
Central Highlands (Sri Lanka) No 1203

Official name as proposed by the State Party:

The Central Highlands of Sri Lanka: Its cultural and natural heritage

Location:

Central and Sabaragamuwa Provinces
Sri Lanka

Brief description:

The nominated property is located in the mountainous region of the central highlands and comprises the Peak Wilderness Protected Area (PWPA), the Horton Plains National Park (HPNP), and the Knuckles Conservation Forest (KCF). Adam's Peak in the PWPA bears witness to a cultural-religious tradition dating back to the pre-Christian era, the HPNP contains traces of human occupation since the Mesolithic era and of early agricultural practices (17,600–16,000 years BP), the KCF has revealed traces of human occupation in the Mesolithic period and the Iron Age and is still inhabited by traditional communities that have been isolated until recently.

Category of property:

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of three *sites*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (January 2008), paragraph 47, it is also nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

[Note: The property is nominated as a mixed cultural and natural site. IUCN will assess the natural significance and ICOMOS the cultural significance.]

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 20 March 2006

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination: None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre: 29 January 2008

Background: This is a new nomination.

Consultations: ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committees on Cultural Landscapes, Archaeological Heritage Management, and Intangible Heritage. ICOMOS has also consulted several independent experts.

Literature consulted (selection):

CINSA (Cultural Information Network for South Asia) Cultural Abstracts Volume One, Number one *Special issue on Archaeology in Sri Lanka*, 1990 Colombo, Central Cultural Fund, 1994.

Deraniyagala, S.U., *Early man and the rise of civilisation in Sri Lanka: the archaeological evidence*, in Nandana Chutiwongs and Nimal De Silva (eds.), *Roland Silva Felicitation Volume*, Colombo, 2008.

Wijeratne, A. P., *Religio-cultural tourism and the local community: Sri Lankan experience*, ICOMOS-Korea, Seoul, 2006.

Wijesuriya, G., *The past is in the present: Perspectives in caring for Buddhist heritage sites in Sri Lanka*, ICCROM, Rome, 2005.

Wijesuriya, G., *La vie du Bouddha à travers les sites du patrimoine mondial*, *World Heritage Review*, 33 (2003), pp. 4-19.

Technical Evaluation Mission: A joint ICOMOS/IUCN mission visited the site on 23 September-2 October 2009.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: None

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 17 March 2010

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The nominated property consists of three different areas: the Peak Wilderness Protected Area (PWPA) covering 20,596ha; the Horton Plains National Park (HPNP) covering 3,109ha; and the Knuckles Conservation Forest (KCF) covering 31,305ha. The PWPA is buffered by an area of 37,571ha, the HPNP has no buffer zone, and the KFC has a buffer zone of 35,074ha.

The PWPA consists of a rugged mountainous region covered by rainforest with a cone-shaped physiographic feature, Adam's Peak, as the highest feature in the range. At its summit the Peak has an indentation that is believed to be the footprint of the Lord Buddha; this has endowed the mountain with religious significance, which has attracted devotees since early times. At the present time some two million people, mostly pilgrims, climb the peak each year using trails. There are numerous religious practices associated with the Peak, mostly related to the pilgrimage.

The HPNP comprises a tableland (2,000m a.s.l.) with a cold climate and subject to strong winds. The Plains are

for the most part covered with grass and herbaceous plants. Recent archaeological and palaeoecological surveys have revealed several prehistoric sites dating back to as much as 24,000 years BP. The dimensions of these sites suggest that the earliest occupation was probably in the form of seasonal camps, whilst the palaeoecological evidence provides information on the adaptation of prehistoric man's lifestyle to changing climate conditions. In the Post-Glacial period, under more favourable conditions, hunter-gatherer practices became associated with early slash-and-burn agriculture, herding, and the initial steps in cereal (oats, barley) cultivation around 17,600–16,000 years BP), whilst the first signs of systematic cultivation appear between 13,000 and 8,700 years BP when wild species of rice were grown.

The KCF is a mountainous area, separated from the PWPA and the HPNP, which are located in the Central Massif, by a 80km wide stretch of forested mountainous land. Recent archaeological investigations in the area have discovered caves with evidence of occupation starting in the Mesolithic period. The Gorahadigala Caves have produced bones of several species and stone implements with faint traces of retouching. Other interesting sites are the Uyangamuwa, Valagamba, and Nariyagala Caves, where traces of a much later period have been identified, mainly consisting of a 'drip ledge' chiselled along the brow of the overhanging boulder at the entrance of the cave, so as to divert rainwater away from the entrance. These caves were used by Buddhist monks from around 200–100 BCE.

Despite the remoteness of the area, there are a number of villages in the Knuckles Range, some of which were hardly touched by modern civilization until recent times. Pre-Colonial texts record the presence of several Vedda settlements in the Knuckles region, some of which have been identified. The impact of modern developments over recent years is resulting in the disappearance of the traditional culture of these communities.

