Performing in Landscape and Emerging Vernacular: Kandy, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper examines how place emerges by ‘performing place’ in natural landscape locations, in order to discover relationships between natural place and cultural place. By examining the issue in new developments in the case of Kandy city in Sri Lanka, the research discusses how traditional built forms are shaped by natural features/locations and performances and sustains vernacular architecture within this relationship. The study considers the role of historical, mythical, and religious narratives in the creation (‘or production’) of place, focusing on the ‘performance’ of the place through the regular re-enactment of ritual activities and events that ‘take place’ in Kandy. It is seen that, ‘place’ is unfolded within a ‘cultural drama’; a ‘performative model’, which narrates in relation to natural landscape. It takes the position that people are actors, and by their daily / weekly / annual historical, religious and mythical ritual processes ‘performing place’ emerges. Cultural place is the theater created by this performance and people re-experience the place and its dynamic nature in the natural – cultural setting: both visibly and invisibly. In Kandy, the vernacular architecture, emerging within this process in material culture, reflecting sense of self, landscape and cultural performance is unique. The experience of natural place in Kandy is an ‘intimate inside’, reflected in performances, dwelling patterns, built forms and in the cultural place.

Keywords: cultural place, natural place, performing place, cultural landscape, natural landscape.
Introduction

Kandy city is the last kingdom of Sri Lanka, situated within a unique landscape location: enclosed by mountains, far views of mountain ranges, greenery, a lake and the Mahaweli river, which is also the most significant cultural place of the island. Nevertheless, many new developments are insensitive or neglect the natural landscape features and location: many new built forms are not in harmony with mountains and landscape in terms of scale, proportions, textures and building locations. These built forms reflect same standard nature of new materials, textures and techniques; the same buildings that can be seen anywhere without relating to the context and the natural landscape. However, traditional buildings are in harmony with natural landscape, in terms of scale, proportion, textures and location. Similar traditional buildings, exist in a more dignified scale in ancient cities like Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, but are in intimate scale in the mountainous landscape of Kandy, reflecting the intrinsic vernacular nature in buildings. These observations from traditional approaches of building processes and emerging vernacular reveal a ‘different way of understanding’ the ‘natural place’ than seen today.

The traditional cultural life celebrates ‘place’, by performing a series of cultural narratives. There are daily, weekly, monthly and annual rituals and ceremonies, being performed celebrating the cultural-social life and the landscape and many traditional built forms are functionally related to these performances and the social system. This study examines the inter-relationships between cultural place, natural place and performances in order to understand how vernacular emerges in and through this relationship. The research aims to discover, how place emerges by ‘performing place’ in natural landscape locations, and shape the cultural place and ‘how traditional become vernacular’ in Kandy.

Performing in Landscape and place making

Many cultures perform narratives as religious, myths, rituals, and social performing: cultural life is dramatized through series of performing events, celebrating the natural place. People are acting and making inter-relationships among each other and with the landscape (Lefebvre,1991; ANT; Lorimer,2005). Richard Schechner’s studies (1988) about ‘performance’—the idea of drama, script, theater and performance—provide interpretive framework in order to understand ‘performing in landscape’. By studying variety of events, performing in different cultures, games, sports, rituals, dance, music, social drama and theater including Avant-garde modern theater, he discusses similarities between all. ‘The phenomena called either/ all ‘drama, ‘theatre’, ‘performance’ occur among all the world’s peoples and date back as far as historians, archaeologist, and anthropologists can go; Human performance is transmitted culturally, not genetically’ (Schechner,1988). Performance and theater appears in many different ways, of daily routine of people. For example, sleeping, walking, washing, cooking, working, driving, and even looking after young ones and families also could be categorized as some kind of performing. The performers’ behaviour, interactions with each other and with landscape make the cultural theater in cultural landscape. Both performance and theater produce space and dynamic nature (Schechner,1988), thus the places that emerge by
performing could be described as ‘performing place’ and ‘performance’ sets in motion the ‘place making’ process.

