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THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**CONVENTION CONCERNANT LA PROTECTION DU
PATRIMOINE MONDIAL CULTUREL ET NATUREL**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**COMITÉ INTERGOUVERNEMENTAL DE LA PROTECTION
DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL CULTUREL ET NATUREL**

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**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda
State of conservation of properties
inscribed on the World Heritage List
and/or on the List of World Heritage in
Danger**

**Point 7 de l'Ordre du jour provisoire
État de conservation de biens inscrits
sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial
et/ou sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial
en péril**

MISSION REPORT / RAPPORT DE MISSION

**Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple (St Sri Lanka) (C561)
Temple troglodyte de Rangiri Dambulla (Sri Lanka) (C561)**

[7-13 January 2023 / 7-13 janvier 2023]

REPORT ON THE JOINT WORLD HERITAGE
CENTRE/ICOMOS MISSION
TO THE “RANGIRI DAMBULLA CAVE TEMPLE” (**Sri Lanka**)



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7-13 January 2023

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Nao HAYASHI (UNESCO World Heritage Centre) and Sharif Shams Imon (ICOMOS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Reactive Monitoring Mission to the World Heritage property ‘Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple’ was conducted from 9 to 13 January 2023 at the request of the World Heritage Committee by Decisions **43 COM 7B.75** (Baku, June 2019) and **44 COM 7B.150** (Fuzhou/online, June 2021).

The Mission’s main tasks were to “*assess the state of conservation of the property, and in particular the implementation of the revised Management Plan, the ongoing work to document and conserve the property, progress with the Visitor Management Strategy and the proposed minor boundary modification to expand the property’s buffer zone*”.

The inscription of the Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple in 1991, under the name of ‘Golden Temple of Dambulla’, the change of the management responsibility from the Central Cultural Funds to the Temple Authority in 1996, was reported. The issues of coordination and conservation needs were raised several times.

In 2019, the State Party submitted a retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, and with its adoption by the Committee, the property’s significance was enlarged to embrace natural and intangible values.

The preservation of the property thus needs to consider two remarkable and interconnected features of the temple. On the one hand, the temple is composed of natural caves decorated with mural paintings and sculptures of exceptional artistic and religious values, and on the other hand, maintained by the temple authorities as a place of pilgrimage and living worship, where devotees dedicate their time for prayer, contemplation, and offerings.

The critical issue to the sustainable preservation of the temple is thus to make these two aspects mutually supporting and compatible. The cooperation and mutual understanding between the secular and religious authorities involved in safekeeping these aspects is fundamental to guarantee the viability of the temple as a living World Heritage property.

Combined with field trips and interactions with stakeholders both in Colombo and Dambulla, the visit shed light on numerous and persistent concerns which should guide the course of actions to be implemented in the physical conservation, documentation and institutional cooperation, which involve stakeholders beyond the heritage and religious authorities, such as the development authorities.

The components above will collectively contribute to the sustainability and safeguarding of the Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple and its attributes in a greater zone.

Appraising realities, trends and the need for immediate and long-term future, the Mission’s recommendations seek to address the issues practically and build trust across the board.

Mission Findings

Overall state of conservation of the property and the conditions of authenticity and integrity

The Mission assesses that the physical attributes identified in the SOUV (such as the cave temple structure, mural paintings and statues), their authenticity and integrity stand still. However, the conservation of attributes is affected by two primary issues: **the pace of response to factors affecting the attributes is slower than the rate of damage to them, and the lack of recognition and inclusion of attributes that contribute to the property’s OUV in the property and buffer zone boundaries**. Without urgently identifying and tackling the root causes of damage, their state of conservation may be threatened to a critical degree in the coming years.

The Revised Management Plan

The study of the revised Management Plan, the legal tools and the institutional setting allowed the Mission to evaluate the fundamental needs for strengthening the management framework by creating an enabling environment for both secular and religious authorities to work more closely and concretely as a joint force.

A need for a shift in the management approach from solving individual problems to addressing issues related to each attribute of the OUV to make the most out of limited financial and human resources given the current national circumstances was also noted.

Implementation of the revised Management Plan

Slow implementation of the Management Plan for several reasons was noted during the mission.

Visitor management

A suitable visitor management strategy is yet to be established primarily because of the different approaches to the preservation of living heritage place between the two key stakeholders.

Minor boundary modification

There are inconsistencies between the boundary description in the SOUV and the maps presented in various State Party documents, including the draft Management Plan 2019. Various official maps and documents delineate the buffer zone differently and they are not based on any sound assessment of the long-term protection needs of the property. The delineation and protection layers of the buffer zone should be considered against the vision that the national authorities bear for the future of the World Heritage site and its environment.

Governance and management structure and the planning capacity

There is a persistent power imbalance between the religious and secular authorities involved in the management of the World Heritage property, making effective management of the property less effective.

Human and financial resources for the conservation and management of the property

While the existing human resource of the bodies responsible for taking care of the property is sufficient, the property can benefit from international partnerships and technical guidance. The ongoing financial crisis in the country is affecting financial recourse availability.

State of documentation of the mural paintings and sculptures

The current manual system of documenting mural paintings and sculptures can greatly benefit from adopting more systematic methods and improving its data management system.

Other issues negatively affecting the property

Several critical and emerging issues, such as climate change and urban development, are recommended to be addressed in the Management Plan.

List of Mission Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, the Mission recommends and invites the State Party to take the actions below. Please see also the conclusion at the end of the report.

Conservation/Preservation of Attributes within the Inscribed Property and Buffer Zones

1. Preventive intervention should be prioritized, and identifying the root cause of water damage to the artwork inside the cave shrines and determining (a) sustainable solution(s) to arrest the expansion of the problem should be expedited. A multidisciplinary research approach that includes geomorphological, hydrological, and topographic factors and human actions in the vicinity of the property should be considered. A plan to tackle these important challenges should also be clearly stated in the property's Management Plan. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
2. Benchmarks for various site conditions and systematic data collection and analysis, regular monitoring should be established, and actions concerning various types of damage and effectiveness of conservation interventions should be reviewed. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
3. Establish a system for recording condition assessment, conservation actions and monitoring data – both qualitative and quantitative – digitally and link it to an accessible trend analysis system. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
4. Differences between the primary stakeholders concerning the use of 3D laser scanning in documenting the property should be resolved. Examples of the use of laser scanning in documenting comparable sites and the demonstration of 3D data's use in documentation, damage assessment, estimation of conservation work, heritage interpretation and public education may be explored as a persuasion tool. Experts in such technologies may be invited to explain with scientific data the safety of laser scanning technology. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Documentation

5. An inventory of all historical and current records related to the property should be prepared and indexed with appropriate cross-references. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
6. Identify gaps in current records by analyzing the documentation inventory and base future documentation activity plans on the analysis. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
7. Adopt digital technologies in recording data, quantifying the data where appropriate and linking the data to a management information system. **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**

Governance and Management

Revised Management Plan

8. Restructure the Management Plan and categorize management issues by linking them to specific attributes of the OUV of the property **PRIORITY: HIGH**
9. Incorporate baseline information in the Management Plan and link them to monitoring the work progress for each attribute. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
10. Incorporate the archaeological remains at the base of the Dambulla rock (a monastic chapter house, bo-tree temple, dagoba), rock shelters and caves reflecting historical phases of the site's development from the megalithic period to the present time in the Management Plan more explicitly. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

11. Further elaborate a vision ensuring the physical safety, the necessary level of preservation of the attributes of the OUV of the property and the quality of experience of visitors, which can guide the Visitor Management Strategy (see below section) **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Visitor Management Strategy

12. Based on the abovementioned vision and visitor data on the number and movement pattern, a combination of various visitor management strategies should be adopted by adapting to the living nature of the property rather than focussing on controlling the visitor number alone. The most effective visitor management strategy may include establishing, promoting, and implementing codes of visitor conduct, hardening vulnerable areas, pricing, spatial and time distribution of visitors, and interpretation and public education programmes that aim at heightening visitors' understanding of the property's religious and heritage values and making them mindful of their actions. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
13. Develop a training programme and enforce mandatory training for all guides and personnel of the property who oversee visitors to inform visitors of the codes of conduct to be observed during the visits. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

The proposed minor boundary modification to expand the property's buffer zone

14. Establish legally enforceable property boundaries, ensuring all attributes contributing to the OUV of the property are included and ensure the highest level of protection. The boundary delineation should be based on careful consideration of both cultural (tangible and intangible) and natural attributes and historical layers of human interactions with the place over two millennia. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
15. Establish legally enforceable buffer zone boundaries for the property. The buffer zone area delineation should be based on the principle of offering maximum and long-term protection to the OUV attributes from current and potential threats arising from development activities within and around the property as well as from other factors identified through systematic risk assessment. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Management structure

16. Include in the Management Plan a mission statement of the Management Committee with a clear definition of roles and interconnections between religious and secular authorities involved in the property's preservation. Urgent measures should be taken to resolve differences between the management authorities by implementing an effective dialogue mechanism on the decision-making and sharing of responsibilities through a mediator if necessary. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
17. By means of a sub-decree or regulation and explicit mention to the Antiquities Ordinance, specify the obligation of cooperation of all stakeholders, religious and secular, for the preservation of the World Heritage properties (inscribed and buffer zones) and other connected and relevant ancient properties; **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**
18. Incorporate a specific mention of the World Heritage properties in Sri Lanka in UDA policies and regulations clarify to ensure the UDA plans recognizes the necessity to protect the OUV of the properties from future development; **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**
19. Evaluate the current human resources and identify the gaps to fill in light of the most pressing needs for the preservation of the property regularly; **PRIORITY: HIGH**

20. Assign dedicated personnel to seek and coordinate international cooperation in response to the most pressing needs in conservation and researching, and drafting applications and proposals; **PRIORITY: WHENEVER NECESSARY**

Others

21. Integrate policies on climate change responses and harmony between heritage preservation and development into the Management Plan. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

THE PROPERTY

The **Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple** was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1991 as a cultural property. In 2019, a retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) of the property was approved by the World Heritage Committee, also diversifying values and attributes associated with the OUV of the property, such as the natural environment and intangible heritage.

Inscribed under the criteria (i) and (vi), the property, a sacred pilgrimage site for 22 centuries, is the cave monastery with its five sanctuaries, and the largest, best-preserved cave-temple complex in Sri Lanka. The Buddhist mural paintings (covering an area of 2,100 m²) are of particular importance, as are the 157 statues.

(see the complete Statement of the Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/561/>)

The elements of attributes associated with OUV, integrity and authenticity as stated in the SOUV at the time of the property's inscription on the World Heritage List in 1991 and then revised in 2019, are tabulated below. The Mission's analysis and views are based on these elements.

Note: The report contains references to attributes which contribute to, support, or sustain the OUV of the property that are shown in the table above, which have a direct relationship with the original attributes that represent the thinking back in 1991 and revised in 2019. The Mission recognizes that contemporary concepts and terms have a place in this report when reference is being made to the three pillars of OUV, for example, the examination of intactness and wholeness in respect of integrity and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in respect of maintaining connections to spirituality, place, and feeling, in continuity.

Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)	Attributes supporting OUV
<p>A living Buddhist site keeping with a longstanding tradition</p> <p>Dambulla is an important shrine in the Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka, remarkable for its association with the longstanding and widespread tradition of living Buddhist ritual practices and pilgrimage for more than two millennia. (criterion vi)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consists of a series of five cave shrines ● Inhabited by forest-dwelling Buddhist monks since the 3rd century BCE ● Evolution into the largest and most outstanding Buddhist complex in the Southern and South-eastern Asian region ● Showcasing innovative approaches to interior layout and decoration ● Associated living Buddhist ritual practices and continuous royal patronage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Several renovation and refurbishing programmes before assuming their present interior forms in the 18th century

<p>Uniqueness of the vast internal spaces of the cave shrines</p> <p>The monastic ensemble of Dambulla is an outstanding example of the religious art and expression of Sri Lanka and South and Southeast Asia. The cave shrine, 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 (i))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not compartmentalized but spatially differentiated by a deliberate and subtle arrangement of polychrome sculpture of exceptional craftsmanship and decorated with brilliant compositions of mural paintings. • This spatial hierarchy and purposive interior layout devoid of physical divisions lead the devotees systematically through the spaces from one ritual function to the next. • Remarkable site in the Buddhist world for its association with the continuous tradition of living Buddhist ritual practices and pilgrimage for more than two millennia.
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<p>Integrity</p>	<p>The property includes all the elements and components related to different facets of creativity that are necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, such as the polychrome statuary either moulded with stucco or clay or carved out of the living rock within the cave shrines, mural paintings, and interior layout. The physical fabric of these elements is in good condition and has been preserved to express this value. The property currently does not suffer from any adverse effects of development or other pressures.</p>
<p>Authenticity</p>	<p>The overall form and design, as well as the materials and substance of the mural paintings that cover the interior surfaces of the cave shrines and the rock-cut and moulded statuary within the caves, have been retained. No interventions have been carried out to change the overall form and design of the interior spaces of the caves or the location and positioning of sculptures and paintings in relation to their interior layouts. The interior spaces are still being used by pilgrims for Buddhist ritual practices, thus maintaining the original use and function as well as the spirit and feeling of their interior spaces.</p>
<p>Protection and management requirements</p>	<p>Under the ownership of the Asgiriya Chapter of Buddhist monks, the property has been declared a Protected Monument under the legal protection of the Department of Archaeology of the Government of Sri Lanka, which administers the Antiquities Ordinance of 1940 (rev. 1998) at the national level.</p>

	<p>No interventions to the property are allowed without the permission of the Department of Archaeology.</p> <p>Conservation and monitoring of the paintings and polychrome objects are the responsibility of the Department of Archaeology.</p> <p>The monks conduct the daily rituals and are responsible for the general maintenance, protection, and upkeep of the property.</p> <p>Part of the gate collection from foreign tourists visiting the property is used by the monks for these purposes.</p> <p>The area extending up to the edge of entire rock outcrop has been designated a buffer zone under the purview of the Department of Archaeology.</p> <p>The religious character of the property is further safeguarded by the declaration of the whole area around the rock outcrop as a sacred area by the National Physical Planning Department.</p> <p>The main challenges ahead are conserving the paintings, dealing with the carrying capacity in view of increased pilgrimage, mainly during religious festivities, and achieving better results in conservation and regular maintenance.</p> <p>Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property over time will require taking measures to enhance the management, conservation, and presentation of the property. These include preparing a heritage management framework, a master development plan, and a visitor management plan, and establishing a regular monitoring regime.</p>
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Summary of past World Heritage Committee decisions and issues

In 1999, the Committee expressed its concerns on the general deterioration of the property, following the technical Mission of ICOMOS in 1998. It observed the fact that there had been no conservation work since the inscription of the property in 1991 and requested the State Party to take urgent measures for its enhanced conservation, preservation and management.

In 2014, the Committee placed the property under the reacting monitoring process by **Decision 38COM 7B.22**, by expressing concerns over the issue relating to the relevance of the management mechanism then solely assumed by the Temple Authority without actual participation of the technical institutions. Following the ICOMOS technical mission in 2015, the Committee **Decision 40COM 7B. 46** in 2016 pointed out the lack of implementation of the Management Plan, which increases the problematic of conservation and pilgrim/visitor management of the property. It suggested, in particular, the establishment of a site management committee and the revision and updating of the Management Plan clearly stipulating the requirement to include both religious and secular authorities in the management. The recommendation also mentioned the need to develop a Conservation Strategy, as part of the revised Management Plan, to address the conservation needs, develop a pilgrim/visitor Management Strategy to control the number of pilgrims/visitors allowed into each cave, as well as a policy prohibiting flash photography within the caves.

In 2018, the Committee, by **Decision 42COM 7B.16** acknowledged with appreciation the advice relating to the improvement of the management mechanism, composed of the Temple Authority, the Department of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Funds and the preparation of the Statement of Conservation Strategy framing the priorities for mural paintings, sculptures and other attributes. It also reiterated the request for revising the Management Plan with specific guidance and establishing a comprehensive Tourism Management Strategy to promote a balanced approach considering the role of the property as a pilgrim site, the vital need for the conservation of Outstanding Universal Value. It also requested the State Party to submit technical details on projects for wall painting and sculpture remedial treatment and laser cleaning, floor tile replacement, and hydro-geological projects.

In 2019, the Committee approved the change of the property's name to 'Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple' by **Decision 43 COM 8B.1**. The Committee **Decision 43COM 7B.75 in 2019** further acknowledged the State Party's completion of the revision of the Management Plan and the constitution of a Management Committee, including members from both the temple authorities and government officials, while reiterating its request to elaborate a comprehensive Visitor Management Strategy, adopting a balanced approach to the property's OUV, its role as a pilgrimage site, its conservation requirements and the needs of visitors. Importantly, the Decision also requested the State Party to seek the means to ensure the transmission of the traditional skills to preserve the mural paintings and sculptures. A joint WHC/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission was recommended to evaluate various aspects of the site management, governance, and actual state of conservation of the property and its OUV.

SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

National Legislation for Heritage

There are three major legislations for preserving World Heritage properties in Sri Lanka.

- a. Antiquities ordinance (AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE BETTER PRESERVATION OF THE ANTIQUITIES OF SRI LANKA, AND OF SITES AND BUILDINGS OF THE HISTORICAL OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN SRI LANKA) N°9 of 1940 (most recent revision by act N° 12 of 2005)
- b. Central Cultural Fund Act N° 57 of 1980
- c. Urban Development Authority Act (amended) 1982

The Antiquities Ordinance of 1940, amended several times and most recently in 2005, provides a solid and comprehensive legal framework on various subjects relating to preserving and protecting heritage in Sri Lanka. Besides the clear provisions to protect monuments, archaeological reserves and national antiquities, trees of a certain age are also granted the protective status, and property rights of antiquities during licenced excavations or by chance discovery are well covered. While there is no specific mention of World Heritage properties, existing legal provisions seem coherent and comprehensive to ensure the legal protection of the inscribed monuments and archaeological zones. Considering its historical nature and attributes, the Dambulla temple was declared by the Department of Archaeology (DoA) as a 'Protected Monument' in 1957 under Article 18 of the Antiquities Ordinance. Article 20 of the Ordinance allows the Chief Incumbent Monk as the supervisor of the temple, and "the Director-General of Archaeology may enter into a written agreement providing for the due conservation of such monument and its protection from the danger of destruction or removal and damage by neglect or injudicious treatment". This allows the DoA to undertake conservation activities by employing its conservators or issuing a licence to a competent third-party agency to carry-out the conservation and restoration work. Article 24 of the Ordinance stipulates that any interventions with the World Heritage buffer zones require the approval of the Director-General of the DoA, who ensures that there will be no impacts on the OUV of the property.

The Central Cultural Funds (CCF) Act provides specific measures to implement the Antiquities Ordinance, especially in terms of financial coverage and coordination mechanism. It is important to note that the CCF provides vital support to the safeguarding of various World Heritage sites, including Dambulla. Its technical expertise should be valorized and integrated into the management mechanism of the concerned World Heritage sites. The CCF obtained a licence from the DoA to ensure the preservation activities at Dambulla in conformity with the two abovementioned legal documents. Since the early 1980s to mid-1990s, CCF has led archaeological excavation, documentation and conservation activities at the Dambulla site and its surrounding area.

The Urban Development Authority (UDA) Act deals with the planning process of urban areas and thus clarifies procedures for setting and/or modifying boundaries of the World Heritage property.

Institutional Framework

In Sri Lanka, the main responsibility for the conservation and management of World Heritage properties is entrusted to the Department of Archaeology (DoA), part of the Ministry of

Buddhissana, Religious and Cultural Affairs. The particularity of this World Heritage property of Dambulla is that it is placed under the primary authority of the Temple authorities, which supervise the daily rituals and safekeeping. Following several recommendations of the World Heritage Committee as well as those issued by the technical missions, the Management Committee was established in 2019 to facilitate the dialogue among different stakeholders.

Role of religious communities

Archaeological evidence bears testament to a history of over 2200 years of human occupation around the Rangiri Dambulla Cave temple. The area was populated by monks following the arrival of Buddhism on the island. Rock shelter residences were established at that time. Since the first transformation of the uppermost group of shelters on Dambulla's South face into shrines in the 1st Century BCE, it was intensified between the 5th and 13th centuries with cave-temples extended into the sheltering rock and brick walls constructed to screen the caves. By the end of the 12th century, sculptures were introduced by King Nissanka Malla to the caves on the upper terrace. The restoration and refurbishment of the upper terrace marked the next major phase of the development in the 18th century, following a longstanding tradition. Painting or overpainting of the surfaces are of characteristic of the Kandy School of the late 18th century. Throughout the 19th century, following the loss of royal patronage in 1815, periodic repainting of sculptures and deteriorating surfaces continued. In the 1930s, the veranda was rebuilt, adopting a mixture of European and Asian architectural styles, and the complex's entrance porch was reconstructed in a conjectural 18th style.

The community of monks has been the primary custodians of the rock shrines, which continues to organize the ritual practices and are responsible for collecting donations and entrance fees.

During the Mission, the team met with the Chief Incumbent Monk at the Roland Silva Research Centre at Dambulla. There was an introductory remark from the Chief Incumbent Monk, and the WHC explained the purpose of the Mission and the necessity of preserving OUV, through the two main pillars, the preservation of the built and physical attributes and that of maintaining its nature of living heritage, without compromising each other. This was said to be well received by the Chief Incumbent Monk. Further needed may be a series of dialogues where the religious and secular authorities share the view relating to the necessity of preserving the site and agree on how they cooperate to fulfil their respective responsibility.

THE MISSION

The World Heritage Committee, by its **Decisions 43 COM 7B.75** (Baku, June 2019) and **44 COM 7B.150** (Fuzhou/online, June 2021), requested the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission.

The Mission, therefore, evaluated the state of conservation, implementation of management tools, and governance through discussions with primary stakeholders, the closer study of documents and field visits and elaborated specific recommendations for the State Party and/or the World Heritage Committee.

ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY

Issue 1: Conservation/Preservation of Attributes within the Inscribed Property and Buffer Zones

TOR 1: Overall state of conservation of the property and the conditions of integrity and authenticity and protection and management

The previous missions, Periodic Reporting and State of Conservation Reports identified various conservation issues. A few have been resolved, and there are ongoing conservation works to address several of them. A few issues are currently under study by the State Party to identify appropriate conservation and management approaches and tools to address them.

Table 1 presents the issues concerning the conservation of attributes within the inscribed property and buffer zone.

Table 1: Qualitative Assessment of Specific Conservation Issues and Measures Taken

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
Overall				
A series of five cave shrines.	<p>The draft Management Plan identified the following issues:</p> <p>Mining or construction work in areas geologically connected to the Dambulla rock may affect the entire property structure.</p> <p>The potential impacts of large infrastructure development projects, such as the Central Expressway Section VI construction within the vicinity of the WH property</p>	<p>While there are no ongoing threats of such nature currently, the potential impacts from the construction of Section IV of the Central Expressway that will connect Dambulla with various urban centres, including Colombo, must be carefully assessed. There are two potential sources of impacts on the OUV of this project: 1. Construction and operation</p>	<p>Depending on the buffer zone delineation, which is currently unclear, the potential impacts of the expressway on the property can be moderate to critical.</p> <p>Big improvements in connectivity often trigger large-scale urban transformations , especially at nodal points. Dambulla's strategic location within the country and the WH</p>	<p>Article 40 of the Antiquities Ordinance empowers the DG DoA "to conduct an archaeological impact assessment of areas that may be affected by development, industrial or other projects proposed by the Government or any person and implement any mitigatory measures that may be required."</p> <p>Impact assessment is a powerful tool to affect sustainable development. However, a better pre-emptive</p>

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
	should be carefully assessed.	of the expressway and 2. Urban and economic development triggered by improved connectivity.	property's location at the junction of major roads in Dambulla are likely to increase the development pressure in the area.	approach is establishing buffer zones with adequate OUV protections. The recently proposed changes to the Sacred Area boundaries leave little or no space between the boundaries and the rock outcrop edge in critical locations. UDA's proposed boundary revision assessment requires careful consideration of all future development scenarios.
	Forest fires and fires caused by faulty electrical work are credible risks for the site. Terrorism, theft and vandalism are other risks that might affect the entire property or a large part of it.	Currently, there is no risk management plan or system for the property. The fire safety standards of electrical installations, including the recently installed lighting fixtures, may not have been followed properly (Figure 1).	Fire and terrorism can cause significant and irreversible loss of attributes. Theft and vandalism can cause permanent damage to the attributes.	No specific actions have been taken to address these issues. The draft Management Plan acknowledges the problem (Issues #33-36) and proposes actions primarily about preparing plans for these.
Inhabited by forest-dwelling Buddhist monks since the 3rd century BCE.	The monks' historical habitats (90+ caves) on Dambulla rock have not been systematically	The five cave shrines' artwork and sculptures are the primary focus of all conservation efforts.	The nature or pattern of change in these caves and their settings cannot be ascertained	No specific actions have been taken to address these issues. The draft Management Plan

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
	studied, nor have they been subject to any systematic conservation efforts (Figure 2).		without baseline data. These caves are mostly absent in the interpretation narratives of the WH property.	acknowledges it (Issue #14).
Evolution into the largest and most outstanding Buddhist complex in the Southern and South-eastern Asian region.	All caves identified as part of the Buddhist complex (90+) and other religious structures on the Dambulla rock and its base are integral to the complex's evolutionary process. However, the conservation efforts are focused primarily on the five cave shrines.	The property and buffer zone boundaries are unclear, and the WH attributes are not explicitly articulated in the property's management documents. The authorized heritage discourse of the property focuses on the five cave shrines.	Important attributes may remain neglected in the property's protection, conservation, management, and interpretation or become lost over time without any knowledge of their loss.	No specific actions have been taken to address these issues. The draft Management Plan acknowledges this issue (Issue #14).
Creativity				
Innovative approaches to interior layout and decoration.	The condition of mural paintings and sculptures inside the caves is deteriorating. Multiple deterioration processes of religious artworks have been identified over the years. (Figure 3 & Figure 4)	The principal causes of the deterioration of the mural paintings and sculptures are: 1. Damage by water seepage through the rock 2. Potter wasp nesting 3. Fungi growth	Mural paintings are in the most precarious condition. While these are longstanding issues, the damage process has not been arrested. In many cases, the damages are permanent and may not be reversible.	The draft Management Plan 2019 acknowledges the inadequacy of the existing knowledge regarding methods, tools and materials used in creating the artwork in the past. The State Party has carried out various research and
Deliberate and subtle arrangement of polychrome sculpture of exceptional craftsmanship and decorated with brilliant				

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
compositions of mural paintings.		<p>4. Direct visitor actions, such as direct physical contact with the painted surfaces or sculptures, and indirect impacts through the change in relative humidity and ambient temperature because of a large number of 'visitors' presence inside the caves.</p> <p>5. Detachment or separation of paint layers.</p>		<p>testing activities to better understand the factors affecting the paintings and sculptures and to identify appropriate interventions to address them (Figure 5). Recommendations of the 2015 ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission have been partly addressed. While the manual but slow graphic documentation of the artwork is continuing (Figure 6), the more effective and faster 3-D laser scanning project is on hold because of the opposition to this technology by one key stakeholder. In general, more efforts are aimed at remedial treatment. Preventive measures should be prioritized to address the source of the issues affecting the OUV.</p>

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
Spatial hierarchy and purposive interior layout devoid of physical divisions leading devotees systematically through the spaces from one ritual function to the next.	No particular conservation issues have been identified.			
Several renovation and refurbishing programmes before assuming their present interior forms in the 18th century.	No particular conservation issues have been identified.			
Living tradition				
Associated living Buddhist ritual practices and continuous royal patronage.	There are no issues related to the continuous use of the property as a Buddhist religious site. However, overcrowding affecting normal ritual operations occurs on certain occasions.	There is a lack of a visitor management system.	Overcrowding can affect the spiritual environment and routine operations of religious activities.	The current approach to address overcrowding is exploring options for controlling the number of visitors. The application of various other visitor management tools such as marketing, hardening of site, spatial and time distribution of visitors, and interpretation and public education has not been
Continuous tradition of living Buddhist ritual practices and pilgrimage.				

Attribute	Issue	Source of the issue	Severity of (potential) impact & trend	Current conservation effort
				explored adequately.

The above analysis points to six critical issues:

1. The conservation works are on-going, and the concerned departments are sincere in preserving the property. However, the general conservation approach is mostly reactionary to most known problems, and the speed of remedial actions is slower than that of deterioration.
2. While slowing down the deterioration process, the symptomatic treatment approach is inadequate for arresting the most pressing issue: the loss of wall paintings due to water seepage through rock cracks, fungi attack, wasp nesting and visitor impacts. The historical water dripping point in cave #2 has acquired a ritualistic value and is relatively stable. However, a previous study that has helped identify the origin of the water seeping into the caves did not explain the reasons for the appearance of new areas of water damage or their gradual expansion over time. Since such problems can be an outcome of complex interactions of geomorphological, hydrological, and topographic factors, or human actions in the vicinity of the property, a multidisciplinary and holistic research programme is urgently needed to identify a sustainable solution to the problem.
3. Various research and data recording measures have been undertaken to understand the nature and the extent of the problems following the previous mission recommendations. However, there is a strong need for establishing benchmarks for condition assessment, monitoring, and reviewing the effectiveness of all types of conservation interventions and management actions.
4. The current mostly manual and fragmented documentation process is not fast enough to address the dynamic processes that are affecting the property.
5. Differences among the primary stakeholders concerning appropriate conservation approaches are affecting the implementation or progress of conservation measures. Stalling of the 3D laser scanning of the cave interiors is a prime example of its impact.
6. The connection between the SOUV, World Heritage attribute identification and property boundary delineation has not been clearly established in the official and legal documents. Such ambiguity makes a proper assessment of conservation and management effectiveness difficult.

Figure 1: Electrical installations



Figure 2: One of the many caves not under active care



Figure 3: Factors affecting the sculptures



Figure 4: Factors affecting the artwork



Figure 5: Restoration of mural paintings



Figure 6: Manual documentation of mural paintings



Authenticity and Integrity

The authenticity of the WH property is well-maintained. Also, there are no immediate issues with the integrity of the property.

The draft Management Plan 2019 has identified blasting and quarrying in rocks geologically connected to the Dambulla rock as a potential threat to the property. The effect of such activities on the integrity of the site is additionally discussed under the discussion on boundary modification.

Authenticity of materials and techniques

There is a general practice of using traditional techniques and materials in the conservation process. Modern conservation techniques have been employed in certain circumstances. However, careful consideration to maintaining authenticity has been given to selecting such techniques.

Actions by the State Party for preservation

Actions by the State Party are limited to addressing various requests and recommendations made by the WH Committee at various times in the past. However, disagreements between the DoA, CCF and TA on appropriate courses of action in some instances (e.g., the use of 3-D laser scanning for documentation, visitor control, etc.) and a lack of technical and financial resources have either put some of them on hold or have slowed down the progress.

Cautionary Comments

Assessment of Gaps

Property and buffer zone boundary delineation at a scale and with appropriate details sufficient to enforce legal protection and management decision-making is urgently needed (more on this under discussion on boundary modification).

Slow and fragmented recording and documentation processes make the objective monitoring of the progression, containment, or regression of adverse changes to the core attributes of the property difficult. Quantifying the damaged or affected areas and connecting them to a management information system is inefficient in manual hand-drawn documentation on paper.

The potential impacts of climate change on the attributes of OUV must be incorporated into the management plan.

Management of buffer zones

There are some ambiguities regarding the buffer zone. The SOUV mentions the Dambulla rock edges as the buffer zone boundaries. However, many other caves and religious structures directly associated with the monastic history of the property exist within it. Those caves are not under any active care.

A change in the Sacred Area boundaries proposed by UDA may expose the property and the buffer to new issues. However, a proper impact assessment of these changes will depend on the details of the changes and planned land use in and around the area. See the discussion on boundary modification for more on this issue.