History and development

The history of Adam's Peak is full of legends. According to the *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka, the projection of Buddha's image is believed to have visited Sri Lanka in 550 BCE and to have planted one foot at the north of the royal city (Anuradhapura) and the other at the top of a mountain (*Sri Pada* or Adam's Peak). In the 11th century CE the reigning monarch, King Vijayabahu I, climbed the Peak with his army for the first time. In the 13th century King Panditha Parakrama Bahu I climbed the Peak and decided to make it less difficult for the pilgrims to reach the summit. Marco Polo visited the place in the 13th century and Ibn Battuta a century later. During the reign of King Magha, Buddhists were persecuted and monks fled in great numbers to neighbouring countries such as Burma, Thailand, and Laos. To continue their worship of the Buddha's footprint, the *Sri Pada*, they made replicas that were

installed in temples abroad. As a result, the worship of the *Sri Pada* spread in South-East Asia, a practice that has continued unbroken since the 13th century. When the monks returned they brought these replicas back to the temples of Sri Lanka and the cult of the *Sri Pada* by means of small-scale copies became popular in the country. Over the centuries, right up to the present day, Adam's Peak has grown in importance as a place for worship.

The cultural heritage of the HPNP is connected with its prehistory. Archaeological findings demonstrate that the area was occupied by Mesolithic people. Recent systematic archaeological investigations based on scientific analysis have yielded evidence of hunting and foraging during the glacial maximum (24,000–18,500 BP). Traces of slash-and-burn and grazing practices have been detected in the following period, whilst during the Post-Glacial period (17,600–16,000 BP) evidence of the beginning of the management of cereals (oats and barley) has been found. The systematic cultivation of rice occurred in the period 13,000–8,700 BP. By that time the cultivation of oats and barley had decreased. Between 8,000 and 3,600 BP with increasingly dry conditions agriculture decreased and in the following period the area appears to have been almost deserted.

The KCF has traces of human life dating back to the Mesolithic period, the Early Iron Age, and the Pre-Colonial period (before 1505 CE). Several sites dated at 30,000 BP have been identified and associated relics, primary tool types, and microliths, have been found. A number of caves that were occupied by Mesolithic man have recently been identified. The area is rich in prehistoric evidence and further research is expected to provide additional information about its occupation in prehistory.

Several caves with drip-ledges dating from the Iron Age (2nd century BCE to 1st century CE) have been discovered.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis included in the nomination dossier is developed independently for the components of the serial nomination. With regard to Adam's Peak in the PWPA, the nomination dossier acknowledges that other Buddhist monuments and places of worship have been inscribed on the World Heritage List (in India and Nepal, for example), but it asserts that Adam's Peak possesses many distinctive features that make it unique in relation to those sites. These include the centuries-old cultural and religious practices followed by hundreds of thousands of devotees who climb the Peak every day to venerate the Sacred Footprint.

So far as the archaeological evidence from Horton Plains is concerned, the significance relates to its global context, the origin of agriculture, which marks the dawn of the Neolithic Revolution, dating back to 14,000–10,000 years BP. East Asian sites such as Xianrendong (China) have yielded evidence of rice-based subsistence patterns as early as 14,000 BP. In South-East Asia, in Mesopotamia, and in the Ghaba Valley in north-west Syria evidence has been found of systematic cereal cultivation as early as 13,000 BP. Siliceous microfossil evidence indicates that early agriculture appeared in the New World in 10,000 BP. The results of exhaustive research carried out at Horton Plains have revealed that agriculture flourished there 13,000 years ago and that this region witnessed the development of the earliest civilization based on rice, oats, and barley domestication dating back to more than 15,000 BP.

ICOMOS first considers that the comparative analysis should have been carried out for the whole serial nomination and not for each separate component.

Secondly, ICOMOS considers that no comparison has been made for the KCF, whilst for the PWPA and the HPNP the analysis should have examined at least properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List, such as Mount Taishan, China (1987, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii)), Mount Emei Scenic Area, China (1996, criteria (iv), (vi), (x)), and Mount Wutai, China (2009, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)), Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, Kyrgyzstan (2009, criteria (iii), (vi)), Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia (1982, 1989, criteria (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii), (viii), (ix), (x)), Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, Japan (2004, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) (vi)), and Kuk Early Agricultural Site, Papua New Guinea (2008, criteria (iii), (iv)), and also sites that are included in the Tentative Lists, such as Hua Shan Scenic Area, the Four Sacred Mountains as an extension of Mount Taishan (China), Mount Kumgang and the Historical Relics in and around the Mountain (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), and Palaeolithic sites and geomorphology of Karatau mountain range (Kazakhstan). Further properties that might have been considered for the comparative analysis are Mount Jiuhua, Anhui Province, Mount Putuo, Zhejiang Province, and Diaotonghuan Cave, all in China, Mehrgarh Neolithic Site in Pakistan, and Göbekli Tepe and Çatalhöyük in Turkey.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not adequately clarify the rationale underlying the selection of the three areas, which in fact appear to be somewhat different from one another and to exemplify almost unrelated sets of values – the religious associations of a natural feature with high aesthetic value at Adam's Peak in the PWPA, the evidence found in the HPNP of the beginnings of cereal management dating back to 17,600–16,000 BP, and the traces of human occupation dating back to 30,000 in the KCF.

