

World heritage site of kandy, Sree Lanka

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Introduction:

Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural & natural heritage adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, scientific & organization at its seventeenth session held in Paris paved way to define monuments, groups of buildings & sites of outstanding universal value as cultural heritage & include them in the world Heritage List. The operational guideline prepared by the Inter Governmental Committee for the protection of the world cultural & Natural Heritage states that the proposed cultural properties by state parties should meet the criteria and the test of authenticity stated under section 24.

The section 24 (b) (i) of the guidelines states “meet the test of authenticity in design, material workmanship or setting” thereby it is essential that a World Cultural Heritage site should contain an authentic setting.

Management guidelines for World Cultural Heritage sites state that the authenticity in setting is reflected in the relationship between the resource as maintained & its physical context. This also including landscape & townscape values, & the relationship of man-made constructions to this environmental context. As such, it is essential to protect the environment in which the cultural property is situated. Encroachment & intrusive commercial development are typical threats that are often seen in the environment around a cultural property. As such, *Buffer Zones* of sufficient size should be established around a cultural property to ensure the negative threats of all types are prevented & strictly controlled. Therefore, all state parties are advised to submit maps and/or plans showing any *Buffer Zone* as stated in section 64.1.eg the Operational Guideline.

In order to ascertain the importance of *Buffer Zones* in protecting World Cultural Heritage sites action taken to control the activities in two major sites, one in Urban setting-KANDY & other in Rural setting-SIGIRIYA in Sri Lanka are enumerated below:

World Heritage City of Kandy – A Urban Site:

Historical Account

According to *Mahawamsa*, the great chronicle of Srilanka history, the hill country was known as *Malaya Desa*. Later it was known as “*Kanda Uda Pasrata*” (the five countries of the hill) or the city of *Senkadagala Siriwardhanapura*. According to the *Chronicles*, King *Wickramabahu IV* of *Gangasiripura* desirous of founding a new city, requested his astrologers to find a suitable auspicious place. The lucky spot chosen, is the site of the present ‘*Dalada Maligawa*’ (Tooth Relic temple of Lord Buddha). So the city is the year 1469-1511 AD. To prevent invasions from the Kingdom of Kotte in the west of the country which was occupied by the Dutch, Kandy

being the hill capital was founded on a low lying ground besides a river, overlooked by nearby hills, and often hidden within a wooded surrounding that occupied a large area.



Ample water and high security of its location in a hilly environment, and river Michaela on its west, north and east' made it a successful capital and a unique place. The natural setting confined the city's horizontal growth & shaped to an altitude of 600m from the mean sea level and drops to a basin surrounded with hills on one side and a river on the other. Ultimately, incorporated with a forest reserve and a man – made lake, it gained a more naturalized setting. During the reign of *King Vimaladharmassoriya I*, the Kandyan Kingdom reached its highest power, dominating even the low country lands. By erecting a two storied temple which was dedicated to the Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha, he manifested his faithfulness for Buddhism. The Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha was taken in procession from Delgamuwa to Kandy secretly. Thus, the Kingdom proceeded from 1592 – 1815 surpassing all the obstructions imposed on its sovereignty by the Portuguese, & later the Dutch & finally British who fought fiercely for its control, until the Kingdom was assigned to them. In the early part of the 19th century, during the time of the last *King Sri Wickrama Rajasingha*, Kandy was known as “*Mahanuwara*” or “*Senkadagala*” to the people of the hill country. As hilltops were major defensive attractions for the town builders, the palace of Tooth Relic and its circumscribing elements were laid parallel to the hilly forest reserve taking it as a backdrop to the total complex. In keeping with cosmological notions the temple faced west; and it was so sited that there were no buildings to its east – a principal emphasized by royal edicts which designated the hillside jungle into a reserved forest where no cultivation what so ever permitted.

The building form of the regal city represented the hierarchical order of the prevailing society. The biggest and the most important building was the temple of the Tooth.



