

PREFACE

The National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Sri Lanka is proud to present yet another of their achievements in their efforts towards the preservation of the cultural heritage. Started over two decades ago with a modest membership, ICOMOS Sri Lanka has developed in to a strong professional organisation committed towards the preservation of the culture of mankind. We trust that this survey report prepared and published with the support of the University Grants Commission, the National Physical Planning Department and US/ICOMOS will serve as a useful document for the students, practitioners and plan implementing authorities.

ICOMOS Sri Lanka commiserated with hundreds of thousands of bereaved, displaced and traumatised people whose lives were dislocated in a matter of minutes due to the great earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in the Republic of Indonesia and the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster of 26th December 2004. Whilst our members were helping their countrymen in their personal capacity, ICOMOS Sri Lanka focussed on the socio-cultural aspects of this tragedy. In a statement issued three days after the event, we called upon the planning authorities to be aware of the importance of maintaining the familiar cultural environment with which the local communities identified themselves with. In order to facilitate this process ICOMOS Sri Lanka set out on an important programme of surveying the affected Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka and invited the University Departments of Architecture, Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies to undertake this rapid survey programme. The Universities of Kelaniya, Sri Jayewardenepura, Moratuwa, Ruhuna, Eastern Province and Jaffna responded whilst the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology provided their expertise in editing and compiling the individual reports. This exercise was also an effort by ICOMOS Sri Lanka in the capacity building and creating an awareness of the role of the cultural properties in the development of the socio-cultural and socio-psychological needs of the community.

I, as President of ICOMOS Sri Lanka will be failing in my duty if I do not mention the support we have had from the family of ICOMOS soon after this tragic event. The President of ICOMOS, Mr. Michael Pretzet and his colleagues in the Paris office wasted no time in sending their commiserations. Many National Committees and members wrote to us as an organisation and to our members personally. US/ICOMOS readily agreed to help us monetarily in our efforts. We were indeed touched by these gestures and were inspired to take on the tasks at hand. These actions gave us an insight to the workings of the ICOMOS community and were indeed an eye-opener for other similar organisations as well as for the members of our own organisation on the commitment on the Preservation of the Culture of Mankind that we have committed ourselves to.

This survey and the report is only the beginning of an extensive study of these monuments and ICOMOS Sri Lanka is committed to continue with the detailed studies and technical advice on the conservation of the affected properties. It is encouraging to note the National Physical Planning Department has already identified the buildings in the survey for incorporation in the national listings that are under preparation.

Finally, let me thank Hon. Dinesh Gunewardena, MP and Minister of Urban Development and Water Supply and Deputy Minister of Education, Prof. B. R. R. N. Mendis, the Chairman, University Grants Commission and Plnr. P. A. Vincent, Acting Director General, National Physical Planning Department for their whole hearted support for this venture. I also wish to place on record the untiring efforts of Prof. Senake Bandaranayake, Ms. Nilu Abeyratne, Archt. Veranjan Kurukulasuriya and the staff of Environmental Planning Services (Pvt.) Ltd. My grateful thanks are extended to the Staff and Students of the Universities of Kelaniya, Sri Jayawardenapura, Moratuwa, Ruhuna, Eastern University and Jaffna and the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology for their quick response in our hour of need. This report would never have reached the public in such a short time if not for the commitment of the members of the State Printing Corporation.

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