

CONSERVATION OF FIRST PUBLIC BUILDING BUILT BY BRITISH RULERS IN SRI LANKA

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Foreward

"The Public Building" in Badulla, can be considered as a unique architectural master piece in Sri Lankan architecture. It is the first ever public building built by British rulers within their 133 years colonial government. The building has abandoned and used for another function and, there were several false historical tales on that among the people. Most of the people think that it was a fortress by Dutch. Some people called it as a market.

But according to the history although the Dutch were able to conquer coastal areas, they could not come in to this hilly area. And on the other hand, there was a huge market building for Badulla, built By British, used as a hospital building at present.

The clipping is from 'The Island' magazine, dated Saturday 21st September 2002. The main headline is 'Badulla Public Market: One of a kind' by W. Panditaratne. The article text is partially visible, starting with 'The news before broadcast on a private channel at 7.00 p.m. on the 21st...'. There are several photographs: one showing the building's facade, another showing a street view, and a third showing a close-up of architectural details. A small inset box titled 'Badulla Market' contains a short summary of the building's history. At the bottom right, there is a separate box with the text 'News paper Article with the original roof structure'.

Therefore it is highlighted that the importance it improving the original use of the building as a public building as there is no such building or a place in Badulla.

The Purpose of the building

The British Rulers in Sri Lanka built this building in 1881 and it has designed and built by the Public Works department, (PWD) which was responsible for conducting design and building of all Government offices, Hospitals, Schools Bridges and highways.

The concept

The building was aimed to create a public square in Badulla town but it was a new concept for the people in Badulla at that period.

Therefore the Architects of PWD thought to design the building according to a concept that more closer to Sri Lankans. The concept was “Ambalama”, (The Way Side Resting Building) The Ambalama is a simple open colonnaded building with a thatched or tiled roof. Some times there is timber or masonry built in seats for sitting and Sleeping.

Ambalama has used for many purposes.

- Walking Passengers- Resting, having meals
- Vendors – sold goods
- Monks – preach Dharma
- Headmen – held meetings
- Farmers – had meals
- Villagers – Chatting, Games

Therefore as a concept the building was a successful creation when considering the built period.

The function

As the main Hospital, court house, Secretariat, daily fair, school, bus station church and many other public places were closer to building many people used the building, and also the walking vendors used the building as a free market.

But in later 1980s the society in Sri Lanka has changed due to the introduction of open economy and also commencement of Terrorist activities in the country.

Therefore people abandoned the building as a public building and vendors gradually entered in to the building and finally encroached the entire building.

Conservation

In 1998 the Department of Archaeology of Sri Lanka conducted a survey on ancient buildings in Badulla Town and listed them as protected monuments as per the regulations published in Antiquities Ordinance.

Among them,

- The Public Building

Courts Complex
Secretariat,
Ambalama,
Temple complex,
St Andrews church
Municipal Council
Old market

And many other buildings were there.

After the listing the Department of Archaeology requested the mayor and Urban Development Authority to release the building for Conservation and use as per its original purpose.

But the mayor and the UDA were not in a position to release the building as the vendors did not agree to move to a far away place and also there were no sufficient funds to build a new building to relocate the vendors.

Therefore several discussions were held among all parties relevant to the matter and luckily The Asian Development bank grant has received for new construction. Thereafter the land adjoining the monument has selected for the new building and vendors were shifted to it in 2002.

Before the commencement of conservation there were several studies had to be done.

1. Identify the damages and make precautions for further decaying.
2. research study on original building
3. preparation of proposals
4. Removal of later addition.

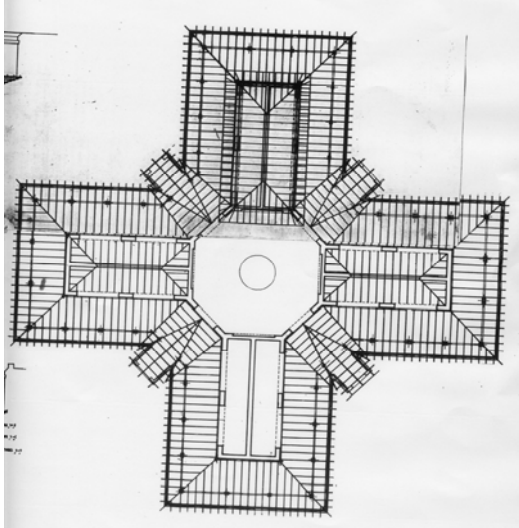
Data about the property

It is an open Colonnaded building with four rectangular wings start from a octagonal central Hub.