Issue 2: Governance and management

TOR 3: A review of the revised Management Plan content

The national authority shared a presentation on the state of the revision of the Management Plan during the inauguration meeting of 9 January 2023 and sent to the Mission the latest

version of the revised Management Plan. The Mission evaluated the current structure and provisions of the Management Plan in light of the challenges which should be addressed to optimize the resources for the preservation of the property and suggests the following main points to consider:

- 1) The presented action plan with 37 issues in the Management Plan could be restructured following the in-depth analysis of the attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value to adopt a focused approach in addressing issues related to each attribute instead of treating each issue separately. It would allow the management authority to group required actions, identify main stakeholders and monitor the progress by clusters of issues linked to each attribute;
- 2) Baseline information, wherever possible, could be collected and included in the Management Plan to facilitate qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the work progress for each attribute;
- 3) The Management Plan could more explicitly include the group of archaeological remains (a monastic chapter house, bo-tree temple, dagoba), rock shelters and caves reflecting historical phases of the site's development and areas from the megalithic period to our time. These are also the attributes related to the long-lasting historical tradition of retreat, which was closely linked to the five major rock temples. These attributes are well included in the ICOMOS initial evaluation (1989) and mentioned in the technical review of the ICOMOS of 2020.
- 4) The Management Plan could also include, in consultation with the Temple Authority, a vision relating to ensuring the physical safety, the necessary level of preservation of the property and the comfort and quality experience for its visitors. Such a vision would guide the need for establishing codes of conduct for pilgrims and visitors in the interests of ensuring quality experience as well as of preventing risks generated by their behaviour toward the environment and physical structures of the rock shrines;
- 5) The Management Plan could state the Mission of the Management Committee, including a proposal of a clear definition of roles and interconnection among religious and secular stakeholders, modality of decision-making on the preservation, means and modality of a regular consultation among the Temple Authorities, the Department of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Funds;
- 6) The Management Plan should elaborate on a particular section showing its planning to tackle the most challenging and urgent requirements for preserving the property's physical attributes. This, in particular, calls for identifying the root causes of the environmental issues and biological processes in the main caves, such as high humidity, water ingress, condensation, and microbiological activities; they include the requirements for environmental monitoring, analysis of water flow courses, in order to identify the most effective means of mitigating further deterioration while keeping to applying the reactive treatments to the most damaged parts and elements.

TOR 4: Implementation of the revised Management Plan

The implementation of the revised Management Plan has known slow progress due to the recent pandemic and financial crisis of the country. The most recent State of Conservation

report from the State Party shows the progress in some fields, such as improving the working relationship between DoA and CCF, sample collection, periodic monitoring programme, and educational material preparation, yet many core conservational issues are reported to be still under consideration due to the lack in resources. The situation also suggested a more focused approach and devolved around each attribute of the Outstanding Universal Value to enable the prioritization and thematic approach to the preservation of the OUV.

TOR 5: Visitor Management Plan, including a Tourism Management Strategy and a Pilgrim Management Strategy

The State Party explained the reluctance of the Temple Authority to establish such tools that are perceived as restrictive means of controlling the number of visitors. Considering the nature of the temples as living worship places, the Mission understands the reluctance and explained several times that a 'strategy' does not exclusively mean restrictive and prescriptive measures but instead visions that the stakeholders can adopt to maximize the benefit of both the visitors and the temple's conservational needs. It could be elaborated in the form of policy or codes of conduct of visitors and propagated by guides (official and informal) as mandatory guidance to visitors before visiting the temples. Figures on the visitor number and profiles need to be collected annually to inform the decisions on managing the visitors. This work would necessitate suitable mediation by a person knowledgeable of the procedures and requirements of the World Heritage properties and the religious institutions in Sri Lanka.

TOR 6: Minor boundary modification

The issue of property and buffer zone boundaries has critical implications for the protection, conservation, presentation and interpretation of the property. However, there are inconsistencies between the boundary description in the SOUV and the maps presented in various State Party documents, including the draft Management Plan 2019. These documents also refer to various legal and administrative terms concerning the boundaries. The definitions of such terms and their differences are not always apparent. For clarification, the terms are described below.

MEANINGS OF VARIOUS TERMS

Monument: "monument" means any building, or other structure or erection, or any tomb, tumulus or other place of interment, or any other immovable property of a like nature or any part or remains of the same or any other site where the material remains of historic or prehistoric human settlement or activity may be found; **and includes the site of any monument and such portion of land** adjoining such site as may be required for fencing or covering in or otherwise preserving any monument"" (Section 48, Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940).

Ancient Monument: "Ancient monuments situated on state lands and ancient trees growing in state land or any other land will be declared as ancient monument in terms of Sections 16 and 17 of the Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940 in order to secure the preservations or protection of them" (Source: [Government Information Centre](#), last updated 29 October 2009).

Protected Monument: "Ancient monuments situated on private land will be declared as protected monuments in terms of section 18 only after calling for objections in terms of section 19" (Source: [Government Information Centre](#), last updated 29 October 2009).

Archaeological Reserve: The Director General of Archaeology may declare any specified area to be an Archaeological Reserve. Cultivation, erection of structures, and destroying trees are prohibited on such land (Section 33 & 34, Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940). Note:

The Town and Country Planning Ordinance does not apply to Archaeological Reserves declared under the Antiquities Ordinance.

Sacred Area: “A Sacred Area is defined as a sacred place with a national and provincial importance for the devotees from a long time as well as a national, environmental, historical, archaeological and architectural dignity” ([Ministry of Urban Development & Sacred Area Development](#)). There are no legal provisions for National Physical Planning Department (NPPD) to plan, implement and maintain sacred areas. However, NPPD has been doing these as a traditional practice at nationally important shrines ([NPPD](#)).

Buffer Zone: With its latest amendments, the Antiquities Ordinance of 1940 does not use the term *Buffer Zone*. However, “Regulations may be made prohibiting, or restricting subject to the prescribed conditions, the erection of buildings or the carrying on of mining, quarrying, or blasting operations on any land within the prescribed distance of any ancient monument situated on State land or any protected monument” (Section 24 (1) of the Ordinance), and “orders have been made in terms of Section 24 (1) of the Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940. Accordingly, **a prescribed zone of 400 yards from the monument** will be reserved and erection of buildings, carrying on of ruining, quarrying or blasting operations will be prohibited within such reserved zone” (Source: [Government Information Centre](#), last updated 29 October 2009).

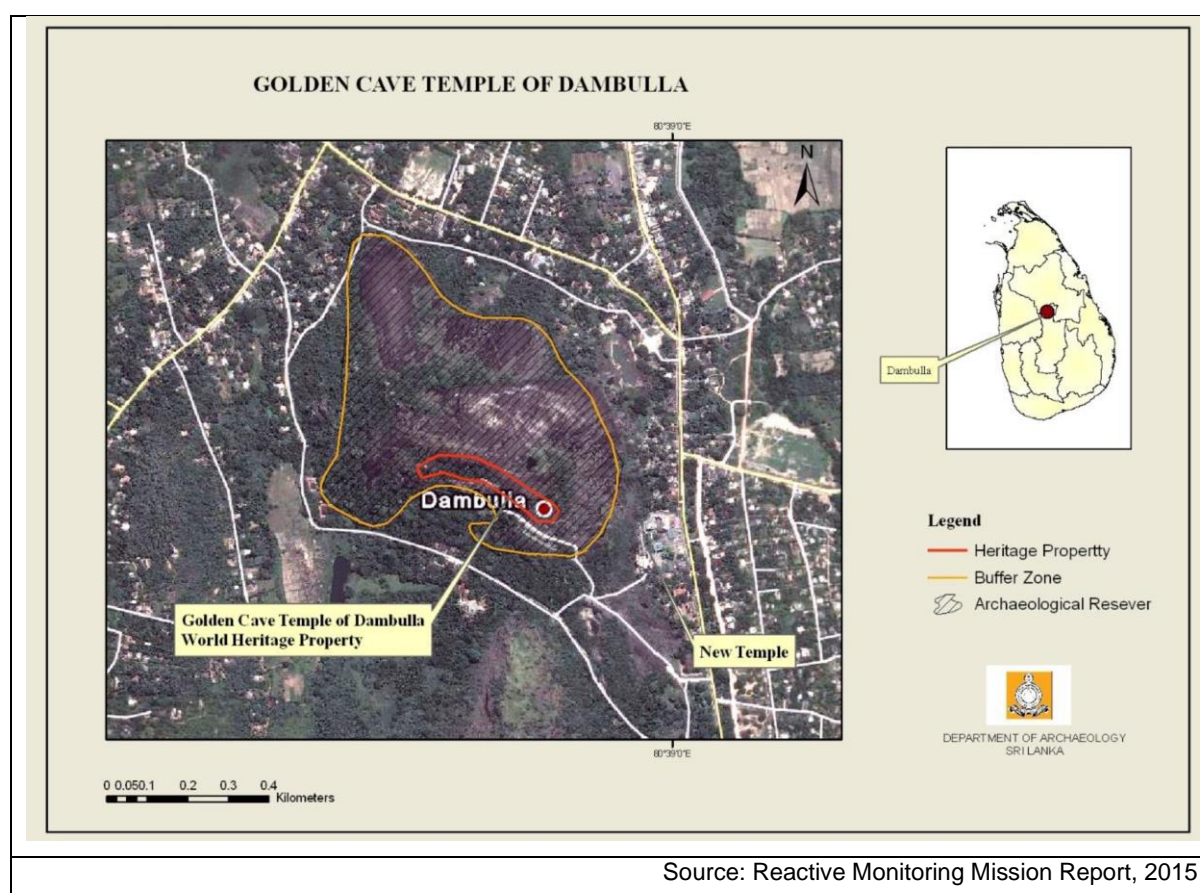
THE PROPERTY BUFFER ZONE

Various official maps and documents delineate the buffer zone, albeit inconsistently.

*No buffer zone was specified when the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List (Periodic Reporting-Cycle 2, 2012). The Retrospective SOUV, the draft of which was submitted to the WHC in 2011 and adopted by the WH Committee in its 42nd session in 2018, states, “The area extending up to **the edge of entire rock outcrop has been designated a buffer zone** under the purview of the Department of Archaeology. The religious character of the property is further safeguarded by the declaration of **the whole area around the rock outcrop as a sacred area** by the National Physical Planning Department” (Emphasis added) (SOUV, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/561/>). Refer to Figure 8 for the Dambulla Sacred Area boundaries.*

The earliest DoA map of the inscribed property and the buffer zone can be seen in the 2015 Reactive Monitoring Mission Report (Figure 7). The outlines of the two areas correspond to the SOUV’s description. However, the map’s scale is too small, and the graphics used to mark the boundaries is not precise. It should be noted that the buffer zone and Archaeological Reserve in this map share the same area.

