

# Cultural Tourism and Visitor Effects on the Local Population with Special Reference to the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka

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The intention of this paper is to highlight the fact that varying and contradictory behaviours of cultural tourists and the users of sites does constitute a conflict. It attempts to understand its implications with regard to Heritage Management and Cultural Tourism. The word cultural Tourist here implies a visitor visiting Cultural Sites from an alien culture.

This is attempted through a study of world heritage sites falling under the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka. The Cultural Triangle sites of Sri Lanka in a broader sense falls into two categories namely "living" sites and "dead" sites.

The "living" sites constitute monumenets where the local population associates themselves within a participatory manner either in a residential or ritualistic sense. In certain cases it may emerge in the form of a change of use from its originally designed purpose.

The "dead" sites constitute monuments where its original or changed usage is no longer functional or is valid and being visited purely for its archaeological, artistic or historic value.

In a separate paper we discuss ways of minimizing this conflict under the title "Managing Visitors at Cultural Sites". Within the Cultural Triangle the City of Kandy and the Dambulla Painted caves are considered "Living" sites and Anuradhapura's Abayagiri and Jethawana Monastic Complexes, the Royal City of Sigiriya are considered "dead" sites for the purposes of this study.

## **Conflicting Behaviour between the Cutlral Tourist and the Religious Believer in the World Heritage City of Kandy.**

Kandy the last historic capital of Sri Lanka became its capital in the 15th century. It has been the historic tradition of Sri Lanka that the headquarters of the religious sects as well as the temple of tooth relic were cited next to the royal palace in its close proximity. Though the Kingdom fell to the British in 1815 the religious capital remained to be in Kandy and the sacred tooth relic remained to be kept in Kandy in the Temple of the Tooth. It therefore is a vital link in Buddhist civilization of Sri Lanka.

The religious beliefs surrounding the temple of the tooth have continued over the centuries.....have remained unquestioned. . . . and will go on unchallenged and continued to be believed..... and thus venerated. From a point of view, for the future well being of Sri Lankan culture it is vital that such aspects of culture remain without being erased. Yet such beliefs constitute material offerings and not doctrinal offerings.

Institutionalization of religion requires the highlighting of the former than the latter by the believer. Thus ritual connected with monuments constitute such material offerings than practitional or doctrinal offering. Ritual in this case constitutes the way one walks and carries oneself through, what one carries with you including offerings, the drumming etc. These together with ones psychological conditioning achieved through education and helped by the articulation of architectural space gives

one a certain psychological upliftment. It is this upliftment that the user expects of his journey or the pilgrimage.

The perception of architectural space is cultural and personal. It is related to one's perception and understanding of sign and symbol. The perception of sign and symbol varies from culture to culture. The architecture a universal image or universal truths of space in the three dimensional form may be understood by all. Yet signs and symbols which are personal and cultural creates a differentiation in perception.

The local user has a different perception of his surroundings in a shrine thus dictating his behaviour. Therefore behaviour in no two cases are equal and a varying contrast in behaviour occurs between the user and the cultural tourist.

In the case of the temple of tooth at Kandy in the eyes of the cultural tourist the local user partaking in the ritual becomes an actor performing in a theatre set in this case the set being the vernacular architecture of the temple of the tooth. For the local user the ritual is an important part of his upliftment process. For the cultural tourist it is a complete drama where even the minute detail of the users walk constitute a part of the performance. The conflict for the local user arises thus. The upliftment either spiritual, psychological or religious is thus affected and is only partial for the local user.

The mere presence of another magnet namely the presence of the Cultural Tourist minimizes the effect of the ritual act of the local user or the believer.

In the case of Malwatte and Asgiriya monastic complexes these complexes have throughout functioned as headquarters of Buddhist sects where administration and doctrinal matters were formulated and controlled. However the primary function of religious practices were carried out by temples in towns and villages. The main monastic centres were never centres of socio-religious interaction. Thus their existence and functioning remained a mystery to a certain extent.

The continuous existence of this form should remain unchanged to keep the mystery it creates intact. Once the mystery is discovered the ritualistic beliefs will be destroyed and its end result being the existence of an established religious order vital in the civilization of a nation being in doubt... Therefore such mysteries should not be exposed to a user who has no intention of safeguarding such values and lifestyles.