The State Party claims that the property has values relating to the association with the Lord Buddha, to long-

lasting prehistoric occupation, and to the anticipation of cereal domestication, but the comparative analysis deals only with properties possessing values related to ancient cereal domestication.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not justify consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Adam's Peak or *Sri Pada* (the 'Sacred Footprint') is one of the most important religious and cultural sites in Sri Lanka and one of the most sacred places for Buddhists throughout the world. Several reigning kings have visited the site since the 11th–13th centuries CE. Pilgrimage and the associated religious practices date back many centuries.
- Archaeological evidence from Horton Plains shows a remarkable sequence of cultural practices beginning before 18,500 years BP and ending at around 3,600 years BP. At this site the management of oats and barley began to be practised around 17,600–16,000 years BP whilst early rice cultivation dates back to 15,000 years BP.
- Recent findings at the Knuckles Conservation Forest have revealed the presence of caves within the forest that have produced Mesolithic artefacts and animal remains which indicate human occupation in Late Quaternary times (around 30,000 years BP). Much later, around 200–100 BCE, Buddhist monks occupied these caves which had been adapted by the creation of drip ledges in order to divert rainwater away from the entrance.

ICOMOS considers that in this serial nomination the cultural interrelationships and the functional links between the three sites are weak. The *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2008), para. 137, states that 'Serial properties will include component parts related because they belong to: a) the same historico-cultural group; b) the same type of property which is characteristic of the geographical zone.'

The cultural criteria proposed for each site have different emphases, which means that their values belong to different thematic groups. The PWPA is valued for the presence of Adam's Peak, a sacred mountain. The ancient hydraulic civilization of Sri Lanka is mentioned but the nomination dossier does not describe the physical remains of that civilisation nor does it detail where they are located in the nominated property; it also does not specify the conditions for their conservation.

The HPNP is valued for its sites inhabited by prehistoric man and the origin of agricultural cultivation. Finally, the KCF is valued for the archaeological discovery of sites where prehistoric people lived and for its traditional villages. Traditional communities are mentioned, but their living environments and their cultural practices are not adequately described.

ICOMOS considers that the interrelationships between these properties have not been made explicit in the nomination dossier and as a result the rationale for their nomination remains unexpressed and impossible to understand.

However, ICOMOS considers that the cultural values of the PWPA, as described in the nomination dossier, relate predominantly to *Sri Pada* (Adam's Peak) and its associated tangible and intangible heritage (the pilgrimages, the related deeply held cultural practices, and the Galpothawala Temple). These may have the potential to justify the outstanding universal value of the property once an appropriate comparative analysis has been developed which takes into consideration religious sites within and outside Sri Lanka.

ICOMOS further considers that the cultural values relating to the archaeological evidence found in the HPNP which make it a possible additional early centre of plant domestication may have considerable scientific interest, and may also contain the potential to justify the outstanding universal value of the property. However, further research as well as scientific debate on the results of current research are necessary. Finally, the cultural values of the KCF related to the Mesolithic occupation of caves require further investigation.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The State Party has examined integrity mainly with regard to the natural values. Only for the KCF is it stated that, owing to its status as a Conservation Forest, only state-owned land may be included within the boundaries and so the village communities are located outside the nominated property.

ICOMOS notes that the conditions of integrity of the cultural components of the nominated property have not been assessed by the State Party.

ICOMOS considers that the cultural values for the PWPA are related to *Sri Pada* and its associated tangible and intangible heritage of the pilgrimage to the peak and related cultural practices. Linked to the worship of *Sri Pada* is veneration of the pre-Buddhist deity Sumana Saman, as attested by religious rituals during the pilgrimage season. ICOMOS therefore considers that, although the key tangible elements involved with the pilgrimage rituals are included in the nominated property, it would be important also to include the Galpothawala Temple in Ratnapura from where each

year the statue of Sumana Saman is taken in a procession to Adam's Peak.

ICOMOS further considers that the integrity of the PWPA, and of Adam's Peak in particular, is impacted negatively by environmental damage due to the sheer numbers of pilgrims (c 2,000,000) in six months.

ICOMOS also notes that the elements associated with the cultural values of the HPNP appear to be included in the boundaries of the nominated property.

The cultural values of the KCF relate to the presence of caves with evidence of Mesolithic occupation, and these have been included within the boundaries of the nominated property. However, the three sites that best demonstrate human cultural and morphological evolution from 35,000 years BP (Fa-hien Lena, Beli-Lena, and Batadomba Lena) have not been included in the nominated property, whilst at least two of the three caves are located in the highlands.

ICOMOS finally considers that the State Party has not clarified, nor can it be understood from other sources of information, how the sites have been selected for this serial nomination.

Authenticity

The nomination dossier states that the authenticity of the religious significance of the Peak is established mainly through an almost unbroken tradition dating back to the pre-Christian era and recorded in the chronicle, the *Mahavamsa* (Anon. 545 BCE–1758 CE). Historically, the *Travels in India and Ceylon* (393–414 CE) by the Buddhist monk Fa Hien records his visit to Adam's Peak and his interpretation of the origin of the footprint. Other famous travellers who visited the Peak and left written testimonies are Marco Polo (13th century) and Ibn Battuta (14th century).

The authenticity of occupation and cultivation of sites at Horton Plains by Mesolithic people has been established through a series of linked scientific investigations based on the recovery of microliths and other artefacts, on radiocarbon-dated records, and pollen analyses.

The authenticity of values in the KCF related to Mesolithic occupation is based on the recovery of human remains and tools from a number of caves, which strongly suggests that these caves were used as early as 30,000 years BP.

ICOMOS considers that *Sri Pada* is one of the most important sacred places in Sri Lanka, where devotional acts have been performed for centuries by pilgrims and with which a strong oral tradition is associated, passed down from father to son. The replication of the *Sri Pada* shrine conserved in several Theravada Buddhist temples also bears witness to the strength of this religious tradition.

