

The following quote reflects the continuing debate in Great Britain, as far back as 1913, on the same lines as above. Charles Peers, Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments wrote in 1913 (Emerick, 2003):

There is a great distinction between buildings which are still occupied and buildings which are in ruins. Buildings which are in use are still adding to their history; they are alive. Buildings which are in ruin are dead; their history is ended. There is all the difference in the world in their treatment. When a building is a ruin, you must do your best to preserve all that is left of it by every means in your power. When you come to a building which is being used as a dwelling house or a church [...] you have a different set of problems. You have to perpetuate it as a living building, one adapted to the use of the present generation, but which has a history to be preserved (Forsyth, 1913, p. 135).

When John Marshal wrote the famous conservation manual in 1923 for the Archaeological Survey of India, he also recognized “living monuments” and gave guidance saying, “in the case of living monuments it is sometimes necessary to restore them to a greater extent than would be desirable on purely archaeological grounds [...]” (Marshall, 1990, paragraphs 25, 26).

With regard to restoration of religious buildings in use in Sri Lanka, Paranavitana wrote in 1945, “restoration of ancient shrines [...] has to be carried out without hurting the religious susceptibilities of the people [...] that intervention by the Department does not affect their vested interests and traditional rights [...]” (p. 43).

However, at the time of writing the Venice Charter, which emphasized the protection of the fabric or the material remains, the use or the function for which they were built was not a major concern. In fact the assumption was that it was the duty of the heritage professionals to find a suitable use for heritage under consideration, hence recommendations to “use of them for some socially useful purpose”. At a later stage, when the values-led approach was introduced, ‘use’, was one of the values that stakeholders also considered when assessing significance, without making a distinction between the original and current use which may be different. This was called “user value” and was established in the assessment process although it was not given any degree of priority.

Today, however, we do not consider any heritage as ‘dead’. While some heritage places continue to be used for the purpose for which they were originally built, others have acquired new functions or use mainly assigned by heritage professionals. New functions may be touristic, economic or social such as converting buildings to museums. However, as will be illustrated below, there are greater implications for the conservation and management of heritage where the continuity of the original function is evident. Recognizing or characterizing