

**ICOMOS Monitoring Mission  
To Dambulla, Kandy and Galle, Sri Lanka  
13 - 20 December 1998  
by the Project Team for ICOMOS  
Professor Yukio Nishimura (ICOMOS Japan)  
and  
Architect Pali Wijiratne (ICOMOS Sri Lanka)**

**A Introduction**

This report was prepared after the visit to Dambulla, Kandy, and Galle, to monitor the achievements and present conservation being carried out at the three sites after their inclusion in the World Heritage List. The programme was organized by Mr H.S.D. Hettipathirana, Director (Development), and his staff at the Central Cultural Fund of the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs. The visit accorded ample opportunities to meet key personnel of the different heritage organizations and the executive bodies at both local and national level.

Discussions with the on-site staffs of the Central Cultural Fund, Department of Archaeology, and Urban Development Authority also provided us an insight into the specific issues related to the current situation of the three World Heritage Sites. The itinerary of the mission is attached to the report.

Key individuals met during the visit included:

- Hon. Lakshman Jayakody, Minister of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- H.E. H. Princern, Ambassador in Sri Lanka for the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands
- Mr Harindranath Dunuwille, Mayor, City of Kandy
- Professor Senake Bandaranayake, Director-General, Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Dr S.U. Deraniyagala, Director-General, Archaeological Department, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Professor Nimal de Silva, Chairman, Urban Development Authority, President, ICOMOS Sri Lanka, and Director, Conservation, Kandy Project
- Mr H.S.D. Hettipathirana, Director (Development), Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Archt. P.B. Mandawela, Deputy Director (Development), Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Ms. Gunasekara, Assistant Director (Development), Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Mr W.A. Chinthana Tilak, Research Officer, Conservation, Central Cultural Fund, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Rev. Ingmaluwe Sumangala, Nayaka Thero, Trustee Priest, Rungiri Dubulu Vihara
- Dr Senenvi Epitawatta, Director, Archaeology, Dambulla and Sigiriya Project
- Archt. Jayatissa Herath, Project Manager, Kandy, and Acting Assistant Director, Sigiriya/Dambulla Projects
- Archt. Dr Gamini Wijesuriya, Director (Architecture), Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs
- Professor Lakshman Alwis, Director, Conservation, Dambulla
- Archt. Rohana Herath, Project Architect, Dambulla Project

## **B Dambulla**

### *Background*

The Golden Rock Temple of Dambulla is one of the largest cave temple complexes in the South and South-East Asian Region and one of the most important centres of Buddhist pilgrimage in Sri Lanka. The wall paintings in the cave are some of the most important artefacts in South and South-East Asia. It was accordingly inscribed in the World Heritage List in October 1989 on the basis of criteria i and vi. The citations in the ICOMOS evaluation report were:

Criterion i: "... the monastic ensemble of Dambulla is an outstanding example of the religious art and expression of Sri Lanka and South and South-East Asia. The excavated shrine-caves, their painted surfaces and statuary are unique in scale and degree of preservation. The monastery includes significant masterpieces of 18th century art in the Sri Lankan school of Kandy."

Criterion vi: "... Dambulla is an important shrine in the Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka."

### *Special issues and concerns*

After the inscription of the Golden Temple of Dambulla on the World Heritage List in 1991, relationships between the Central Cultural Fund, the conservation executing body for Dambulla, and the custodian of the property, the high priest, have worsened. Since no conservation work has been carried out by the Fund since that time, the general situation of the temple has deteriorated. Therefore, immediate intervention on site is required to safeguard the monument. The relationship between the two parties should be restored as soon as possible, probably with the Department of Archaeology intervening as a facilitator.

### *Conservation achievements*

A six-year programme for conservation of the paintings at the cave temple was launched to copy all the cave paintings, covering an area of 25,000ft<sup>2</sup>. The programme has been successfully completed.

Water flow between the edge of the verandah roof and the natural rock has been arrested by repairs carried out to the roof.

Terra-cotta tiles have been laid on the temple floors to improve the conditions of the complex.