ICOMOS further considers that the fact that archaeological evidence provided by investigations in Horton Plains has been recovered from a depth of c 6m in a rarely visited and well protected area bears credible witness to the values of the site, although further research would be desirable in order to confirm the recently achieved scientific results.

In the KCF only one of the twenty recorded caves preserves an intact stratigraphy, whereas in all the others the stratified deposits have been largely disturbed. Further investigations are therefore necessary to obtain credible evidence of the values claimed.

With regard to the serial nomination, ICOMOS considers that the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property values need to be reconsidered, which is also important for future heritage management of these areas.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have not been met for the serial nomination considered in its entirety.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (v), and (vi) (and also natural criteria (vii), (viii), (ix), and (x)).

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Adam's Peak has been associated with the evolution of the civilization of Sri Lanka for more than two millennia and has an unbroken link with the Buddhist faith. For this reason, it is one of the most venerated mountains in the world. The uniqueness of the HPNP relates to the way in which Mesolithic man evolved from the hunter-gatherer to the agricultural stage between 24,000 and 8700 years BP. In this period prehistoric human beings passed from hunting-gathering to the early steps in the cultivation of oats and barley and thence to organised agriculture based on rice. Finally, the cultural importance of the KCF relates to archaeological findings that have revealed the existence of caves attesting to Mesolithic occupation. Subsequently, the caves were used during the Early Iron Age by Buddhist monks. The presence of ancient villages in the Knuckles Range also bears witness to an almost unbroken traditional way of life.

ICOMOS considers that the association of Adam's Peak with the veneration of the Lord Buddha, although long-lasting, would better justify criterion (vi).

However, the nomination dossier mentions that in the PWPA traces of hydraulic civilization, represented by 'thousands of reservoirs to store water and provide the people with sustainable living conditions,' are to be

found and that there are eleven peripheral cluster villages in the Adam's Peak Wilderness which demonstrate 'a long history of human settlements' and 'are strongly associated with the belief in the sacredness of the Samanala Adaviya (Peak Wilderness range).'

ICOMOS considers that the heritage values of the nominated properties are not adequately documented so as to make it possible to understand whether they meet this criterion.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the HPNP outstandingly exemplifies the sequence of human development from the hunter-gatherer stage through early cereal cultivation to agriculture, under changing climatic condition. Furthermore, the discoveries in the HPNP and subsequent scientific analysis have put plant domestication back from 13,000–14,000 years BP to an earlier period (17,600– 16,000 years BP).

The villages in the KFC illustrate cultural traditions that are based on the uses of local resources for their subsistence and which have evolved over many centuries.

ICOMOS considers that the State Party has included in its proposed justification for inscription under criterion (v) only two of the three components of the serial nomination. The examination of criteria for a serial nomination should include the series as a whole.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified for the serial nomination in its entirety.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the cultural–religious traditions relating to the Adam's Peak in the PWPA are strongly linked with the Buddhist faith, and also to belief in the deity Saman, who is said to have invited the Lord Buddha to visit the mountain and mark his footprint on the top of the peak. The inhabitants of remote isolated villages in the Knuckles range still perform ancient rituals and traditional practices to appease the deities and demons of the region and to obtain protection from wild animals as well as a rich harvest.

ICOMOS considers that the State Party has included in its proposed justification for the inscription under criterion (vi) of Adam's Peak and its associated pilgrimage trails and the ancient ways of life of the traditional villages in the KCF. These are parts of two components of the serial nomination, but identification of the criteria for a serial nomination should include the series as a whole. Furthermore, the cultural practices of traditional communities need further documentation.

Nonetheless, ICOMOS considers that, as a well known sacred mountain with a long tradition of religious practices, Adam's Peak's associative value as a holy mountain may have the potential to justify this criterion after an accurate comparative analysis is carried out.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified for the serial nomination in its entirety.

ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is not justified and that the selection of sites does not appear appropriate. The chosen components do not reflect the same set of values: each of them bears witness to different cultural phenomena and ranges of values.

ICOMOS does not consider that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met and that criteria and Outstanding Universal Value have been justified.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Development pressures

The State Party reports that along the former southern boundary and in the eastern section of the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary development pressures (land settlement, village expansion, cultivation encroachments, etc.) have resulted in the erosion of the protected area. However, the district revenue officers increased their control over the land and were able to regularize encroachments. Nevertheless, large sections of the PWS in its eastern half have been converted into village settlements. Tea estates were also found within this area.

No serious development pressures are envisaged in the Horton Plains National Park.

On the other hand, the nomination dossier states that there is a proposal to construct two reservoirs in the area downstream of the KCF (Kalu Ganga and Moragahakande reservoirs). The KCF is the major catchment that would need to be protected if the reservoirs are to be provided with a steady flow of water.

ICOMOS considers that more information is needed on the proposed projects for the two reservoirs and that an assessment of their impact on the cultural resources in the nominated property as well as on the traditional communities that live in the area should be developed.

Tourism pressures

The State Party reports that Adam's Peak, as one of the holiest shrines for Buddhists, experiences considerable visitor pressure, which, owing to the inadequate measures for coping with attendant problems such as sanitary facilities, exploitation of forest resources, etc., results in considerable environmental pollution and erosion of natural resources.