The idea of performance, in relation to the ‘making process of the place’, have been described by many: the appearance of cultural place in terms of bodily engagement, behaviour and cultural performing has been discussed by Tilly (1994), Rykwert (1976), Geertz (1973), and Rapoport (1975). The social space (Lefebvre, 1991), as ‘production of space’ in terms of body-gesture, behavioral process, as a network of relations describe the body as the generating particle of the cultural place and producing space around the body; as architecture and cities are work of arts; as like Venice is a work of art emerging within, without pre-planning (Lefebvre, 1991). Phenomenological concepts of ‘being’ and ‘dwelling’ (Heidegger, 1962) provide a better frame work to understand the ‘place’ and ‘sense of place’ of the ‘cultural place’. According to Heidegger (1962), Man understands his existence and his ‘being’, by dwelling on the earth, implies connections with physical world and cultural place, his surroundings, making himself belonging to the surrounding, thus experiencing ‘sense of place’. In the cultural landscape, people experience sense of place by cultural performing, by engaging in landscape, by making things around him, by imagination, by performing day-to-day activities, and the place experienced could be described as the ‘cultural place’. Therefore, cultural place has an emerging nature with ‘human performing’. The study argues that ‘cultural place’ emerges by ‘dwelling’ and ‘performing in landscape’. Hence, performing in landscape and dwelling provide an approach to explain architecture and emerging nature of the place that explains how landscape becomes a part of the cultural place and shape the cultural place and how ‘traditional’ becomes ‘vernacular’. Despite cultural geographer’s description of landscape as a discursive field (Foucault, 1967, 1970; Althusser, 1971; Duncan, 1990) cultural place is more dynamic, emerging with human performing, and the production of space. Norberg Schulz explains how ‘genius-loci’ of the natural place reflects the architectural place (Schulz, 1980) by discussing character of the place from a phenomenological point of view.

The study questions what interactions take place between people and the landscape by performing, and how cultural place emerges within this situation.

‘The first theatres were ceremonial centers – part of a system of hunting, following food sources according to a seasonal schedule, meeting other human bands, celebrating and marking the celebration by some kind of writing on a space; ...’ (Schechner, 1988:156). Hence, theater marks a community center, to share with each other, to celebrate, a public place with cultural interactions, celebrating time and the place.

‘The first theatres were not merely ‘natural spaces’, but were also, and fundamentally, cultural places. The transformation of space into place means to construct a theatre; this transformation is accomplished by ‘writing on the space’,

Schechner, 1988:156

We can describe ‘performance’ as THE whole narrative of a particular cultural group interacting with the landscape. Transformation of ‘space’ into ‘place’ happens by any kind of performing, such as writing, imagination, making stories, myths, songs, dances, walking and
making visual things (arts, artifact and architecture). Performing place emerges in this ‘transformation’, converting ‘natural space’ into ‘cultural place’.

The theater is a place where transformations of time, place and persons (human and non-human) are accomplished’ (Schechner, 1988: 165-166). The theater creates special situations, unique to the place and time, and it is emerging with whole performance and performers’ experience in this situation has been discussed by many scholars, (Rothenberg, 1968; Eliade, 1965; Lommel, 1967). Schechner describes that this is a process in which understanding of both the creative condition and the art work takes place: the actual, which is identical among primitive people. ‘Among primitive people the creative condition is identical with trances, dances, ecstasies; in short shamanism’ (Schechner,1988). Shamanism is a ‘method, a psychic technique’ of which the ‘fundamental characteristic ....is ecstasy, interpreted as the soul forsaking the body’ (Lommel,1967). Similar ideas about the integrated understanding of the world and the body have been discussed in ‘phenomenology of perception’, between the perceived world and the lived-body, there exist intentional relations such that the two together form a single system, a circular system (Merleau Ponty,2002). The discussion of bodily appearance in the environment, the surrounding space of Man as a bodily extension (Hale,2006); human body as a ‘embodied paradigm’(Hale,2012) open up a multi-dimensional and multi-sensual world for better discussion on place making (Palassma, 1996) in relation to performance.

