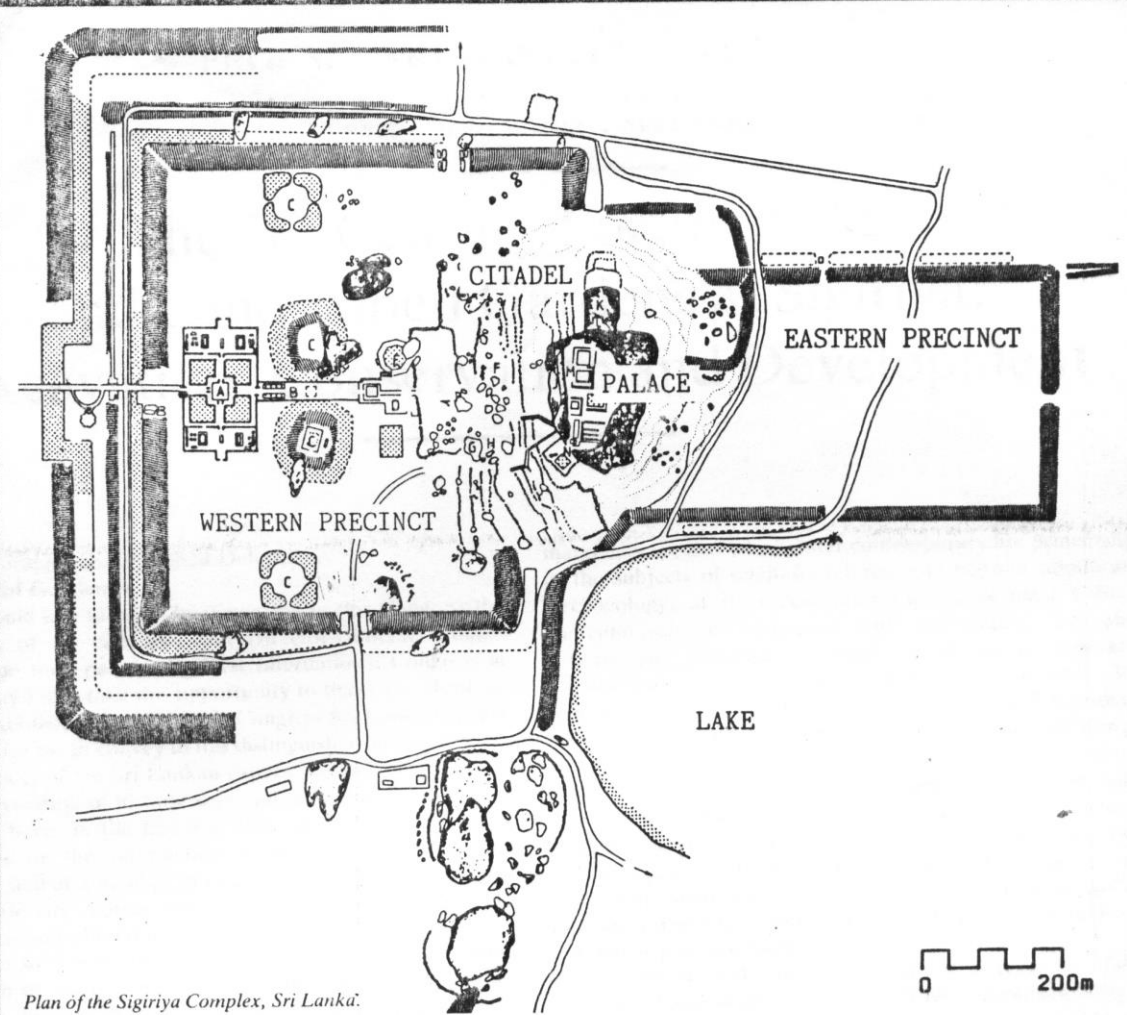


CONSERVATION AND TOURISM

Basle 1985



Plan of the Sigiriya Complex, Sri Lanka.

Front Cover – The Parthenon, Athens.

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The 5th Century Fortified City and Landscaped Gardens at Sigiriya: Excavation, Conservation and Development

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by conveying to this Congress the greetings of my colleague and Director-General, Roland Silva, who took part in the First International Congress in 1983. May I also take this opportunity to thank the Heritage Trust and other sponsors of this Congress for having made it possible for me to convey to this distinguished audience some small aspect of the Sri Lankan experience and viewpoint on the conservation of historic sites and monuments.

We have, in the last few days, looked at the general problems of the inter-action between conservation and tourism, and at a number of case studies in the conservation of historic city centres and living architectural complexes. Today, as you observed, Mr. Chairman, we are turning our attention to a somewhat different phenomenon – the conservation of archaeological sites. Although the dividing line between historic city centres and archaeological sites is sometimes blurred, the important difference is that while the one is enmeshed in a living fabric of contemporary life and settlement and is therefore subject to its own particular pressures and problems, the others are usually places or monuments which are not in current occupation, or only

marginally so; and which enter contemporary life principally as the subjects of scientific interest and popular attention. Archaeology, at its fullest reach, considers itself a fundamental science, concerned with the enquiry into the patterns and processes of human behaviour as they are encountered in the material remains of past societies. Its principal concern, therefore, is with obtaining and decoding the complex information that is available in ancient things and ancient places. Conservation to an archaeologist essentially means preserving the possibility of access to that information – not only possibility of access to the archaeologists who retrieved that information but also to other archaeologists, perhaps many years or decades later. And, even more important: the possibility of retaining access to information that the original discoverer of the material even did not suspect was there.

But as a scientific guardian of the material remains of the past, the archaeologist also has other responsibilities. This is especially so in countries like mine, where there are many ancient sites which have a long record of historical continuity – some having been in continuous occupation or worship for nearly two millennia – and many historical precedents for the restoration or renovation of ancient monuments; and where