The number of visitors to the HPNP has also grown in recent years; if this trend continues there will be heavy pressure to deal with the ensuing problems. No estimate of the carrying capacity has been made, but the present numbers are likely to fall within such a capacity. Visitor numbers in the KCF are still well below what would be its carrying capacity.

ICOMOS considers that the measures initiated to counteract the impact of visitors along the trails to Adam's Peak and in the HPNP should also be continued in order to protect the cultural values of the two areas. ICOMOS recommends that an assessment of the carrying capacity of the most visited areas should be developed to serve as the basis for further initiatives addressing visitor issues.

Environmental pressures

The State Party reports that there are major environmental problems concentrated in the PWPA, connected with the presence of pilgrims in the areas along the trails that lead to Adam's Peak. The major issues are waste disposal and lack of sanitary facilities. Much has been done to address the problem of garbage, but this remains a problem owing to the sheer numbers of pilgrims. With regard to the second issue, some action has been taken but more has to be done to mitigate environmental damage.

ICOMOS recommends that systematic action be undertaken as soon as possible to tackle the environmental problems posed by visitor pressure.

Natural disasters

The State Party states that the area is not prone to natural disasters.

ICOMOS considers that the major threat for the area is from flooding.

Impact of climate change

ICOMOS considers that climate change in this region may cause high variability in rainfall patterns and increased temperatures, possibly leading to an intensification of floods.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are the environmental pressures caused by visitors and pilgrims and encroachments in the boundaries of the property.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The area enclosed by the boundaries of the whole nominated serial property covers 55,010ha. The precise number of inhabitants living within the nominated property is not known, although there are only a few residents inside the three components of the nominated property, which, by law, should not be inhabited. The majority of the residents are concentrated in the buffer zones. The estimated population of the KCF buffer zone is around 40,000 (1994 Management Plan), while there is no estimate for the PWPA buffer zone.

The boundary of the Peak Wilderness Protected Area includes the outer boundaries of the Peak Wilderness Nature Reserve (PWNR), the Peak Wilderness Conservation Forest, the Walawe Basin Conservation Forest, and the Morahela Conservation Forest, and, in its eastern extension, it has a common boundary with Horton Plains National Park (HPNP). The boundary of the PWNR has been defined by notification in the Government Gazette under the provisions of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance (FFPO). The boundaries of the three conservation forests have been defined by notification in the Government Gazette under the provisions of the Forest Ordinance.

The boundary of the HPNP has been defined in the Government Gazette notification declaring this area a national park under the provisions of the FFPO.

The boundary of the KCF has been defined in the Government Gazette notification declaring this area a conservation forest under the provisions of the Forest Ordinance.

The nominated property has been provided with a form of buffer zone based on the legal instruments currently in force. The FFPO provides for protected areas to be buffered by a one-mile wide area where development is prohibited, a provision in force for the PWPA and the HPNP. The Forest Act does not provide the KCF with a buffer zone, but the Knuckles Environment Protection Area under the National Environmental Act affords blanket protection. This area consists of private and public lands outside the KCF and is legally described in the Gazette text (23.7.2007), in which provisions for the allowed uses are also determined.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary, which after amendment today comprises the components of the PWPA bearing cultural

values, covers the six trails and the Peak Area, which are clearly delineated on the ground by concrete markers. The boundaries of the HPNP are clearly indicated on the ground by means of concrete markers. The boundaries of the KCF are described in detail in the Official Gazette registering the inclusion of further areas in the KCF and are also marked on the ground.

ICOMOS considers, however, that there is no map at an adequate scale in which the boundaries of the nominated property are delineated and recommends that at least three maps should be produced (1:50,000 scale at least) showing the boundaries of each nominated area and its related buffer zone and the geomorphology of the region as well as identifying the location of the components bearing cultural values (*i.e.* the caves occupied in the Mesolithic period and the areas that have produced evidence of early agricultural practices). ICOMOS further recommends that a map of the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary be developed with a scale no less than 1:10,000 that makes it possible to identify the geomorphological features and the major manmade elements of the Sanctuary associated with its cultural values.

ICOMOS considers that the established buffer zones provide forms of development control over the areas surrounding the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that the rationale adopted to delineate the boundaries of the components of the nominated property is based mainly on the boundaries of areas that are protected for their natural values and, for this reason, are not adequate to fully represent the cultural values of the nominated property.

Ownership

The Peak Wilderness Protected Area (PWPA) is today a state-owned property in its entirety. The whole of Horton Plains National Park (HPNP) is owned by the state. The land included in the Knuckles Conservation Forest is state-owned. There are still a number of interspersed plots that are privately owned. Action has been taken to acquire them and as soon as they are in state ownership they will be automatically included in the KCF.

Protection

Legal Protection

The most important statutes for the protection of cultural heritage are the Antiquities Act of 1940 (revised in 1956 and 1998) and the Cultural Property Act 1988. The most relevant acts for the protection of natural heritage are the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance – FFPO (1937) and the Forest Act (1995).

The *Antiquities Act* (1998) provides for the preservation of antiquities, sites, and buildings of historical or

archaeological importance. It prescribes inventorying archaeological heritage, protecting such heritage, conducting research, enhancing public awareness, levying entrance fees at selected sites, conducting impact assessments, and formulating a national archaeological policy. This policy is intended to provide a framework that enhances the proper management of archaeological heritage comprising sites, monuments and movable antiquities dating to before 1815, sites, and monuments which are more than 100 years old and which have specifically been declared to be 'protected' under the Antiquities Ordinance.