Thus, theater and performance open space of new dimensions. By considering these studies, the experience of space, emerging with performance and theater could be described as:

- Transcendental
- Embodied experience of mind, body and the surrounding
- Unique and dynamic
- Human and non human (other worldly/ divine)
- Wholeness

This space can be described as ‘performing place’. We can go back to Heidegger’s concept of ‘dwelling’ and ‘Being’ in order to understand the nature of ‘performing place’. As performers experience oneness in mind-body-surrounding and as they experience the oneness in creation and art work, performing place is a dwelling place. Experience of fourfoldi (Heidegger,1971) within this oneness is evident, earth and sky is the mind and body, divine and mortals is the human and non-humans all in one situation. Therefore, performing place establishes a dwelling place as well as a creative process as Schechner (1988) describes, understanding both the ‘creative condition and the art work’.

Performance and Vernacular

Therefore, performance and theater establish a ‘process’, a place making process for dwelling on the earth. Schechner discusses this process as ‘actual’- which is identical among primitive people; people sense the place and communicate with the place, with each other, with self and outside, with self and landscape features, through bodily performing, dancing, singing, drumming, walking, imagination, kind of inter-related network establish between self and the landscape and outside (Lefebvre,1991; ANT; Schechner,1988). And whole mind-body
become the sensing entity and creating entity of the world, understanding both creative condition and the art work, soul forsaking the body (Lommel, 1967) or experiencing fourfolds (Heidegger, 1971) in the space, and experiencing embodied relationship between self and the environment (Merleau Ponty, 2002; Hale, 2012; Pallasma; 1996).

Related studies, in other disciplinary areas could be taken to describe how ‘performing in landscape’ and place making happen in everyday life performing. The Actor-network-theory ANT, that originally emerged from ethnographic studies of science and technology (e.g. Latour, 1987) discusses the relational view of world always in making. The recent interest on landscape understanding and writing in order to walking, movement and biography become a key theme in the field. Lorimer discusses the landscape as more than representative: telling stories about people, embodied relationships between individual subject and an environment, landscape told as a distribution of stories and dramatic episodes, (Lorimer, 2005) or as ‘repertoires of lived practice, can be creatively recut, embroidered, and still sustain original narratological integrity’ (Lorimer, 2005). Wylie (2005) argues that human emotions, perceptions and sensations in landscape writings and domains of experience that are more than subjective and yet at the same time formative of senses of self and formative, for example, of senses of self and landscape. Lorimer in geography, focusing on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, refers as ‘busyness of being’- the performance aspect. By considering garden activities, he describes that hobby farmer, the plotter, the vegetable grower, the artist, the dog walker, the dog, the human rambler, and the fruit harvester are encounted in passionate, intimate and material relationships with the soil, and the grass, plants and trees that take root there (Lorimer, 2005). Crouch’s horticultures describe how the repetitive doing of things is affirmative of, and can impel, a powerful sense of being, or ‘practical ontology’ (Crouch, 2003).

As we discussed, performance establishes a dwelling place and a process: sometimes without significant architecture or built forms dwelling can occur, it could be only imagination of landscape features or a narration (eg: Australian Aborigines), or it could be art work; art and architecture is the result of interviewing self and the environment by making inter-related network, acting and making (ANT) by performing.

Out of many interpretations about ‘vernacular’, the most appropriate definition of ‘vernacular’ could be, “the architecture of the people, and by the people, but not for the people “ (Oliver, 2003:14). Therefore, we can discuss vernacular emerging in material culture, as a result of interaction between people and the landscape: by acting, sensing and making, converting natural place into cultural place. It is a result of their understanding about both the creative condition and the artwork. As Paul Oliver says,

As yet there is no clearly defined and specialized discipline for the study of dwellings or the larger compass of vernacular architecture. If such a discipline were to emerge it would probably be one that combines some of the elements of both architecture and anthropology with aspects of history and geography’

Oliver, 2003: ? (Wikipedia)
Therefore vernacular is a process; ‘satisfactory definition of vernacular is more difficult; At the moment, the most successful way of describing it seems to be in terms of process; how it is ‘designed’ and built’ (Rapoport, 1969). The peasant owner is still very much a participant in the design process, not merely a consumer; this applies to the townsman of a preindustrial culture (Rapoport, 1969). Therefore, it is reasonable to describe ‘vernacular’ in material culture as a result of understanding both ‘dwelling’ and ‘dwelling process’, by performing. As we discussed earlier the ‘dweller’ is the ‘creator’; process of making is distinguished with transcendental experiences, embodied experience of mind-body and the surrounding, unique and dynamic nature of the place, human and non-human (other worldly/divine) experiences and the wholeness in the place. We can generalize experiences of performers, we have discussed in relation to methods of performing as in table 01.