Pilgrim pathways to the caves of the main temple have been renovated.

Squatter settlements and a vehicle park at the foot of the rock have been relocated outside the boundaries of the World Heritage Site. There is now ample public space.

The World Heritage Site and the buffer zone are well depicted in the Sacred City Plan.

A museum to display the documented paintings with a visitor centre is under construction in the buffer zone at the foot of the rock.

New town development in Dambulla is located so far from the buffer zone that it will have minimal impact on the World Heritage Site. Infrastructure around the site is being improved.

The market has moved and the vegetable collection centre is being developed away from the site, increasing amenity values on the site itself.

Excavation of the burial ground at the Ibbankatuva megalithic cemetery, 2km north of Dambulla Rock, has been started but not completed yet.

Excavation and conservation of the Somawathi Temple compound is almost completed but the site is not open to the public.

Good scientific conservation techniques have been applied in most instances.

#### *Recommendations*

1. In order to improve the relationship between the trustees of the property and the organization executing the conservation work, notably the Central Cultural Fund, it is recommended that the Department of Archaeology or another relevant authority, in consultation with the Central Cultural Fund, should become involved, in order to create a clear policy and strategy for the conservation and maintenance programme for the Temple Sites.
2. High humidity and temperature inside the cave may cause damage to its mural paintings in the long term.
3. Lighting in some of the caves should be improved to give visitors a better understanding of the artefacts there.
4. The electric wiring should be correctly installed to avoid short-circuiting or other technical problems caused by the existing poor installation.
5. Restoration of the entrance roof of the verandah, which is currently deteriorating, should be completed as soon as possible. The choice of roofing materials should be re-examined to prevent damage caused by monkeys and strong wind.
6. Work at the Somawathi monastic complex, including the cave adobes, should be completed and the complex opened as a tourist/pilgrim attraction.
7. The temple at the foot of the Rock is alien to the complex. Steps should be taken immediately to arrest this situation and curtail such insensitive construction.
8. Funding resources for conservation and maintenance of the site should reviewed. At least some of the income from visitors should be channelled for such purposes.

## C Kandy

### *Background*

Situated in the middle of a natural basin surrounded by high mountain ranges and with a man-made lake in the middle, Kandy is the last capital of the Sinhala kings. It remains the religious capital of Buddhism and a sacred city for millions of Buddhists all over the world. The Sacred City is composed of the remains of the Royal Palace, the Temple of the Tooth (known as the Dalada Maligawa), and other associated temples. The relic of the molar tooth of the Lord Buddha is enshrined in the Dalada Maligawa.

The Sacred City of Kandy was inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 1988 under criteria iv and vi. The citations in the ICOMOS evaluation were as follows:

Criterion iv: "The monumental ensemble of Kandy, rebuilt under the reign of Keerti Sri Rajasimha, is an outstanding example of a type of construction in which the Royal Palace and the Temple of the Tooth of Buddha are juxtaposed. Since the 4th century it has been customary to do this. In the descriptive account left by the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang in 629, the Temple of the Tooth of Anuradhapura was in close proximity to the palace. The same was true for the temples built wherever the relic, a true palladium of the Sinhalese monarchy, was carried each time the capital was changed."

Criterion vi: "The Temple of the Tooth, the palatial complex, and the sacred city of Kandy are directly and tangibly associated with the history of the spread of Buddhism, one of humanity's great religions. Built to house the relic of the tooth of Buddha, which had come from Kalinga, India, to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sri Meghavanna (310-328), when it was transferred a final time, the Temple of Kandy bears witness to an ever flourishing cult."

### *Special issues and concerns*

As one of six important conservation sites in the Cultural Triangle in Sri Lanka, the Kandy Project is being successfully implemented by the Central Cultural Fund. The project is well staffed and, despite the tragic bomb blast in February 1998, which caused considerable damage to the Temple of the Tooth, conservation and restoration works are progressing steadily. Firm leadership at local authority level facilitates the development control of the whole city and there appears to be plenty of public support for this conservation policy. The systematic approach applied to urban conservation as experienced in Kandy may serve as a convincing model for other relevant areas in the country.