The PWPA comprises several parts that are protected under the legislation for natural heritage. They are: 1) The Peak Wilderness Nature Reserve (PWNR), a highly protected area under the provisions of the FFPO and administered by the Department of Wild Life Conservation (DWLC); 2) the pilgrim trails and the Peak which retain the status of sanctuary (declaration 1940) and are administered by the DWLC; and 3) three conservation forests declared under the provisions of the Forest Ordinance and administered by the Forest Department.

The HPNP was declared a National Park under the provisions of the FFPO in 1988. It is under the charge of the DWLC.

The buffer zone of the nominated property has been established following the legal instruments in force in Sri Lanka. The FFPO provides the PWPA and the HPNP with a one-mile wide buffer zone where development is prohibited. The Forest Act does not provide the KCF with a buffer zone but it is, however, covered by a designated Knuckles Environment Protection Area under the National Environmental Act. This area consists of private and public lands outside the KCF and is legally described in the Gazette text (23.7.2007), in which also provisions for the authorized uses are determined.

The three areas included in the nominated property are owned by the state and are under the responsibility of the DWLC and of the FD. Although these departments act in cooperation with local administrations, there are no local plans that apply to the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that the areas, sites, and immovable artefacts that bear witness to cultural values and phenomena should also be protected under the relevant legal instruments for cultural property so as to ensure proper protection of the cultural heritage. An inventory of the protected cultural features should be established and regularly updated.

Traditional Protection

The bodies responsible for protection and management of the nominated property have established cooperation programmes with the existing Community Based Organisations (CBO).

ICOMOS notes that the CBOs are very strong in the south and west of the PWPA and the KCF and are actively participating in protection and conservation programmes with the Forest Department.

Effectiveness of protection measures

The conservation forests within the PWPA are in the charge of the Forest Department. The Peak Wilderness Nature Reserve, the pilgrimage trails and the Peak, which also form part of the PWPA, are in the charge of the Department for Wildlife Conservation, both of which are under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Archaeology have no administrative control over the property but would be associated with the DWLC and the FD in management in relation to the cultural sites within the property. However, following an amendment to the FFPO (20.4.09), any archaeological investigation in the nominated property requires a permit from the Director General of DWLC on the advice of the Director General of Archaeology Department or of the Director of the National Museum.

The Forest Department is organised through regional offices, headed by the Divisional Forest Officers (FDOs). Their areas of control are well defined. The management of the DWLC areas within the PWPA and the HPNP is the responsibility of the head of DWLC.

ICOMOS considers that protection measures for the natural aspects of the property are in place but that the cultural resources are not adequately protected. It therefore recommends that the protection of the cultural features of the nominated property should be strengthened through the application of the Antiquities Act and related legal instruments as soon as possible.

ICOMOS considers that the protection measures in place for cultural resources are not adequate and recommends that the protection of the cultural features of the nominated property should be strengthened through the application of the Antiquities Act and related legal instruments as soon as possible.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

There is no mention of inventories or any recording process in the nomination dossier, although the results of recent research are synthetically described.

ICOMOS considers that it is of crucial importance that cultural resources, including areas of potential archaeological interest, should be properly mapped and inventoried. Related documentation should be duplicated and stored in more than one place.

ICOMOS also encourages the State Party to continue with systematic research campaigns to expand and

deepen the knowledge on the cultural aspects of the nominated property, with special reference to its prehistoric occupation.

Present state of conservation

The State Party considers that, whilst there is no threat to the condition of Adam's Peak or of its cultural values, the conservation status of the pilgrimage trails is affected by the massive scale of use of these tracks during the pilgrimage season each year. The Horton Plains area is well managed and free from the conservation issues that affect many of the other protected areas in the country. Its topographical features give it natural protection and the area is free from encroachment problems. The state of conservation of the sites of cultural relevance within the KCF is considered satisfactory.

ICOMOS considers that there is a need for extra efforts to ensure the better conservation of the forest, especially adjacent to the pilgrim trails in the PWPA, with the objectives both of reducing pollution and of protecting the cultural values of the property, as well as of the walking tracks in the HPNP. In this area the erosion of the trails, as well as seasonal over-use by visitors, may interfere with the preservation of excavated archaeological remains.

ICOMOS further considers that there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the state of conservation of the cultural resources that are considered to sustain the values of the nominated property.

Active conservation measures

Active measures include not only conservation actions but also maintenance work, ranging from pilgrimage to forest management. These are programmed on an annual basis.

ICOMOS considers that measures have been undertaken in the PWPA to avoid forest and natural heritage erosion due to the heavy use of natural resources made by villagers. The Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have reduced the disastrous level of use of forest resources and have developed self-employment and job programmes in the agricultural and visitor sectors.

In the KCF, CBO activity begun ten years ago has been successful in restoring degraded sites, fire protection, developing domestic gardens, and providing micro-finance.

However, ICOMOS considers that there is a need to develop programmes for the conservation of the cultural heritage, in the implementation of which CBOs should also be involved.

Maintenance

ICOMOS considers that there is regular maintenance carried out by local employees and local communities. The best organized maintenance programmes are carried out at the KCF.

Effectiveness of conservation measures

ICOMOS considers that several actions have been developed and implemented by the State Party to cope with the factors affecting the property. ICOMOS recommends that these efforts should be continued to ensure the adequate environmental protection of the nominated property, especially in the PWPA and the HPNP, where the impact of visitors has caused the most significant damage.