Table 01: Methods of Performing and Related Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of performing experience</th>
<th>walking</th>
<th>Repetition of doing</th>
<th>Acting and making inter relationships with the landscape</th>
<th>Imagination and making stories about natural features and landscape</th>
<th>Body—gesture, rhythmic movement</th>
<th>Emotions, perceptions and sensations of landscape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Being</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce space</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind—body embodiment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing place as bodily extension</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configuration of self and landscape</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate and material relationship with landscape</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performing process is identical with unique experiences and making direct inter relationships with landscape and the outside; unfold dynamic space (performing place), unique and immediate, present and not having past knowledge. Therefore this is a pure region of immediate understanding of, embodied nature of self within the landscape and performance; vernacular nature in material culture reflect this pure understanding of humans (self), landscape and performance, rather than enriched pre-advanced knowledge. So, vernacular could be the process of immediate experiences gained, rather than primitive, traditional or modern. As Schechner describes,

‘Some artists among us experience the way the Australians (Aborigines) do. Artists treat experience as something indivisible but exchangeable; as endlessly varied but on the same plane; as here and now but other—worldly. It is hard to talk about in our language.’

Schechner, 1988:43
In architecture, building forms and places may reflect human nature, landscape and performance as ‘vernacular’. The last three experiences described in table 01, could be taken to examine ‘vernacular’ in cultural place, according to the visibility in material culture,

- Intimate and material relationships with landscape
  - Use of materials in architecture and artefacts
  - Finishes
  - Techniques
- Configuration of self and landscape
  - Scale and proportion of visible structures
  - Relationship with landscape location and visible structures in terms of scale and proportion.
  - Proportion of natural landscape in cultural place.
- Performing place as bodily extension
  - Human scale and proportions in built forms.
  - Human personalities.

Method of study

The study examines literature, related to ‘performance approaches’ and ‘landscape understanding’ in order to make an interpretive framework, then examines the case study of Kandy, Sri Lanka. Taking a phenomenological approach, it defines its unit of analysis as ‘performing place’ of narrative stories. Data have been collected in the form of observations of rituals and ceremonies, oral and written stories, and myths about the place and have been analyzed as follows;

- How people are performing,
- What they are doing in the performances,
- Use of clothes,
- Production of sounds,
- Making of temporary structures and permanent structures,
- Producing relationships with landscape,
- Imaginative stories about their performance,
- Their experiences about the performance and
- Meaning of the performing.

Data is collected through active methods such as general observations, participant observations, video and audio recording, informal discussions, sketching, meeting with specialists and note taking, as well as passive methods of examining historical chronicles, archival materials, examination of archaeological and museum evidences such as maps, images and folk poetries.

Performing in Kandyan Landscape

Sri Lanka is rich with a variety of natural landscapes, more varieties than Schulz’ (1980) categories described: each landscape location represents a personal character and unique genius-loci. During last 2500 years in Sri Lanka cultural narratives mainly within Buddhist-Hindu cultural frame work have been developed, composed and continuing, representing in the landscape, as discursive fields as Duncan (1990) described in Kandyan landscape. However, it is
seen that different natural landscape locations have been identified differently, by performing narratives and transformed into different dwelling patterns, shaping the cultural place.

Kandy city is located amidst a mountainous landscape in the central part of Sri Lanka. Kandy city was taken under the rule of British Government in 1815 A.D. And from that the place has been exposed to many changes. However, Kandy still remains the principal cultural city of Sri Lanka with a rich heritage of living monuments (Seneviratna, 1983). The city location is a triangular shaped valley, enclosed by three mountains, on an altitude of 488.6m which is 1629 feet (Fig.01). The city edges are demarcated by Udawattakele mountain from east, Bahirawakanda mountain from west and Hantana mountain range from south. The triangular shaped valley, enclosed by intimate scale mountains, how mountains meet the sky, far views of mountain peaks, evergreen landscape and bright sun shine making shadows on the landscape, great river flows around the mountains is a unique location for a city (Fig.02).