#### **Behavioural Aspects of Cultural Tourists and Local users in the Painted Caves of Dambulla (World Heritage Site)**

The painted caves of Dambulla with its history going back to the 2nd century B.C. is a living oriental art gallery with its paintings and sculptures dated from the second century B.C. to the 18th Century A.D. The magnitude of space overwhelms the believer as well as the cultural tourist and one's behavior is governed by the space itself. The spatial progression to the climb on rock to a height and the form of the natural cave are common experiences to the local user as well as the cultural tourist.

In the Louvre a statue by itself is a sculpture for exhibition; an object for appreciation of a work of art; where the object has been given cultural value by society. In the caves of Dambulla to the local user an image is an object for veneration. To the cultural tourist it is a sculpture in its original setting increasing its value or scope for artistic appreciation.

For the local user it is a search from the known to the unknown through one thousand Buddha figures and images with prior conditioning on what to look for namely the previous lives of the Buddha. It is a journey of discovery, a journey of refreshing one's mind a journey of relating to what one knows of one's religious background aided throughout by the articulation of architectural space. The articulation of space in this case constitutes the natural formation of

the cave modified by man, its manmade additions of painted ceilings and walls, floors often uneven and imagery etc. Yet to the Cultural tourist it is a pure living painting gallery thus therein arises a conflicting behaviour in both.

#### **Behavioural Aspects of Cultural Tourists and Local users in the Historic City of Anuradhapura (World Heritage Site)**

The world heritage city of Anuradhapura was the royal city as well as the religious capital of Sri Lanka from the 4th Century B.C. to the 11th Century A.D. To the local user Anuradhapura brings a sense of Royal Pride as well as a religious or spiritual upliftment.

In its religious sense to the majority of local users its a arduous pilgrimage to eight principal monastic remains widely spread and surrounded by royal remains. The ancient city of Anuradhapura constitutes living as well as dead monuments. Often the smaller "Living" monuments are surrounded by "dead" remains of monasteries and remains of royal palaces. Considering the dead part of Anuradhapura a local visitor visits it with a sense of pride of a great heritage since he being part and parcel of a continuation of the same heritage. A visitor from an alien culture would come to see or appreciate another heritage which existed in the past history of mankind. Therefore the perception and appreciation though not similar will yet be complimentary. Thus when others seeing ones objects of pride in this brings about by a magnitude itself and helps in the enhancement of ones feelings. Further the perception of such remains being seen by others and being appreciated by other cultural tourists enhances ones pride.

However at the Sacred Bo Tree Shrine, which is a living monument the situation described above under Kandy exists.

Yet in the overall; the physical dimension of Anuradhapura being as it is and being made visually high by its giant stupas the chances of the behaviour of locals being affected are less while the

cultural tourist visiting the same site with the same intention. In the case of the stupas its vastness and height subdues the cultural tourist as well. However in this case the perceptions are nearer being the history of mankind, the history of a nation while in the case of locals the inspiration being heightened by the seeing of ones own monuments being appreciated by aliens.

#### **Behavioural Aspects of Cultural Tourists and Local users in the Royal City of Sigiriya (World Heritage Site)**

The royal city of Sigiriya the capital in the 5th century A.D. comprises of remains of a royal palace parts of which had been used later as monasteries as well as the world's oldest remaining water garden. Also found are the remains of the ancient civic city while its fresco paintings in the rock has brought it world wide fame.

The local visitor appreciates Sigiriya primarily for historic, archeological and artistic values. The path of progression through a moat, past a terraced garden with a view of an elevated Summer Palace and subsequently through steep steps to its mid terrace and finally to its upper level and the view therefrom of a well laid water garden confirms the learning of the local user of Sigiriya as a pleasure center. The appreciation of the Cultural Tourist also almost remains the same and thus the chances of a conflict arising are less.

In the special case of the Conservation of the anthropological village at Abayagiri highlights this conflict which we have raised throughout this paper. In this case its conservation only amounts to the preservation of a lifestyle and not its architecture. Yet it is an extremely difficult task in an emerging and changing society. A walk through the anthropological village by a cultural tourist will lower the inhabitants to the standard of museum objects and thus create two totally conflicting behaviours and will lead to the defeat of the intentions of conservation.

The aim of this paper has been to achieve an understanding on the process use of cultural sites by visitors. As a conclusion we can derive the following:

(a) In the case of "living" monuments the mixing of local visitors and alien visitors should be handled with adequate care to avoid any behavioural conflicts which will lead to the destruction of the liveliness of the site/monument.

(b) In the case "dead" monuments and sites this will not be critical unless the number of visitors will create any danger to the physical existence of the monuments.

The above identifications must be made on a national level and decisions must be taken at the same level. Implementation of these decisions should require detailed planning of control of visitors on a site by site basis.