ICOMOS considers that cultural resources, including areas of potential archaeological interest, should be properly mapped and inventoried. ICOMOS further recommends that a comprehensive state of conservation of the cultural resources that sustain the cultural values of the nominated property should be developed and that conservation programmes for the cultural heritage should be developed and implemented with the involvement of the Community Based Organisations.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

Both the DWLC and the FD have hierarchical structures with all the organisational charts set out in the management plans. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Archaeology have no administrative control over the property but would be associated with the DWLC and the FD in aspects of management relating to the cultural sites within the property. In the field there is considerable involvement with local communities through the CBOs.

ICOMOS notes that, although each area included in the nominated property has its own management plan, there is no comprehensive, over-arching management framework for the nominated serial property nor is there any mention of such a framework/plan in the nomination dossier. ICOMOS considers that such a structure should be developed for serial nomination as required by paragraph 114 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

Policy framework: management plans, and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

Currently, management for the nominated property is covered by the following management plans:

- Peak Wilderness Sanctuary, 1999–2003;

- Management Plan, *Samanala Adaviya* Protected Area Complex, 2005 (Adam's Peak Range);
- Management Plan, Horton Plains National Park, 1999–2003;
- Management Plan, Horton Plains National Park, 2005;
- Management Plan for the Conservation of the Knuckles Forest, 1994.

In view of the fact that the three areas (PWPA, HPNP, and KCF) are nominated as a serial property with both cultural and natural values for inscription on the World Heritage List, cultural sector agencies will now be officially included in the management process and related operational plans as relevant stakeholders.

ICOMOS observes that the existing management plans do not contain any reference to the cultural heritage preserved within these protected areas. It is therefore necessary that all plans in force should be revised and expanded so as to include a chapter on archaeological sites and heritage and means for their protection.

ICOMOS recommends that the planned measures and provisions to fill the gap in the protection and management of the cultural heritage of the nominated property should be implemented as soon as possible. Special attention should be paid to the archaeological heritage, which remains largely unexplored and is likely to yield important information about the prehistoric human occupation and subsistence practices in the region.

Risk preparedness

There is no mention of any risk preparedness measures or plans in any of the components of the nominated property.

ICOMOS recommends that risk preparedness measures be developed in order to cope with possible disastrous events that may occur in the area.

Involvement of the local communities

The cooperation of the authorities responsible for the protection and management of the nominated property with the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) demonstrate that the local communities are engaged in the protection process and are also well aware of the nomination process.

ICOMOS considers that it is very important and beneficial for the property that local communities continue to be involved in the conservation and management of the property.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

The management of the property is carried out by local staff.

The staff at the sites consists of Range Officers, Extension Officers, Beat Officers, and Field Assistants. Field Guides, outside the department's cadre, are selected from within the local community.

At the PWPA the on-site staff is headed by a Grade 1 Ranger with other rangers, range assistants, and guards under him. The FD professional staff members are recruited from graduates in disciplines relevant for the protection/management of the property. After recruitment they receive forestry training at various foreign educational institutions. There is no systematic scheme for the training of DWLC staff.

ICOMOS notes that there is no mention of staff for cultural resources in the nomination dossier and apparently there is no on-site cultural site management training. Archaeology staff related to the Department of Archaeology is based in Colombo and have no guaranteed funding programmes for their work. There is therefore a need for financial resources to allow research on the prehistoric sites to continue.

ICOMOS recommends that at least one archaeologist and two professionals with cultural resource management backgrounds should be hired to work on site with the permanent staff of the DWLC and the FD responsible at the local level for the nominated property. ICOMOS further recommends that training in cultural heritage management should be established on-site for the DWLC and the FD staff and that an adequate budget should be provided to research, protect, and manage the cultural heritage in the nominated property, with special regard to archaeological findings.

Effectiveness of current management

ICOMOS considers that management is effective at the field level. However, the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Archaeology are based in Colombo and hence remote from the nominated property. This requires a close cooperation between the DWLC and the FD departments and the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Archaeology to be established.

ICOMOS considers that the management system needs to take into consideration the cultural value of the nominated property. ICOMOS further recommends that an adequate budget should be created to research, protect, and manage the cultural heritage in the nominated property, with special regard to archaeological findings. Finally, ICOMOS recommends that professionals with a background in cultural heritage management should be hired to work on site with the permanent staff of the DWLC and the FD at the local level and provided with basic training in cultural heritage management.

6. MONITORING

The State Party reports that monitoring will consist of the regular systematic collection and analysis of data. Several indicators have been identified along with the periodicity of measurements and the location of data records.

ICOMOS considers that monitoring indicators should be selected so as to ensure the relevant monitoring of possible changes and threats that may affect the attributes supporting the proposed outstanding universal value.

ICOMOS recommends that the monitoring system and related indicators should be developed with specific reference to the attributes supporting the value of the nominated property. ICOMOS also considers that the monitoring system should be implemented, its effectiveness assessed and, where necessary, modified in order to ensure its usefulness in observing and controlling changes in the relevant values of the property.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This serial nomination of three sites is proposed as a mixed property. However, the nomination is focussed predominantly on the natural aspects of the nominated property. Moreover, the cultural criteria proposed for each site have different emphases, which means that the values of these three sites belong to different thematic groups and the cultural interrelationships between them appear weak and are not made explicit.