Figure 7: Property boundaries in 2015

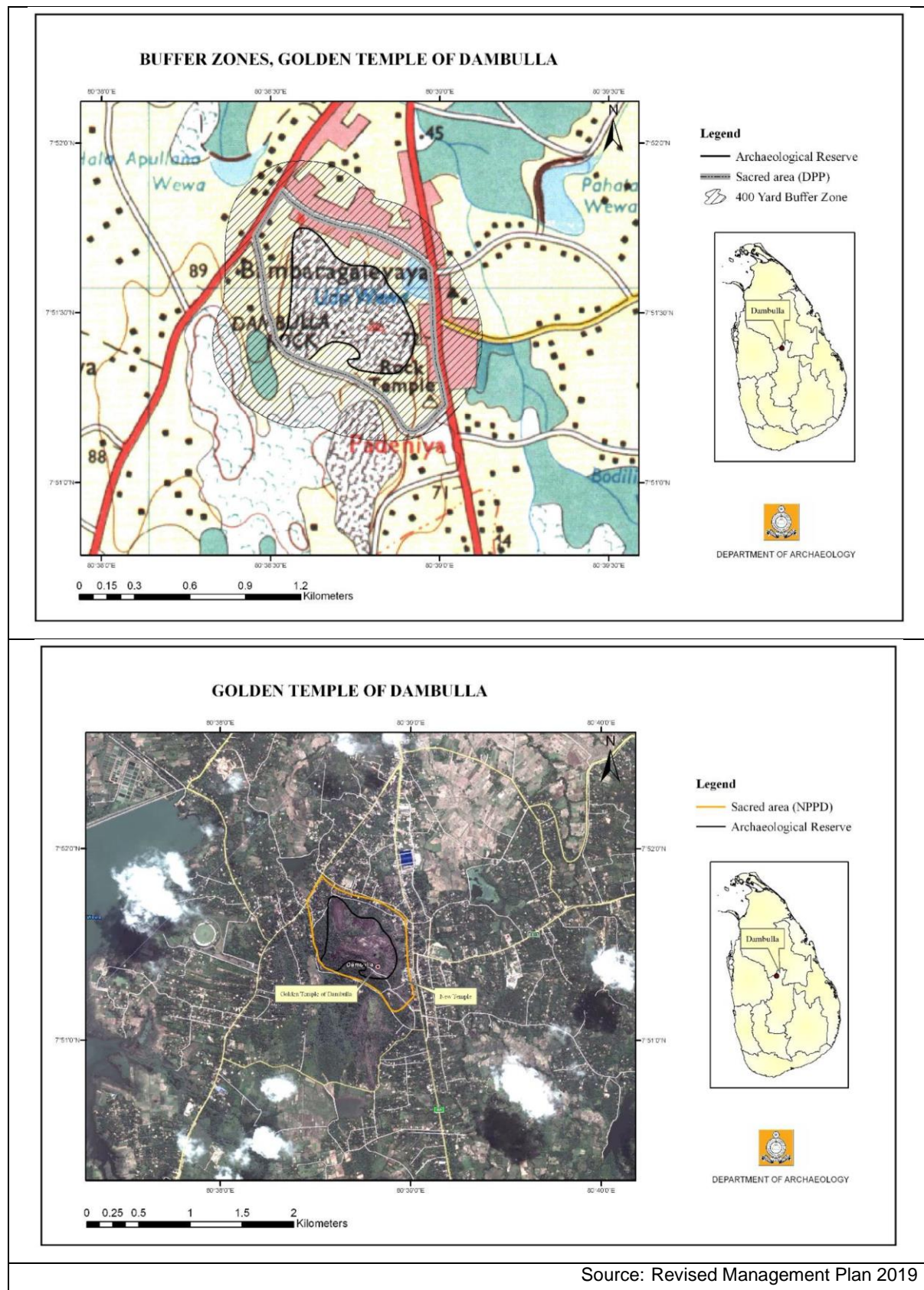


The January 2019 State of Conservation Report describes the following:

“The area extending up to the edge of the entire rock outcrop has been designated a buffer zone **(400 yards)** Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940 and is under the purview of the Department of Archaeology.” It is unclear how the “400 yards” in the above statement has been measured. The same report continues: “The religious character of the property is further safeguarded by the declaration of the **whole area around the rock outcrop as a sacred area** by the National Physical Planning Department” (Emphasis added).

In the revised Management Plan dated 2019, the Archaeological Reserve area boundaries remain unchanged. However, the buffer zone is much bigger, with a boundary line encircling the Archaeological Reserve at a 400-yard distance around the rock outcrop edge (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Boundaries in the revised Management Plan 2019

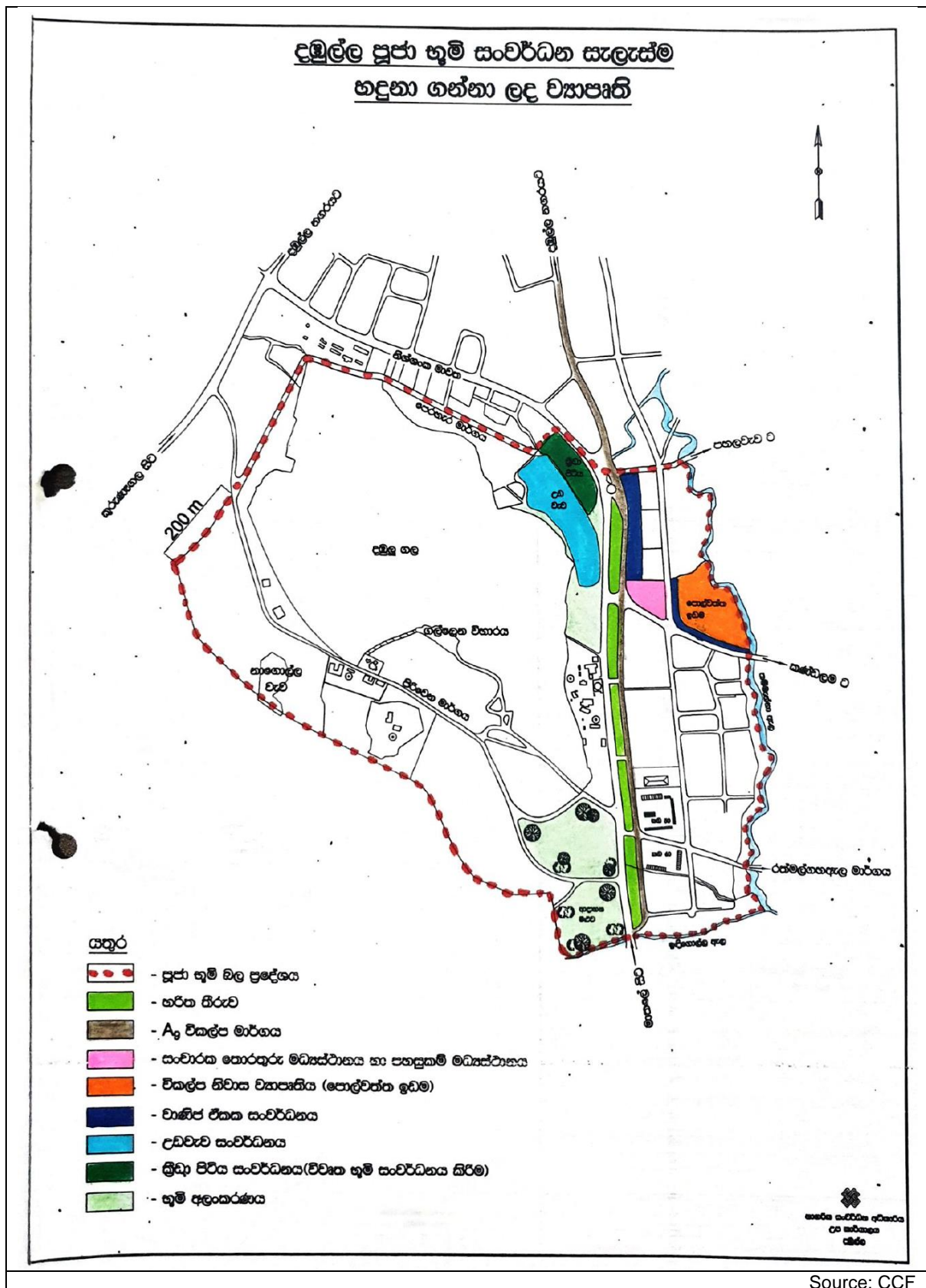


The area surrounding the rock temple was declared a Sacred Area by Gazette notification N° 137 of 16 April 1981. The National Physical Planning Department (NDDP) prepared the development plan for this area in the 1990s. In 1994, considering the need for urban development planning of the town of Dambulla, the Sacred Area was incorporated into the planning programme of the Urban Development Authority (UDA).

The State Party reported to the Mission a plan of the Urban Department Authority (UDA) to decrease the area of the buffer zones (from the current 400 yards to 200 yards from the edge of the rock). The Mission is of the opinion that the boundary modification needs to be carefully considered in light of the future that the authorities desire for the environment of the Dambulla temple complex. The SOUV explicitly mentions the sacred nature of the area of the rock as a whole, not only the temple caves and their interior. The rock itself, apart from sheltering the cave temples, represents an ensemble in the landscape of Dambulla, with its greenery and views from its top. Narrowing the boundaries too close to the rock's outskirt would lead to a development which could, in the long term, have significant impacts on the vista and atmosphere of the place.

During the Mission, it was revealed that the [Urban Development Authority](#) (UDA) had recently proposed a revision of the **Sacred Area** boundaries (Figure 9). It is in the final stage of becoming official (as per the DoA officials, it is to be gazetted soon). The boundaries of Sacred Area to its east and southwest have been expanded to include new areas. Northeast and northwest boundaries have been reduced, leaving very little and no spaces between the rock outcrop (Archaeological Reserve) and the boundaries. No explanations for the revision were available during the Mission to assess the justification of the changes.

Figure 9: UDA's revised Sacred Area boundary, 2023 (proposed)



TOR 7: Governance and management structure and the planning capacity

The persisting power imbalance between the religious and secular authorities has been reported since the time of the inscription. This still lies at the heart of the managerial challenge, as the property's Outstanding Universal Value is twofold, its remarkable artistic values of physical and religious components (mural paintings and sculptures) and its long tradition as a living worship place whose custodians are the temple authorities led by Chief Incumbent Monk. These values are mutually supporting, and attributes which carry the respective values must be preserved and maintained. To do so, mutual understanding and cooperation between two authorities are crucial. The Mission believes that further efforts and mediation support are needed to build trust and collaborate. The regular organization of the meetings of the Management Committee should be ensured with a clear agenda and points of discussion to build mutual trust and find an operational mode to work together. An advisor who can be a mediator trusted by both parties may be appointed.

Concerning the legal framework, there may be a need to clearly state in the sub-decree or amendment to the Antiquities Ordinance to specify that the preservation of World Heritage properties and any other relevant ancient properties require a mechanism of cooperation of all stakeholders, including religious and secular authorities as stakeholders. Likewise, specific mentions may be useful to supplement the UDA Act to clarify that due consideration is required for buffering potential pressures of developmental projects to the World Heritage properties in light of the OUV to be preserved.

TOR 8: Human and financial resources for the conservation and management of the property

The Ministry, DoA, the CCF and other stakeholders (ICOMOS Sri Lanka, among others) are equipped with capable professionals and highly educated experts. The past UNESCO campaigns, such as Cultural Triangle and technical cooperation, were recognized as foundations of this institutional solidity. Opportunities for the transmission of knowledge and skills should be optimized so that the younger generations benefit from the experience of elders. It goes for all fields of expertise. Dedicated personnel to seek international partnerships in researching, analyzing the most pressing need, and drafting proposals, could be helpful in streamlining various cooperation opportunities.

Issue 3: Documentation of the attributes and preservation measures

The Committee Decision requests the Mission to evaluate the state of the documentation of the attributes and to suggest the ways they could be preserved to enhance the OUV of the property.

TOR 9: State of documentation of the mural paintings and sculptures

The State Party has a tradition of manually recording mural paintings and sculptures. Bound paper volumes of graphical records of the paintings and sculptures are kept in the Dr Ronald Silva Mural Paintings Conservation & Research Centre, Dambulla. Hand-drawn records of water damage and insect nesting were also seen during the Mission. The Mission was informed that reports of assorted studies and analyses conducted on the property exist at other locations.