![Kandy city - natural landscape location](source: author)

![view of the city from Hantana mountain side.](source: author)
As described earlier, cultural narratives practicing in Kandy are mainly from Buddhist-Hindu cultural backgrounds. Performing these narratives, in different natural landscape locations, have been marking variety of dwelling patterns during past thousands years in Sri Lankan landscape, as follows:

**Non-Being**: not existing, visibly or invisibly, materially or immaterially. The Buddha is known as non-being, the ultimate reality of everything.

**Meditation**: opens pathway towards non-being, the ultimate intention of the world.

**Gods**: represent divine nature, but earthly bounded. They are dwelling in the place without body and performing; hence their 'Being' is different from the Being-in-the-world, described by Heidegger. They have certain territories of which those landscape locations exhibit spiritual nature.

**Kingly nature** – The idea of King is more than human. He is waiting to become Buddha hood, the non-being status and he is Godly and guarded by Gods. The earliest Kings were more Godly than humans and with super natural powers.

**Monkhood** – there are two types, one category, completely devoted for meditation, while the other category is making their influence over the society, involving in education, and religious practices.

**Mundane life** – day today life of people.

Out of many rituals examined in Kandy, there are some rituals which make direct interrelationships with landscape - for example *Asela perehera*. Walking parades from city towards villages and coming back across the landscape, making sacred objects, marking geometrical patterns in the city by walking parades, repetition of actions and events, dancing, acrobating, playing music, body sacrificing, food offerings, and narrating stories are common in these performings (Table 02). Performers of these ritual ceremonies may experience sense of being, production of space, mind-body embodiment and bodily extension in the environment, and etc. as we discussed in table 01, as they perform similar method of performing and make direct inter relationships with landscape. So, it is reasonable to describe these performances and processes, as may have related to experiencing and establishment of vernacular nature in the place.
Table 02: Asela perehera – time, space, method of performing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Number of happenings</th>
<th>Relationship with Natural features/natural landscape location/time/universe</th>
<th>Method of performing</th>
<th>Significant aspect of the performing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kapa situweema</strong></td>
<td>Once a year (July/August) Two days</td>
<td>Selecting and cutting a tree and planting mark direct inter relationships with landscape.</td>
<td>Parades, rituals, music, offerings.</td>
<td>Marking a centre by planting the kapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner parade</strong></td>
<td>Three times in the evening for Five continuous days</td>
<td>Parade around the temple makes inter relationships with landscape location.</td>
<td>Small procession walks around the temple, three times in the evening for five days. Music, offerings and rituals.</td>
<td>Marking a place in the landscape location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outer parade – Kumbal perehera</strong></td>
<td>Five days in the night</td>
<td>Parade walks (clockwise) along the old streets.</td>
<td>Long procession, walking, dancing, acrobating, singing, playing musical instruments,</td>
<td>Parade represent the whole social structure, making interrelationships with landscape location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outer parade – Randoli perehera</strong></td>
<td>Five days in the night</td>
<td>Parade walks (clockwise) along the old streets.</td>
<td>Include God’s palanquins to the above long procession.</td>
<td>Parade represent the whole social structure, making interrelationships with landscape location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diya kapeema</strong></td>
<td>from midnight to dawn</td>
<td>Relates to the changing patterns of midnight to the dawn, parade walks towards the river to perform rituals.</td>
<td>Perception and sensation of the landscape, walking, dancing, playing music, offering food.</td>
<td>Water cutting, offering foods (special rice) for gods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day parade</strong></td>
<td>From mid day to evening</td>
<td>Walking along old streets in day time.</td>
<td>Walking, dancing, playing music, acrobats, body sacrificing.</td>
<td>Parade ends by walking three times around the central square.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Devil dance (Wali Yakun Nateema)</strong></td>
<td>Seven days</td>
<td>Narrative performance of imagined stories</td>
<td>Dancing, singing, music, mime, stories, drawing symbols</td>
<td>Performing series of mythical stories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
City as an ‘Inside’