### *Conservation achievements*

The Sacred City area, inscribed in the World Heritage List, is being cleared systematically. Twenty-two buildings were listed to be demolished in the *Kandy Sacred Area Planning Scheme*. Out of this, twelve buildings have already been removed and two others have been converted to uses compatible with the conservation plans. The rest are to be demolished in due course.

Several areas that were crowded and built-up have now been made into public open spaces, thereby increasing the amenity value of the area. This has also created common areas for the many thousands of devotees, pilgrims, and local and foreign visitors that throng to see and venerate the Temple of the Tooth.

Conservation and presentation of the excavated monuments are of a high standard. All the officers working on the site appear to have a sound understanding of good conservation techniques. The technology applied in the conservation of the buildings and the mural paintings is of a high standard and the work is being recorded scientifically. Conservation technology in roofing materials and methodology is being evolved in a commendable way after experimenting on many sites.

Maintenance of some open areas has been brought under the aegis of the lay custodian, the Diyawadana Nilame. This has proved to be extremely successful, because of the team spirit that prevails.

The restoration of the buildings damaged by the bomb blast in February 1998 is being carried out systematically and the progress is good. The discovery of two layers of mural paintings on the walls of the inner chamber of the Temple is of significance in researching into the history of the building. The historical analysis of these paintings has brought new insights to the story of the Temple.

Since the Dalada Maligawa is a living monument, it has to cater to many worshippers and pilgrims. This provision has continued to be made available in spite of the extensive conservation work being carried out, particularly after the bomb blast. The conservation work is so well planned that the public does not appear to be inconvenienced, in spite of tight security controls and limited access. This speaks volumes about the high level of management of the site by both the conservation team and the administrators of the Temple.

The Kandy Sacred Area, which is the core area of the World Heritage Site, is clearly depicted in the Planning Proposals (Gazette No 301 of 8 June 1984). The buffer zones, shown in Plan No D/32/07/02 prepared by the Central Cultural Fund, cover the surrounding areas well in harmony with the central monuments.

Precise guidelines for the two buffer zones are executed properly. Almost all the areas visible from the Dalada Maligawa are well protected.

The authorities have set out development guidelines for the area within the Kandy Municipality in keeping with the historic character of the city, where the World Heritage Site is the focal point. The guidelines thus include controls over building heights, facades, and density of developments. This has resulted in the production of a conservation and development plan not only for the area around the Kandy Lake but also for the city as a whole.

The *World Heritage City of Kandy, Conservation and Development Plan* edited by Anuradha Seneviratne and Nimal de Silva, is to be published soon.

The Kandy Heritage Foundation, in its autonomous capacity, is in a position to provide the necessary guidelines and action plans for the improvement of Kandy within the city limits.

The World Heritage Committee, with the Mayor as the chairman, appears to function reasonably well in spite of its limited resources.

A list of historic buildings worthy of preservation has been completed and is to be gazetted in due course. It will enable this valuable collection of buildings to be protected and followed by the extension of the buffer zone.

The proposed removal of the courthouse complex and the school from the area immediately outside the World Heritage Site will ease the traffic pressure generated in the historic area

There appears to be good coordination for the improvement of the city under the strong leadership of the City of Kandy. The city is seriously considering granting various incentives to influence property owners to help in the conservation programme. The Heritage Clubs have set up in the schools area commendable practices for providing school children with an awareness programme and to teach them the values of caring for the heritage in their young and formative years.