However, the cultural values of Adam's Peak in the Peak Wilderness Protected Areas and Horton Plains National Park may have the potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value, according to a thoroughly revised nomination.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka: Its cultural and natural heritage, Sri Lanka, to the World Heritage List be ***deferred*** in order to allow the State Party to reconsider the scope of the nomination.

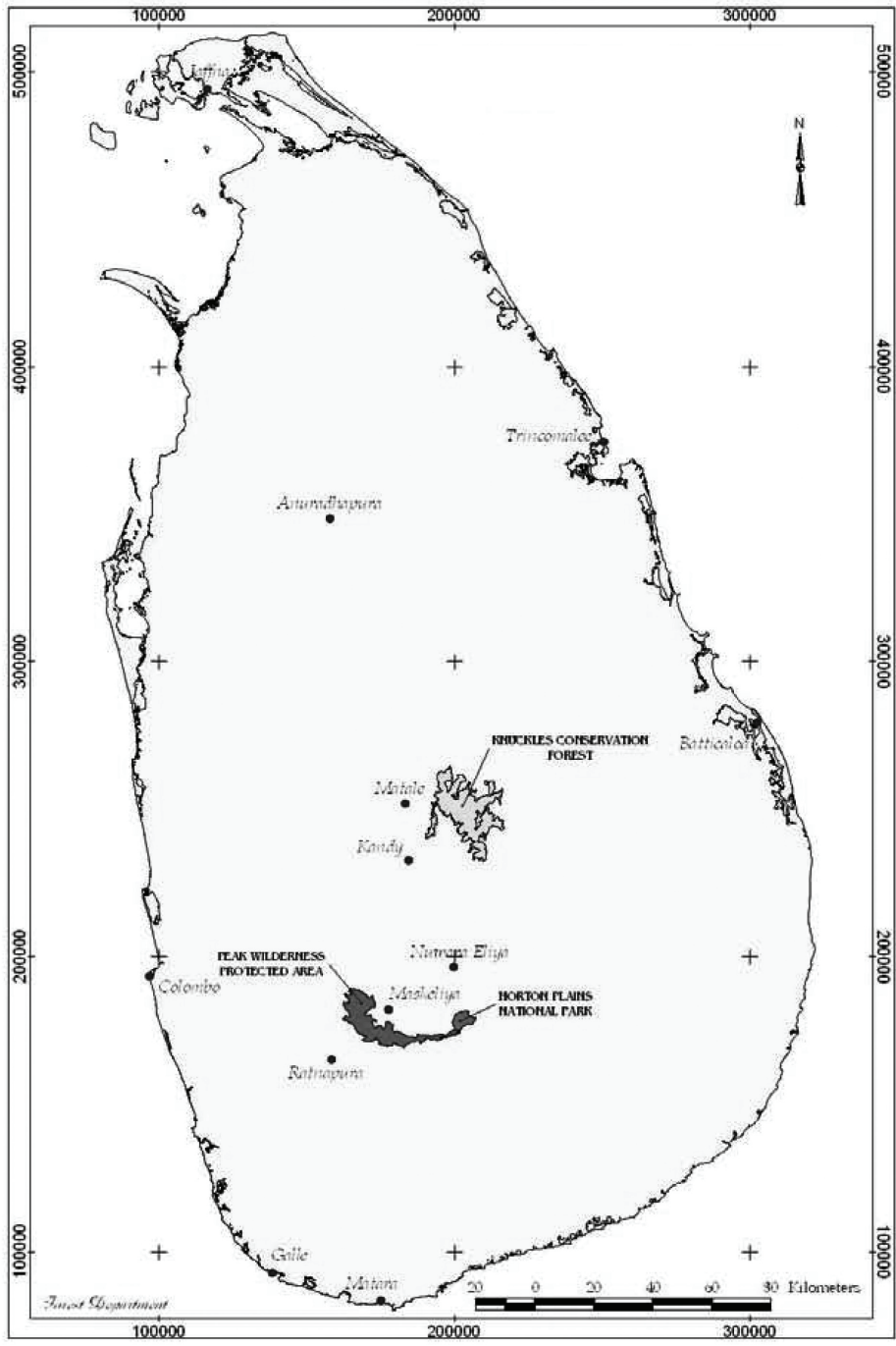
ICOMOS considers that any revised nomination with revised boundaries would need to be considered by an expert mission to the site.

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- The protection of the cultural features of the nominated property should be strengthened

through the application of the Antiquities Act and related legal instruments;

- Measures and provisions for filling the gaps in the protection and management of the cultural heritage of the nominated property should be implemented without delay;
- Cultural resources, including areas of potential archaeological interest, should be properly mapped and inventoried;
- Comprehensive measures to sustain the cultural values of the nominated property should be developed without delay;
- An assessment of the carrying capacity of the most visited areas should be developed so as to form the basis for further initiatives addressing visitor issues;
- The monitoring system and related indicators should be developed with specific reference to the attributes that support the value of the property, in order to ensure effective observation and control over possible modifications of these attributes.



Map showing the location of the nominated properties



Peak Wilderness Protected Area,
Adam's Peak during the pilgrim season



Horton Plains National Park



Knuckles Conservation Forest,
caves occupied in the Mesolithic period



View of Meemure, a village located within the Knuckles Conservation Forest