The following are the Mission's observations regarding the state of documentation of the mural paintings and sculptures:

1. The quality of hand drawings of the paintings and sculptures on paper is very high, with excellent workmanship.
2. Not all caves have been thoroughly documented.
3. All the drawings are available in paper version only. No digital versions exist.
4. There is no inventory of records. Therefore, the Mission could not determine the completeness of the documentation. The staff at the Centre also did not have complete information on the current state of documentation. Without the inventory and cross-referencing between various documents, the effectiveness of the records to support timely and fully informed conservation and management decisions remain difficult.
5. There are no set documentation standards. Not all drawings are dated, which means their usefulness as a management information source is limited.
6. The drawings primarily represent the outlines of the caves' artworks.
7. A few drawings record the water or insect-damaged areas of the mural paintings with colours (Figure 6). However, the data has not been quantified.
8. The documentation system is a slow and long-drawn process. Documents created through the process present snapshots of situations at the time of their creation. Any changes to the situation cannot be updated fast enough for effective conservation and management of the property.

Issue 4: Others

TOR 10: Other relevant issues negatively affecting the property

The revised Management Plan 2019 focuses primarily on the current issues affecting the property's conservation, management, and interpretation. Moreover, the OUV's narrow interpretation influences the conservation and management approach, concentrating on the five cave shrines.

Potential impacts of and resolutions to critical and emerging issues such as climate change, new infrastructure and urban development projects, and regional plans are not addressed in the Management Plan.

The current national financial crisis the State Party is experiencing will significantly curtail access to such resources for various ongoing and planned projects and programmes by the DoA and CCF. Since the crisis may last for an undetermined period while the conservation issues continue to affect the property's OUV, mobilizing support by international bodies should be actively and urgently considered.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The analysis of data collected through site visits, discussions with primary stakeholders, and review of various legal, management and conservation documents confirm the State Party's strong commitment and ongoing efforts to protect and conserve the property's OUV and its attributes. Various measures undertaken to address and implement previous missions' recommendations by the State Party have also been observed. The Mission assesses that the physical attributes identified in the SOUV (such as the cave temple structure, mural paintings and statues), their authenticity and integrity stand still. However, the Mission also identified several issues of serious to moderate concern related to the conservation of the attributes, documentation, governance and management, visitor management and property and buffer zone boundary delineation.

The conservation of attributes is affected by two primary issues: **the pace of response to factors affecting the attributes is slower than the rate of damage to them, and the lack of recognition and inclusion of attributes that contribute to the property's OUV in the property and buffer zone boundaries.** Major contributing factors to these are a lack of total and complete documentation of all attributes, a slow documentation process, and inconclusive research regarding identifying the root cause of water damage to paintings and appropriate and effective interventions to address fungi and wasp damage. Without a suitable visitor management strategy, overcrowding and improper visitor behaviour remain a significant threat to the paintings and statues.

The study of the revised Management Plan, the legal tools and the institutional framework revealed a strong need for strengthening the management framework by creating an enabling environment for both secular and religious authorities. The persisting power imbalance in management decision-making, resulting in the polarity between two major actors for the World Heritage property's safeguarding, needs to be remediated, although their respective intentions are sincere and genuine in preserving and valuing the temple and its tangible and intangible values. There is a need to work more closely and concretely as a joint force to ensure the conservation of the property as a living heritage site with its mural paintings and sculptures of exceptional artistic and religious values. In its current format, the Management Plan lacks explicit references to the integrated nature of such attributes.

Boundaries of the inscribed property and the buffer zone are described and presented inconsistently in various documents the Mission has reviewed. Moreover, various religious and natural attributes, such as the archaeological remains at the base of the Dambulla rock (a monastic chapter house, bo-tree temple, dagoba), rock shelters and caves reflecting historical phases of the site's development from the megalithic period to the present time, have not been explicitly incorporated into the Management Plan.

Recommendations

Based on its findings, the Mission recommends that the State Party takes the following actions:

Conservation/Preservation of Attributes within the Inscribed Property and Buffer Zones

1. Preventive intervention should be prioritized, and the identification of the root cause of water damage to the artwork inside the cave shrines and the determination of (a) sustainable solution(s) to arrest the expansion of the problem should be expedited. A multidisciplinary research approach that includes geomorphological, hydrological, and topographic factors and human actions in the vicinity of the property should be considered.

A plan to tackle these important challenges should also be clearly stated in the property's Management Plan. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

2. Benchmarks for various site conditions and systematic data collection and analysis, monitoring should be established, and conservation actions concerning various types of damage and effectiveness of conservation interventions should be reviewed. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
3. Establish a system for recording condition assessment, conservation actions and monitoring data – both qualitative and quantitative – digitally and link it to an accessible trend analysis system. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
4. Differences between the primary stakeholders concerning the use of 3D laser scanning in documenting the property should be resolved. Examples of the use of laser scanning in documenting comparable sites and the demonstration of 3D data's use in documentation, damage assessment, estimation of conservation work, heritage interpretation and public education may be explored as a persuasion tool. Experts in such technologies may be invited to explain with scientific data the safety of laser scanning technology. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Documentation

5. An inventory of all historical and current records related to the property should be prepared and indexed with appropriate cross-references. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
6. Identify gaps in current records by analyzing the documentation inventory and base future documentation activity plans on the analysis. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
7. Adopt digital technologies in recording data, quantifying the data where appropriate and linking the data to a management information system. **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**

Governance and Management

Revised Management Plan

8. Restructure the Management Plan and categorize management issues by linking them to specific attributes of the OUV of the property **PRIORITY: HIGH**
9. Incorporate baseline information in the Management Plan and link them to monitoring the work progress for each attribute. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
10. Incorporate the archaeological remains at the base of the Dambulla rock (a monastic chapter house, bo-tree temple, dagoba), rock shelters and caves reflecting historical phases of the site's development from the megalithic period to the present time in the Management Plan more explicitly. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
11. Further elaborate a vision ensuring the physical safety, the necessary level of preservation of the attributes of the OUV of the property and the quality of experience of visitors, which can guide the Visitor Management Strategy (see below section) **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Visitor Management Strategy

12. Based on the abovementioned vision and visitor data on the number and movement pattern, a combination of various visitor management strategies should be adopted by adapting to the living nature of the property rather than focussing on controlling the visitor number alone. The most effective visitor management strategy may include establishing, promoting, and implementing codes of visitor conduct, hardening vulnerable areas, pricing,

spatial and time distribution of visitors, and interpretation and public education programmes that aim at heightening visitors' understanding of the property's religious and heritage values and making them mindful of their actions. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

13. Develop a training programme and enforce mandatory training for all guides and personnel of the property who oversee visitors to inform visitors of the codes of conduct to be observed during the visits. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

The proposed minor boundary modification to expand the property's buffer zone

14. Establish legally enforceable property boundaries, ensuring all attributes contributing to the OUV of the property are included and ensure the highest level of protection. The boundary delineation should be based on careful consideration of both cultural (tangible and intangible) and natural attributes and historical layers of human interactions with the place over two millennia. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
15. Establish legally enforceable buffer zone boundaries for the property. The buffer zone area delineation should be based on the principle of offering maximum and long-term protection to the OUV attributes from current and potential threats arising from development activities within and around the property as well as from other factors identified through systematic risk assessment. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

Management structure

16. Include in the Management Plan a mission statement of the Management Committee with a clear definition of roles and interconnections between religious and secular authorities involved in the property's preservation. Urgent measures should be taken to resolve differences between the management authorities by implementing an effective dialogue mechanism on the decision-making and sharing of responsibilities through a mediator if necessary. **PRIORITY: HIGH**
17. By means of a sub-decree or regulation and explicit mention to the Antiquities Ordinance, specify the obligation of cooperation of all stakeholders, religious and secular, for the preservation of the World Heritage properties (inscribed and buffer zones) and other connected and relevant ancient properties; **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**
18. Incorporate a specific mention of the World Heritage properties in Sri Lanka in UDA policies and regulations clarify to ensure the UDA plans recognizes the necessity to protect the OUV of the properties from future development; **PRIORITY: MEDIUM**
19. Evaluate the current human resources and identify the gaps to fill in light of the most pressing needs for the preservation of the property regularly; **PRIORITY: HIGH**
20. Assign dedicated personnel to seek and coordinate international cooperation in response to the most pressing needs in conservation and researching, and drafting applications and proposals; **PRIORITY: WHENEVER NECESSARY**

Others

21. Integrate policies on climate change responses and harmony between heritage preservation and development into the Management Plan. **PRIORITY: HIGH**

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to the “Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple” (Sri Lanka)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple (Sri Lanka) January 2023

At its extended 44th session, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party of Sri Lanka to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property “Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple” (**Decision 44 COM 7B.150**, Annex 1).

The objective of the Mission is to “to assess the state of conservation of the property, and in particular the implementation of the revised Management Plan, the ongoing work to document and conserve the property, progress with the Visitor Management Strategy and the proposed minor boundary modification to expand the property’s buffer zone”.

In light of the above, the Mission should undertake the following:

General

1. Assess the overall state of conservation of the property in relation to all of the criteria for which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the conditions of integrity and authenticity and protection and management;
2. Provide advice to the State Party in order to strengthen governance and increase capacities for planning and for the development of measures to cope with elements of potential threats to the attributes which support the property’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV);

Governance and management

3. Review the content of the revised Management Plan for the property in light of the technical recommendations of ICOMOS;
4. Review the implementation of the revised Management Plan, both current status and proposed programme;
5. Review the state of elaboration of the Visitor Management Plan, including a Tourism Management Strategy and a Pilgrim Management Strategy;
6. Update the current status of the proposed minor boundary modification to expand the property’s buffer zone;
7. Review the governance and management structure and the planning capacity, including an appropriate consultation mechanism within the management authority and among all stakeholders of the property, including religious and local communities;
8. Review human and financial resources available to support the conservation and management of the property; Documentation and conservation
9. Review the state of documentation of the mural paintings and sculptures, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of current conservation approaches;

Other

10. In line with paragraph 173 of the Operational Guidelines, assess any other relevant issues that may negatively impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including its setting and the conditions of authenticity and integrity, and protection and management.

The Mission should also consult with the Sri Lankan authorities at the national, provincial, and municipal levels, and with other relevant governmental and provincial authorities involved in the management of the property and in the development of major projects within and around the property.

In addition, the Mission should consult with relevant stakeholders, including tour operators, NGOs and representatives of local communities.

The State Party is requested to facilitate necessary consultation with stakeholders, including Sri Lankan authorities, the property management authority, as well as representatives of religious organizations, the tourism industry, NGOs and the local community, and field visits to key locations within the property previously mentioned by the Committee's Decisions and concerned by the elements listed above.