*Recommendations*

1. Records of the conservation work, as well as excavation reports, should be published.
2. Maintenance of the courtyard of Natha Devalaya, the temple in front of the Dalada Maligawa, needs to be upgraded.
3. Facade treatment in the street of the adjacent block within the Sacred City area, west of the temple compound, should be improved.
4. On the removal of the courthouse complex from its present site, those buildings must be used for a function sympathetic to the temple complex.
5. The Queen's Bath, currently used by the police, should be converted to either a tourist activity or one related to the cultural significance in order to make the most of the heritage building.
6. The proposed comprehensive master plan for Kandy should be referred to various professional bodies and other interested parties for comments and discussions before finalizing and implementation.
7. The master plan should take into account the infrastructure needs of the increasing number of tourists visiting Kandy and cater to their requirements.
8. The master plan should also include an inner city regeneration plan, because activities in the inner city area after dusk have decreased considerably over the last decade.
9. The Museum of Kandy should be geared not only exhibit the valuable treasures and the archives of the Dalada Maligawa but also to depict the history of the City of Kandy, which is interwoven with that of the Temple Complex.
10. Traffic congestion and parking problems caused largely by the road closures should be resolved as a priority. In particular, a better parking and traffic system must be implemented for the area immediately around the World Heritage Site.
11. Visitor facilities, such as toilets, interpretation boards, etc, need to be improved.
12. The development guidelines currently implemented by the city authorities should be made readily available to the public and prospective developers.
13. New buildings in the present World Heritage Site should be discouraged altogether.
14. Consideration should be given to extending the boundary of the present World Heritage Site to include the Kandy Lake and Udawattakele, the mountain range behind the Dalada Maligawa, since they form an integral part of the complex by forming the ideal setting.
15. The buffer zone need to be redefined to include all the mountain range Walker Estate, which is visible from the core area.
16. Restriction on building development over 2000ft above MSL should be lowered to the existing building construction situation.
17. The World Heritage City Advisory Committee should have official status and should be properly constituted with its terms of reference defined, in order to handle its responsibilities.

## **D Galle**

### *Background*

The Old Town of Galle and its fortifications constitute the largest, complete walled town in Sri Lanka that is still a living settlement. It was inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 1988: the citations in the ICOMOS evaluations were:

Criterion iv: "... Galle provides an outstanding example of an urban ensemble which illustrates the interaction of European architecture and south Asian traditions from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Among the characteristics which make this an urban group of exceptional value is the original sewer system from the 17th century, flushed with sea water controlled by a pumping station formerly activated by a windmill on the Triton bastion. However, the most salient fact is the use of European models adapted by local manpower to the geological, climatic, historic, and cultural conditions of Sri Lanka. In the structure of the ramparts, coral is frequently used along with granite. In the ground layout all the measures of length, width, and height conform to the regional metrology. The wide streets, planted with grass and shaded by suriyas, are lined with houses, each with its own garden and an open verandah supported by columns - another sign of the acculturation of an architecture which is European only in its basic design."

### *Special issues and concerns*

Since the Galle Fort is outside UNESCO-Sri Lanka Cultural Triangle Project, all matters relating to the conservation of the historic city and the area immediately surrounding the Fort rest solely upon the Department of Archaeology, which is responsible for looking after over 2000 listed sites and 12,000 listed monuments.

Being a living settlement, the Old Town of Galle should not and cannot be frozen in order to preserve it. There should be an articulated Master Plan to guide the sympathetic development of the town and a strong authority to implement such guidelines.

Since the Galle Fort depicts a dual heritage, the positive commitment of a European counterpart should be assured for the future support of its conservation programme.

Unfortunately, the mission could not contact any members of the Galle Heritage Trust when it visited the site, and so could not obtain detailed information about the future of the old town and its fortifications in the eyes of the Trust, or about the role it has played to date in the conservation of the site.

### *Conservation achievements*

All the historic structures within the Fort have already been surveyed and documented in *Ancient Ceylon*, the Journal of the Department of Archaeology No 15, entitled "The Conservation of the Galle Fort and its Environs."

The Galle Heritage Trust Act (Act No 4 of 1994) was approved in the Sri Lankan Parliament in April 1994. This was designed to facilitate the bringing together of all the organizations and agencies engaged in conservation into a single unit "...to promote the preservation, conservation, and development of the Galle Fort"(section3.a).