The scale, the proportion, the architectural character or the religious perception with so-called symbolism, all have united to make that image. The palace was erected on the highest shelf as the royal astrologers reckoned it the most auspicious place. A moat separated it from the land below. The thick green Udawatta Kele forest behind the palace is a “*Nilamengha*” –the blue clouds of the sky was created by a cloud walls in white. Then by transferring the paddy fields into a lake, one will see the reflection of the cloud wall and the palace building in water, no doubt it will appear like ‘*a city floating in the sky*’. The royal architect, adhering to a strong concept of symbolism, designed the surrounding landscape including the palace and the lake. It was the last king of the capital who converted the paddy field towards the south of the palace into the present lake, in 1806. The area also consists of four temples, *Natha, Vishnu, Pattini and Katharaga*, dedicated for gods and the two monasteries representing the power of the Buddhist religion. The temple of Natha, right in front of the tooth relic temple, was built in 14th century in the South Indian *Vijayanagar* style of architecture and may be considered as the oldest living monument in the city.

It reminds us of the origin of Kandy as a royal city. The ancient city centre of the regal city was known as *Deva Sanhinda* where the social interactions were focused on was in a lower level before the moat and the *Mahawasala* and encircled by the temples dedicated to the worship of gods Natha and Vishnu. The most significant cultural procession, “*the Perahera*” starts from the Tooth Relic temple and proceeds along the selected routes within the city.



It is the most significant social & religious event that highlights the importance of the Tooth of Lord Buddha and heightens the sense of boundary and the bound relationship between the temple & the town. The King himself was bound to take due advice from the Venerable monks in all matters concerning government and religion. Therefore, two great monasteries were established on either side of the royal palace namely *Malwatta Mahavihara* on the south of the Royal palace across lake, and the *Asgiriya Mahavihara* to the north-western side of the outer city just beyond the crematory ground. From the beginning two kinds of residential buildings were erected; the *Chieftain's 'Walawwas'* (Pic-12) and Pheasant's houses built of mud & timber with thatched roofs (Pic-13) & raised plinths harmonious to the environment. The palace, the lake, & the linear pathways, embodied with Chieftain's houses or *Walawwas*, were the original composition of the city, which were endowed with panoramic views of mountainous range. The phase of growth of Kandy until the British occupation, was slow & interspersed with setbacks resulting from internal conflicts and invasions from western powers. British brought a great change to the existing majestic appearance of the hilly landscape. Expansions of administrative, commercial & other service functions took place within this basic framework until about the time the British rule terminated in 1948.

Kandy with its extraordinary complexity and the beauty of its colonial and pre-colonial composition invites people to admire it. Its immediate surroundings contain a wealth of structures and spaces and compositions no less impressive than those in other parts of the world. Its streets belong to the city grid, closely packed houses, open spaces, green spaces & all other related elements gathered there to tell one story.



What brought it there, [view here](#) be read in all the details of its physical nature. Despite the fact that the historic centers are collection of vestiges of past, they are places where life continues to be lived. The UNESCO declared Kandy as a World Heritage site in 1947, being one of the living ancient capitals of the world today under criteria IV & VI of the operational guidelines.

“Criteria IV – *The monumental ensemble of Kandy is an outstanding example of a type of construction in which the Royal Palace and the temple of the Tooth of Buddha are juxtaposed since the 4th century.*”

“Criteria” VI – *The temple of the Tooth, the palace complex and the Sacred city of Kandy are directly and tangibly associated with the history of the spread of Buddhism. The temple of Kandy built to house the tooth of Buddha bears witness to an ever-flourishing cult*”



Heritage Protection Efforts in Kandy:

Efforts in protecting the heritage in Sri Lanka commenced during the British period with the establishment of the archaeological survey of Ceylon in 1890. Although the Treasure Trove Act of 1888 and the Antiquities Ordinance of 1900 provided legal support for the efforts in protecting the valuable heritage of the country, the protection of the heritage and its surrounding was only possible after enactment of the Antiquities Ordinance in 1940. According to the ordinance, legal protection was provided to the monuments by declaring them as “*Ancient Monuments*” and “*Protected Monuments*” and prohibiting the archaeological excavations without a license from the Department of Archaeology. This ordinance also provided legal protection to the surroundings of the monuments by prohibiting or restricting activities on any land within a prescribed distance, which stands as 400 meters. In keeping with this provision several monuments, i.e., Palace, Tooth Relic Temple, *Natha Devalaya*, *Vishnu Devalaya*, *Pattini Devalaya*, *Katharagama Devalaya*, *Malwatta Monastery* and *Asgiriya Monastery*, within the heritage city of Kandy was declared as Ancient & Protected Monuments. However, as Kandy was considered to be the second capital of the country it grew not only as a cultural centre but also as the religious, administrative commercial & historical centre. The development of Kandy as a major city took place during the British period with the addition of beautiful colonial buildings. The beauty of the city could be seen from the Dutch style/city half-round tiled roofs, Doric columns, timber balustrades and valance boards, & proportions of British period buildings seen within the area. With the independence, the new wave of architectural style attracted the country restricting the use of timber and tiles in buildings, and reinforced concrete was introduced. In order to control this new architectural style affecting the heritage area of Kandy, the area around the Tooth Relic Temple was declared in 1971 as a specially protected area namely a sacred city, under the Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946 (Picture-21). Accordingly the use of the land within the area was regulated and controlled & only development of land for the preservation of places & structures of religious, historical, architectural, archaeological or artistic nature was permitted. However, this declaration could not prevent the destruction of several ancient so-called *Walawwa*'s within the grid city as most of them were completely demolished, and new buildings were erected. Over & above due to scarcity of land within the grid city, demolition of number of ancient buildings and replaced them with new buildings, which do not suit to the ancient character of the Kandy ancient city one seen. As such over the years, streetscape of the city began to change creating a serious concern on the heritage values of the ancient city. In 1980, the Central Cultural Fund commenced its conservation activities in Palace complex Devala Complex, Malawatta Monastery Complex & Asgiriya Monastery Complex under the UNESCO – Sri Lanka Cultural Triangle Programme. The deterioration of the city also began in the same area with the buildings constructed with the buildings materials made available with the open economy principle adopted by the Government, which came to power in 1977. Use of glass with aluminium framework with the concrete began to fade the character of the urban centre & the urgency to conserve the left over with the grid city was quickly realized by the authorities of the Central Cultural Fund. After assessing the situation in Kandy in 1983, Government appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister to study the possible threats faced & to report the possible interventions that would control the development pressures within the area. On the recommendations made by the committee in 1984, Kandy Municipal Council area was declared as an Urban Development Area under the Urban Development Law of 1978 & designated the area around the Tooth Relic Temple as a “Sacred Area”. The main objections of the designation was:

1. To maintain the sanctity of the Tooth Relic Temple by restricting or prohibiting all uses & developments this will not be in conformity with the principal use.
2. To develop facilities in the area including traffic facilities such as parking, pedestrianisation & restriction of through traffic.
3. To promote architectural, landscape and environment quality of all development in the area.
4. To regulate all types of advertisements within the area.

After identifying the boundaries of the sacred area, two peripheral protected areas, i.e. an area of 500m radius from the Octagon of the Tooth Relic Temple (Peripheral protected area 2) and water shed of the Kandy Lake (Peripheral protected area 3), are identified (Pic-24). The development controls imposed on the three areas are:



Sacred Area:

1. No lands or buildings within the area were allowed to be used for
 - Manufacturing or service industry
 - Warehouse or wholesale industry
 - Retail trade or boutique except those incidental to the use of the temple.
 - Hotels, lodges, restaurants, night clubs & similar uses.
 - Residents except those incidental to the use of the temple.
 - Any other used which is likely to offend the religious nature.
2. No new buildings and no alterations or additions to any existing buildings not connected with the temple.
3. Existing height and character of buildings & other structures not to be altered.
4. All alteration, additions & new constructing should harmonies with the main and subsidiary buildings of the temple in respect of the facade, texture, color, height and materials of constructions.

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