Building with changes for shops

The building is built with burnt brick and lime mortar. Central Hub creates an open to sky area, with 4 canopies for 4 wings, It is said that the upper area was used as a watch deck, but no evidences found. But according to an old photograph, there was an ornamental roof over the octagonal part.



Existing roof structure



Inner portion of the building
without the roof structure

Values

There are two main values on the property.

- 1) The architectural value due to its special architectural details that relevant to the period of constructions.
- 2) Functional value as a public Building that provides a free space for citizen's day to day activities.



After removing the shops
Ready for conservation

This building is located in the centre of the Badulla town, close to the central bus station, Hospital, Government secretariat, Courts complex, School, and shopping area. The botanical garden and Sunday fair are also close to the site.

Therefore the site itself has a higher land value according to the property market.

And being in the centre of Business and administration district, it is a viable place for much kind of activities.



After removing the plaster for restoration
work

Therefore developing the monument in to its original form and activity will be advantageous in many ways.

Aims

Define the aims of conservation

The building can be conserved as per to its original condition, and can be used as a public building of present day, which enhances the life of the city.

It will be used as a gathering area for people in their leisure time as well as when they loss in the town especially in the night. (Many people prefer to travel in the night as it takes more than 6 hours to visit Colombo.)



Specially manufactured ridge tiles based on original design

Therefore it will be consisted of a sitting areas, reading area, coffee shop, and public toilets.

One open plan wing at the rear site will be walked with reversible partitions, to accommodate toilets and caretakers office and room.

The front yard will be kept open for cycle parking which does not block view of the building.

There will be no walls or a fence around the monument, so that people will feel, that this is a common building around the monument will also connected to the building.



Special timber arches
It is a difficult task to find suitable timber for restoration

The surrounding land will be landscaped well for better environment and an electronic security system and fire alarm system will be installed.

The centre should be self survived through the income generated and the caretaker appointed will be responsible for proper care and maintenance of the centre.

The people of the town and school children will be educated about this building through common awareness programme.

How to use the building after conservation

1. Road wing – Sitting area, Tea Boutique
 2. School wing - Reading Room
 3. Shopping Mall wing – Cyber café
 4. Rear wing – toilets and maintenance Unit
- In stage 2 of the Conservators wish to re do the decorative roof and the pinnacle. It has to be done more carefully as there are no any physical remains of that roof other than a photograph.
 - Also there had been canopies for Arch ways that can be conjectured by using remaining coble stones.

Special maintenance requirements

Mainly the timber structure has take care on special attention as termite attacks will be there. Therefore the caretaker should have enough stock of wood preservatives, pest control chemicals, and paint etc.



A canopy over the arch way should be replaced with the use of existing coble stones

- As it is very difficult to find timber for conservation in Sri Lanka there were several meetings with The District Secretary and The State Timber Corporation (STC).
- As the DS holds the power of authority on lay down trees he agreed to issue permits to cut down old trees in crown lands.
- Also the STC agreed to issue all local timber (Indigenous Species) only to the

- Department of Archaeology.
- The roof needed much timber for replacing as the vendors have destroyed entire roof structure

 - Some portions of the building was grown with plants and the chemical conservators removed them safely and treated chemically to stop re planting

Maintenance Programme

The entire conservation will be done by the Department of Archaeology

The Center will be functioned under a separate private organization which should responsible for,

1. Department of Archaeology
2. Municipal council of Badulla
3. Urban development Authority
4. Provincial council of Uva

- The project has to be supported by
 - Citizen's Association
 - Lions Club & Rotary club
 - Businessmen's Association
 - Bus Operators Society
 - Passengers Association
 - Voluntary Archaeology Association
 - Three wheeler and Taxi operator's Associations

After total completion