Fifteen small projects, in the public domain, were identified in order to demonstrate good conservation practice and the betterment of the place in general.. Some of them, such as the Moon Bastion of the

Fort, the facade of part of the warehouse at the entrance, and the square in front of the courthouse complex, have been completed and others are awaiting sources of funding.

Demarcation of the World Heritage Site and its buffer zone leave no room for ambiguity. It is strongly recommended that the boundary of the site should include the ancient harbour.

The Netherlands Government shows keen interest on the conservation of the site by being actively involved in the processes, the latest being the funding of the improvement of signposting at a cost of US\$8000. They are also involved in jointly organizing a workshop to create public awareness of the values of the historic town. Dutch and Australian marine archaeologists are assisting the Sri Lankan authorities in the underwater exploration of the harbour area, and also in improvements to the Marine Museum.

### *Recommendations*

1. The Galle Heritage Trust, consisting of six members appointed by the Minister, six by the Municipal Council, and 13 *ex-officio* members, appears to be defunct owing to the lack of technical staff. The Trust should be restructured so as to be more active in the improvement of the site.
2. An overall Development Plan should be prepared and implemented to provide clear guidelines not only on conservation but also on new and infill development.
3. A poor standard of conservation work may cause problems in the future. For example, the building of the Galle Museum is now being conserved; the roof that has been recently completed is leaking, and if this is allowed to continue, the collections will also be damaged. The standard of conservation should be upgraded and carefully monitored by the on-site staff.
4. The standard of maintenance of the Rampart Walls and other sites that have already been conserved is questionable.
5. The design guidelines for the renovation of private houses within the conservation area should be finalized and published for the general use of owners.
6. Scientific research for analysing the origin and evolution of the housing layouts and the architectural details has not materialized to improve the academic standard of conservation, even though detailed documentation of the cultural properties in the area has been carried out.
7. Adaptive use of the historic buildings, owned by both the private and the public sector, should be examined carefully to illustrate a wide spectrum of sympathetic restoration works.
8. The infrastructure facilities of the old town, such as road paving and the ancient sewer system, appear to be poorly maintained. The infrastructure facilities should be upgraded in conformity with the historic importance of the site.
9. Landscaping of the public areas would set a good example to those living in the city.
10. The growing traffic volume within the Fort may become a major issue if steps are not taken to arrest the situation.
11. Since there is every possibility of an increase in tourist numbers to the area, adequate steps should be taken without delay in order to provide the necessary facilities that are so essential for such an influx.

12. Expertise available in agencies other than the Department of Archaeology should be mobilized to deal with changes that are taking place in this World Heritage Site.
13. Responsibilities for the conservation of the whole town should be clearly institutionalized so as to improve conservation standards.

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*Mission Coordinator and Report Editor*

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**ANNEX***ICOMOS Mission to Evaluate the State of Conservation of the World Heritage Sites of Dambulla, Kandy, and Galle (Sri Lanka)*

- 13 December 1998      Leave Tokyo for Colombo  
Arrival in Colombo (Yukio Nishimura)
- 14 December 1998      Discussion with Central Cultural Fund Officials and Project coordinators  
Stay at Colombo
- 15 December 1998      Leave for Dambulla  
Visit Dambulla Heritage Site  
Briefing from Project Staffs  
Stay at Dambulla
- 16 December 1998      Leave for Kandy  
Visit Maligawa and other sites  
Briefing from Project Staffs  
Stay at Kandy
- 17 December 1998      Leave for Colombo  
Stay at Colombo
- 18 December 1998      Courtesy call on the Ambassador of the Netherlands  
Courtesy call on the Hon. Minister of Cultural and Religious Affairs  
Leave for Galle  
Visit Galle Fort  
Briefing from Project Staffs  
Stay at Galle
- 19 December 1998      Leave for Colombo  
Final concluding discussion with Central Cultural Fund officials and others  
Leave for Tokyo (Yukio Nishimura)
- 20 December 1998      Arrival in Tokyo (Yukio Nishimura)

END OF PROGRAMME