To enable the preparation for the Mission, the following items should be provided to the World Heritage Centre (keeping ICOMOS International in copy of all exchanges) as soon as possible and no later than 4 weeks prior to the Mission:

- a) Elements concerning management and planning under application and/or elaboration for the property, including in particular the revised Golden Temple of Dambulla Management Plan (2019-2026), details of changes to this Management Plan made in response to the ICOMOS technical recommendations, as well as the elements of the Visitor Management Plan, (including a Tourism Management Strategy and a Pilgrim Management Strategy), which are under preparation;
- b) Existing legal regulations concerning the property (heritage laws, decrees and sub-decrees), a succinct summary of these legal regulations, and relevant information about any proposed changes or new legal regulations;
- c) Documentation and information concerning the management authority, including its organization chart, mission statement, and details on human and financial resources and operational relationship to other organizations;
- d) All available documentation and information about possible ongoing and future major projects (development, construction, conservation, research, tourism related projects) within and around the property that may have impact on the OUV of the property, such as project designs, locations, and impact assessments where available;
- e) Comparative data, if available, enabling comparison between the overall state of the property at the time of inscription and at present;
- f) Available information about visitor facilities and services, such as interpretation, educational, and outreach activities (targeting local, national and international citizens);
- g) Reports of the monitoring and surveillance of the property, including time series figures (2019-2022) on visitor categories (national, international) and numbers by month, tourism facility statistics, tour operators statistics; and
- h) Seizures of illegal constructions/initiatives (any type).

Based on the results of the abovementioned assessments and discussions with the State Party representatives and stakeholders, the Mission will develop recommendations to the Government of Sri Lanka and the World Heritage Committee with the objective of providing guidance to the State Party regarding actions to be taken to address identified threats to the property and to improve the conservation of its Outstanding Universal Value.

Recommendations will be provided within the Mission report (see below) and not during the Mission itself.

The Mission will prepare a concise report on the findings and recommendations within six weeks following the site visit, following the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies' Reactive Monitoring Mission report format (Annex 2)

Annex 2: Decision **44 COM 7B.150**

Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple (Sri Lanka) (C 561)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision **43 COM 7B.75**, adopted at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019),
3. Regrets that the State Party did not submit a report on the state of conservation of the property by the deadline of 1 December 2020, as requested by the Committee in the aforementioned Decision;
4. Welcomes nonetheless the efforts and progress made by the State Party to improve the overall state of conservation and management of the property;
5. Urges the State Party to continuously implement the Revised Golden Temple of Dambulla Management Plan (2019-2026) with further refinement as recommended by ICOMOS through the Technical Review;
6. Requests the State Party to submit the conservation approaches and related reports arising from the implementation of the immediate and short-term priorities identified in the 2019 Management Plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
7. Urges again the State Party to finalize a Visitor Management Strategy, including a Tourism Management Strategy and a Pilgrim Management Strategy, and submit it to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
8. Also requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to the property, as requested in Decision **43 COM 7B.75**, to assess the state of conservation of the property, and in particular the implementation of the revised Management Plan, the ongoing work to document and conserve the property, progress with the Visitor Management Strategy and the proposed minor boundary modification to expand the 'property's buffer zone;
9. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 December 2022**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the Committee at its 46th session.

Annex 3: Composition of mission team

Nao HAYASHI, representing the World Heritage Centre and UNESCO for the Mission, is a Japanese historian, trained in Japan (Sophia University, Graduate School of the University of Tokyo), France (Paris IV-Sorbonne, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Ecole pratique des hautes études) on Classical Studies, archaeology and comparative religious studies of Roman 'Empire's eastern provinces (North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon) and in the UK (University of London) on sustainable development. She joined UNESCO in 2002 as programme specialist and directed large-scale operational projects and capacity-building programmes for World Heritage sites and museums in Asia, Arab States and Africa. Her work includes several international conferences, notably as the commissioner of the UNESCO's first High-Level Forum on Museums in 2016, held in Shenzhen, China. She produced several international exhibitions such as 'Museums for Intercultural Dialogue' linking the National Museums of Syria and Egypt, and 'Exploring the World Heritage sites in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam', as a collaboration of 6 World Heritage sites and nine museums.

Sharif Shams Imon, representing ICOMOS International for the Mission, from Bangladesh, specializes in urban conservation and has degrees in architecture, urban planning, and business administration, a PhD in Urban Conservation and advanced training in Integrated Territorial and Urban Conservation. His teaching, research and professional experience spans over 27 years, including consultancy for international organizations, UN bodies and governments. He has published over 40 articles in books, journals and conference proceedings. His work focuses on historic city management, Heritage Impact Assessment, heritage tourism, and heritage interpretation. Currently, he is the president of ICOMOS Bangladesh and an expert member of the International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Committee. He has served in ICOMOS' World Heritage Panel, evaluated World Heritage nominations as a technical evaluator, advised State Parties on World Heritage nominations, and carried out joint Reactive Monitoring Missions for UNESCO and ICOMOS. He regularly designs and delivers capacity-building projects for heritage and tourism professionals internationally.

Annex 4: Itinerary and programme of the Mission as implemented

Schedule for UNESCO reactive monitoring Mission 8th – 13th January 2023

8 January

11am Arrival at Colombo Airport (Pick-up arrangement by the CCF)

2pm Arrival and stay at **Cinnamon Red**

5pm Meeting of the mission team

9 January

9am Welcome and the initial brainstorming with the National Team at the Department of Archaeology (present: Director-Generals of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Fund and National experts)

10am Meeting with the Secretary of the Foreign Ministry

13pm Lunch break

15pm Departure to Dambulla

18pm Arrival at the Hotel: Gimanhala, Dambulla, meeting of the mission team

10 January

10am – 11.15pm Meeting with the participation of the Chief Priest at the Dr. Roland Silva Mural Paintings Conservation & Research Center in Dambulla

Introductory presentation – Jointly Archt. Prasanna Ratnayake, Prof Jagath Weerasinghe Dr. Nilan Cooray, Dr Nandadeva OUV, Management (legal, institutional)/conservation

11.15am Tea break

11.30am – 2.45pm Field visit at Rangiri Dambulla temple

3pm Lunch break

4pm – 5pm Documentation verification at Dr Roland Silva Memorial Centre

5pm Tour around the buffer zone/rock outcrop from vehicles and visit to Ibbankatuwa archaeological site

6.20pm – 7.20pm Visit to Museum of Wall Painting for mural paintings documentation

4pm- 6pm Discussion at the Dr. Roland Silva Mural Paintings Conservation & Research Center

11 January

9am Visit to the archaeological remains and caves

2.30pm Meeting of the mission team with the management team

5.30pm Visit and climbing of the Dambulla Rock from the opposite side to the cave temple

12 January

Departure to Colombo in the morning

10pm Debriefing meeting with the National Team at the Department of Archaeology (present: Director-Generals of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Fund and National experts)

11am Meeting with Prof. Indrika

3pm Meeting with ICOMOS Sri Lanka at the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya

13 January

8am Checking out

8.30am Departure to the airport

Annex 5: List of people met

Professor Anura Manatunga, Director-General, Department of Archaeology (DoA), Senior Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya

Mr Manisha Gunasekera, Additional Secretary/Bilateral Affairs (West), Foreign Ministry

Rev. Dr. Godagama Mangala Thero – Chief Incumbent of the Dambulla Rajamaha Viharaya

Mr Gamini Adikari, Senior Professor, Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya (ICOMOS Sri Lanka President)

Mr D. M. P. B. Dissanayaka, Assistant Director of Archaeology

Prof. Indrika Rajapaksha, Professor in Architecture, Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa

Mr. Ajith Jayasundara, Officer in charge of Dambulla Project of the Central Cultural Fund (CCF)

HE. Mrs Kshanika Hirimburegama, Former Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to France and UNESCO

HE Mrs Manisha Gunasekera, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to France and UNESCO

Dr Gamini Wijesuriya, Senior Advisor to the DG of ICCROM, Special Advisor to WHITRAP Shanghai

Mrs. Geethani Kuruppuarachchi, Director, Chemical Conservation Division, Department of Archeology (DoA)

Professor Jagath Weerasinghe, Director Archaeology, Central Cultural Funds (CCF)

Dr M.S. Manawadu, Senior Professor of Architecture, University of Moratuwa

Professor B. D. Nandadeva, Retd Professor, University of Kelaniya (DoA – Management Plan)

Dr Nilan Cooray, Architect, Heritage Conservation Consultant

Dr Nimal de Silva, Advisor to Minister of Buddhasasana

Mr Prasanna Ratnayake, Additional Director General, Department of Archeology (DoA)

Mr Somarathne Vidanapathirana, Secretary, Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs

Professor Sirimali Fernando, Secretary General, Sri Lanka National Commission to UNESCO

Ms Sumedha Mathota, Architect, Director Development, Central Cultural Fund (CCF)

Mr. A. K. Pana Maldeniya, Painting Conservator

Mr. Shantha Karunarathne, Painting Conservator, Dambulla Project

Mr. Nalaka P. Dharmakeerthi, Archeology Officer CCF

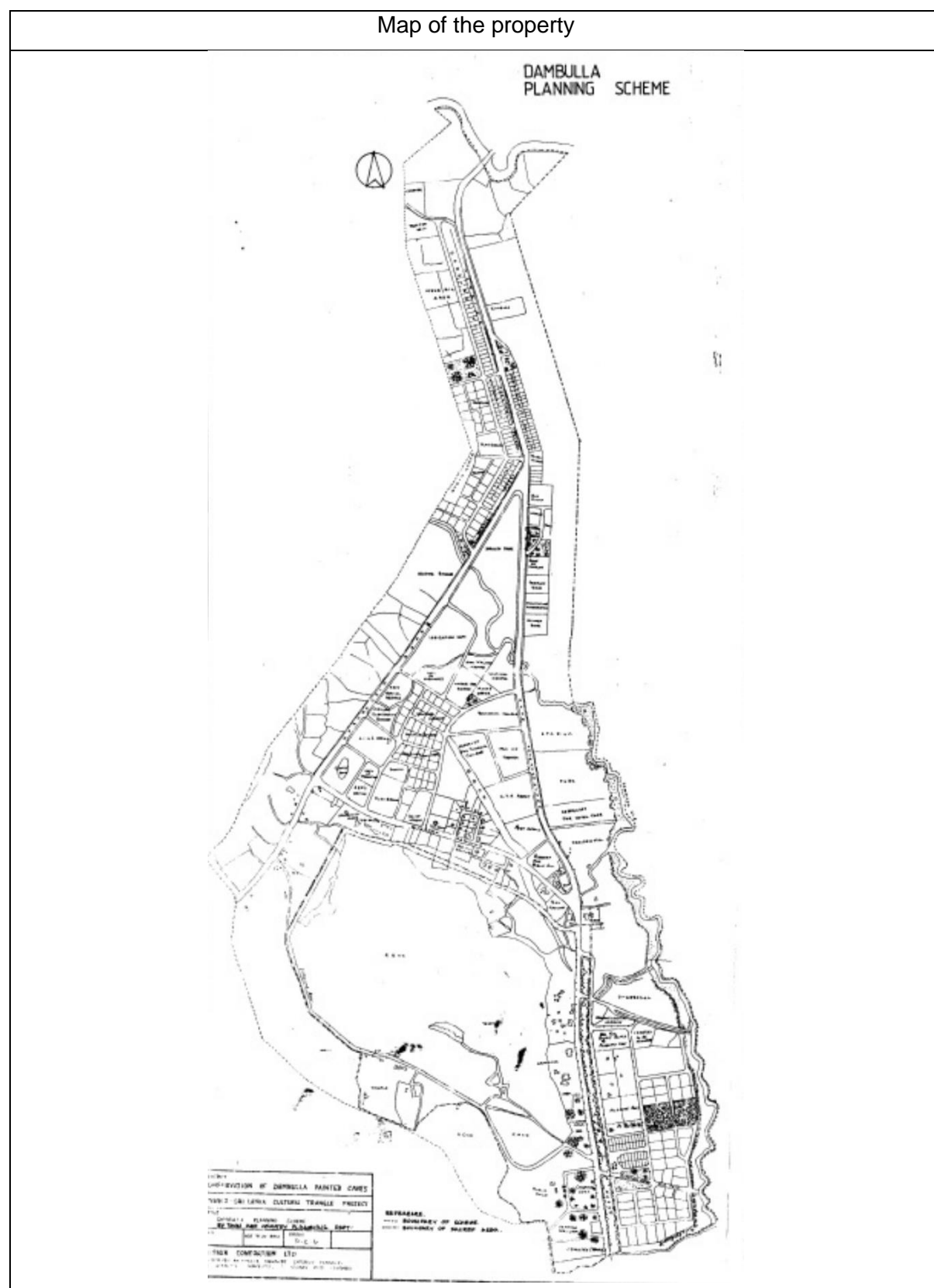
Mr. Kelum Manuwansa – Photographer

Annex 6: SOUV of the property

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/561/>

Annex 7: Maps, photographs and other graphical material required to illustrate issues