As Asela perehera is the largest ritual ceremony performed in a grand scale. As similar parades are happening all over the island, the study focuses on this ceremony. Perehera, performed annually for fifteen days continuously, begins by planting kapa on auspicious time and day. Most significant event in Kandy Asela perehera is planting four kapa (pole) on the same auspicious time within four main Hindu shrines - temple of God Natha, temple of God Vishnu, temple of God Kataragama and temple of Goddess Pattini. (Fig. 03) Planting Kapa signifies centre (senevirathne,1978). Centre converges everything into inside and therefore, an inside is a center, and any point in inside is a center. Planting four kapa marks four centers at the natural landscape location, described earlier as a triangular shape valley. Hence, the landscape location has been understood as ‘an inside’ by performing rituals as four important centers are marked simultaneously. As shape of the landscape location is a triangle and shape and scale of enclosed mountains make converging effect, the geographical pattern of the natural landscape location also has provided an ‘inside’ to locate the city. The experience of inside and center discussed by many, (Eliade, 1954; Merleau Ponty, 2002; Bachelard, 1964; Schulz, N. 1988) as open out new dimensions.

In this ceremonial event participant experience divine appearance in the space and by performing by making sounds, smoke, firing, rhythmic praying, and repetition of acting and planting kapa new space is produced. They made the pole, the kapa, as sacred and living by performing rituals and for the entire ceremony kapa is one of spiritual object in the cultural place.

![Diagram of city map](image)

**Fig. 03: Marking four centers**
Source: author (basic city map: Seneviratne, A, 1983)
The next event is inner parade, performing five continuous days. Small parade walks around the four temples three times in the evening (same time), marking four spatial domains within the landscape location (Fig. 04). A temporary fence is erected around the temple, with arched entrances made of young palm leaves weaved together, mark boundary and entrance of the domain. These ceremonial parades take clockwise direction. The next event, continuing for five days along the old streets in Kandy, is the Kumbal perehera (procession of workforce). The meaning of this parade is known as a display of workforce to the king. Although parade takes once in the night within a day, according to Knox’ (1681) description parade takes two times in a day, in the day and in the night during the period of King Rajasingha II (1639 – 1687 A.D.). According to the pageant described by Coomaraswamy (2003), the parade display whole social structure of the Kandyan period during king’s time; another similar idea is perahera as microcosm of Kandyan society (Seneviratna, 1978). However, if parade is only a cultural display or a display of workforce to the king, why this performing is repeating is a question. And also, why there are similar displays performing in all other traditional settlements? We can describe, these performances are relating to the ‘traditional understanding of place making’ and experiencing ‘vernacular nature’ in the making process.

Once the geometrical patterns created by pereharra parade are analyzed, designing of the city is emerging within the performing pathways of ceremony across the landscape. The procession takes clockwise direction, circumambulation of the city (Senevirathna, 1978). The next event, Randoli perehera continues for another five days, which is same as Kumbal perehera but long and more elegant. The whole perehera is a remarking and re-experiencing the cultural place. According to Schechner (1988), transformation of space into place is accomplished by ‘writing on the space’, here transformation happens by ‘writing dwelling patterns on the space’: first mark four centers; then mark four important domains; then circumambulation of the ‘inside’ given by the natural landscape location, transforming natural space into cultural place.
By making direct inter relationships with landscape, by walking, by narrating, by making, by repeating and etc., they establish inter related network, experiencing ‘immediate’ and ‘present nature’ of the dwelling place. Therefore, their actions and performance are experiencing ‘vernacular nature’, immediate embodied experience of self, landscape and performance by re-enactment and re-experiencing the place and dwelling.

Until the last night parade, they mark enclosed domains of dwelling and following morning before the dawn, *kapa* is taken to the river to be floated at the *diya kapeema* (water cutting) ceremony. This is the most significant moment, participants believe ‘divine presence’ in the surrounding and large number of people gather to celebrate this auspicious moment by food offering, bathing in the river and eating food offered to Gods. In this performance people gathered are actual participants, more than observers. After water cutting ceremony, day parade begins from two places, where they have kept sacred objects last night. The sacred objects are taken back to the respective temples in ceremonial procession same as night parade; the parade is ending by walking around the central square three times, marking central enclosed domain. The repetition of walking around this square is the highest in all pathways procession takes place, hence strengthening the ‘sense of being’ in the place. (Fig. 05)

![Fig. 05: Repetition of walking along the streets](image)

Dotted lines indicate pathways of parade: all of them begin and end in front of the temple of Tooth relic  
Source: author

It is seen that Kingly nature – king, administrative buildings, queens palace, and temple of the tooth relic (most sacred object of the Buddhist) - is at the outside of the marked domains,
located east side, at the foot of the Udawattakele mountain. Temple of the God Vishnu also at the outside of the marked domain at the foot of the Udawattakele mountain (fig. 05).

Therefore, these two dwelling patterns have become the mountain, enclosing and safe guarding the city—mundane life; acting like a mountain; making Kingly nature more divine. Temple of the God Natha is located in the square, is the most ancient God—more divine nature exists within mundane world. Temple of the God Kataragama is within the mundane life of people—more mundane nature exists within divine nature, hence four main Gods are dispersed, God Vishnu to become the mountain with Kingly nature, God Natha and Goddess Pattini with other Buddhist image houses and stupa within the central sacred domain, and God Kataragama among the mundane life of people. Monasteries of monks are at the edge of the circumambulation. The dwelling patterns within this ‘inside’ make combination of Kingly-Divine-Non being and Nature; more Divine-Mundane life; more human-Divine; Monks and Mundane life patterns are sharing the place, merge with each other (Fig. 06). There is no clear edge between each domain and no one is dominating out of the place, but be in harmony with each other, sharing the ‘intimacy of inside’ given by the natural landscape location, as any point/location in ‘inside’ is important.

**Fig. 06: Designing Dwelling patterns**
Source: author
Vernacular in the place.

One building from each category has been examined in order to explain vernacular understanding in material culture. (Table 03)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Kingly</th>
<th>Non – Being / Kingly</th>
<th>Godly – more divine within mundane</th>
<th>More mundane/ divine</th>
<th>Non Being/ divine/ mundane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of materials</td>
<td>King’s palace (fig. 07)</td>
<td>Temple of the tooth relic (fig. 08)</td>
<td>Temple of God Natha (fig. 09)</td>
<td>Temple of God Kataragama (fig. 10)</td>
<td>Stupa (fig. 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishes</td>
<td>Clay, rubble, bricks</td>
<td>Clay, rubble, bricks</td>
<td>Clay, rubble, bricks</td>
<td>Clay, rubble, bricks</td>
<td>Clay, bricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Hand crafting techniques.</td>
<td>Hand crafted timber</td>
<td>Hand crafted, by using small scale instruments</td>
<td>Handcrafted, by using small scale instruments</td>
<td>Handmade using small scale instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale and proportions</td>
<td>Small scale</td>
<td>Intimate scale and human proportion</td>
<td>Intimate scale and human proportion</td>
<td>Intimate scale and human proportion</td>
<td>Intimate scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with landscape features/ location</td>
<td>Located at the foot of the Udawattakele mountain. Merge with the mountain and become the mountain</td>
<td>at the bottom of the Udawattakele mountain, next to the King’s palace. Merge with mountain and become the mountain.</td>
<td>Placed at the central square, making intimate relationship with the landscape and with other buildings.</td>
<td>Located among mundane life of people.</td>
<td>Located at the central square, making intimate relationship with landscape location and other buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character/ personality</td>
<td>The building itself is small, placing at higher level, with the mountain make guardian image to the city and people.</td>
<td>Verandas around the central walled room invite people to circumabulation and make the sacred object more sacred.</td>
<td>Homely, welcome appearance. Open drumming hall invite people to relax and enjoy the place.</td>
<td>Homely and urban. Inside open verandas invite people to relax from the business of urban life.</td>
<td>Symbolic but intimate character.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The location of buildings within the place could be understood in terms of performing parades and marking dwelling patterns in the landscape. Experience of natural landscape location as an ‘intimate inside’ reflects on performance, dwelling patterns and in built forms. All buildings examined in each category are in intimate scale, building character looks more human as in Temple of God Natha and Temple of Tooth Relic, king’s palace is not grand, but human and become the mountain and the natural landscape and also within the urbanity of the city. Stupa located at the central square reflect human sense and small in scale, responding to the landscape location, which is in grand scale in Northern part of the island, is a fine example of how traditional forms are becoming vernacular forms. Material handling, finishes, techniques reflect sense of self and landscape. More crafting techniques are used in building constructions, while earthly colours and textures are common in all. The bodily extension and human sense reflect in the place in terms of human scale, proportion, human appearance and character - for example in drumming hall, in stupa, between buildings, image house (fig. 12) and in corridors and in pathways (fig. 13). The traditional building forms, for example king’s palace, image house, stupa which are grand and elegant in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa ancient cities, are becoming vernacular in Kandy, reflecting sense of human, landscape and performance (fig. 14). Yet there are high styles appearing in some built forms in diminishing scale, like temple of the tooth relic and king’s palace; however, their scale, human touch, and human appearance make them more close to vernacular process of understanding ‘self and landscape’, displaying how traditional becoming vernacular. Thus, there is an interesting relationship exists between traditional built elements and landscape features (fig. 15).
**Fig. 09: Temple of God Natha**
Source: author