Map of the property



Source: State Party (Dambulla Planning Scheme 1989)

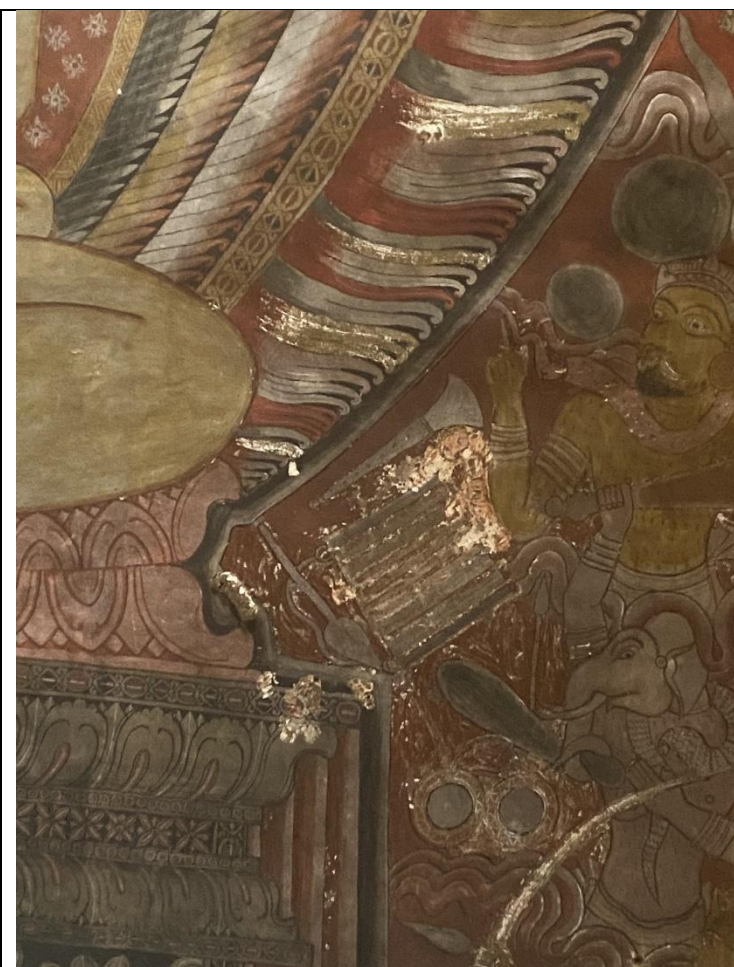
Annex 8: Mission pictures



Mission team and the management authorities (DoA and CCF)



Colour fading on murals



Color fading



Colour fading



Damaged ceiling in temple #5



Exhibition showing the before and after the restoration of the polychrome sculptures



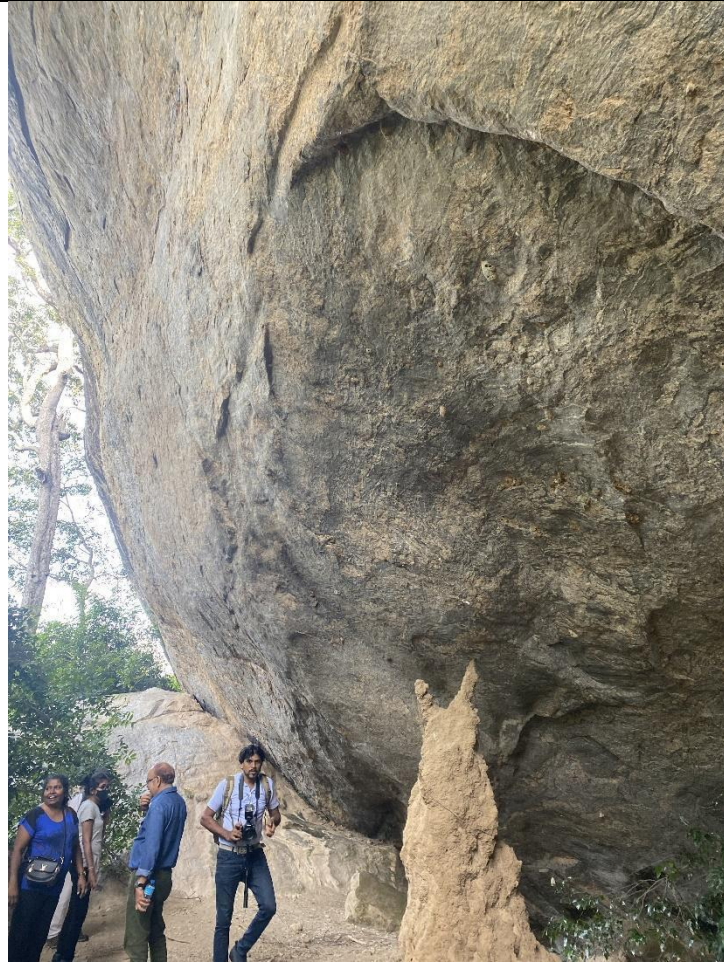
Chemical Laboratory of the Roland Silva Centre



Temple of bo-tree



Chapter House



Cave



Copyng work of the mural painting by the staff of the Roland Silva Centre

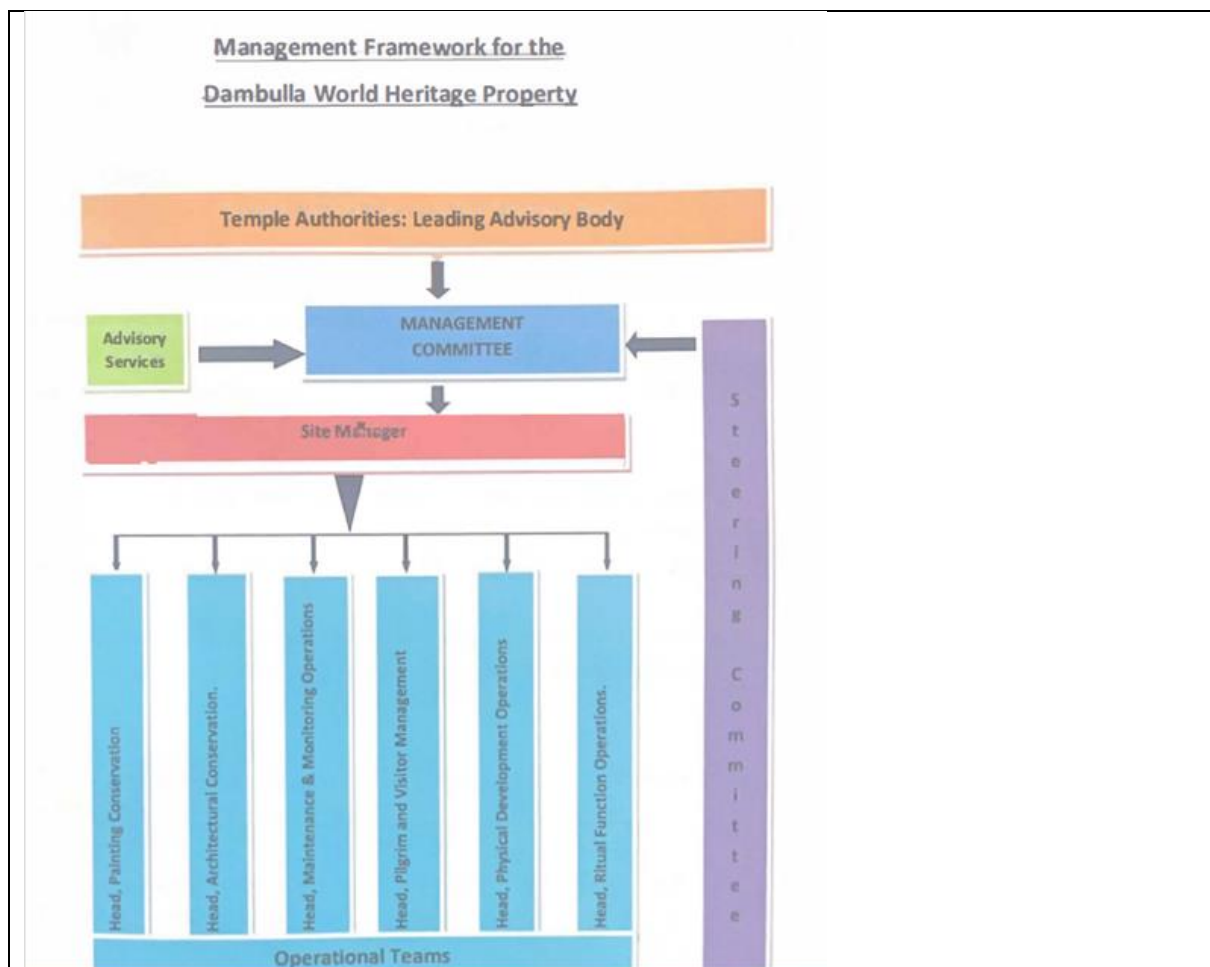


Manual documentation of damages to mural paintings



Meeting with the Temple Authority

Organigramme of the management authorities



Source: State Party

Annex 8: List of key documents which have informed the Mission

National Legislations

Antiquities Ordinance No. 09 of 1940

Town and Country Planning Ordinance No. 13 of 1946

Urban Development Authority Law No. 41 of 1978

Regulations concerning Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple

Revised Management Plan of the Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple (2019-2026), January 2023

Planning Document

Dambulla Sacred Land Development Plan (proposed), Urban Development Authority (in Sinhala)

Information documents

ICOMOS Evaluation on the Golden Temple of Dambulla (1989)

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) (1998)

Report on the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Golden Temple of Dambulla (Sri Lanka) 11th to 15th of March 2015

Technical studies

Proposed Central Expressway Project, Kadawatha to Dambulla (Sections 01, 02 and 04), Final Environmental Impact Assessment Report, May 2016

Evaluation by third party

ICOMOS technical review on Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple Plan of Management (2019-26), September 2020