**Fig. 10: Temple of God Kataragama**
Source: author

**Fig. 11: Stupa at sacred square**
Source: author
Conclusion

‘Performance’ represents an important part in place making in traditional cultures. The place that emerges by performing, opens out multi dimensional, transcendental, human - divine space; performers experience uniqueness in time and space of which they embodied. Performing in landscape is by making direct interactions with landscape - in traditional cultures, by narrating in landscape by means of walking, dancing, body gestures, making stories, touching material sensitivities, firing, making sounds and making interrelationships with each other. Within ‘performing place’, intimate material relationships imply between each other, and ‘human actor’ is the creator of ‘cultural theater’, embodied in the landscape and cultural place, interweaving self, landscape and cultural stories, is a dynamic process. Vernacular Architecture emerging in this situation is unique to the time and place. Therefore, ‘vernacular’ emerges in material culture as a result of understanding both ‘dwelling’ and ‘dwelling process’, by performing. Performing process is identical with unique experiences and making direct inter relationships with landscape and the outside; unfold dynamic space (performing place), unique
and immediate, present and not having past knowledge. Therefore this is a pure region of immediate understanding of, embodied nature of self within the landscape and performance; vernacular nature in material culture reflects this pure understanding of humans (self), landscape and performance, rather than enriched pre-advanced knowledge. So, vernacular could be the process of immediate experiences gained, by performing and dwelling in the place, rather than primitive, traditional or modern. Performing of Asela perehera in Kandy is a re-enactment of place making and re-experiencing the dynamic nature of the place and the vernacular nature.

Fig. 15: Relationships between natural elements and built elements
Source: author

References


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1 Key words and definitions

Nature (in a form of place) – The study is focused on ‘Nature’ in form of a place – a particular place or location, how physical features, and topography make the place and character: for example, river valley, plateau, mountains, hillocks, flat terrains. Nature is somewhere set apart from the human world. (P. 82, John R. Gold and George Revill)

Landscape – John and George have given the definition of landscape by using German term Landschaft. The meaning of Landschaft is ‘perceived appearance of a piece of land – a landscape – but also a restricted piece of land’.

Landscape is then both a physical object and a way of seeing the world. The term refers to the appearance of an area. Landscape is made as much by ploughing fields and building houses as by painting and writing poetry. Landscape therefore is a form of discourse. (between man and nature) (P.87, John R. Gold and George Revill)

Landscape location – location provide a land area (within perceivable level) to make/locate a place.

Dwell – to understand his existence man has to dwell on the earth (Heidegger, 1962)

Sense of Place – when man dwells he experience he belongs to location - sense of place in the location – and himself, the location and dwelling process become one situation, one place.

Natural place – when man experience the nature in a form of a place, for example a scenery, a location and he feels the ‘sense of place’ in the location it become a natural place. Man experience his existence without making physical structures, but dwelling in the Nature, experiencing ‘Natural Place’.

Natural Landscape – Although landscape is a production of discourse between man and nature, the untouched land forms could be described as natural landscape, or the landform before becoming the landscape of man could be described as ‘natural landscape’.
Cultural Landscape – If landscape more close to Nature is Natural Landscape, the landscape created by man is Cultural Landscape, example; cities and towns, houses and buildings, roads and plantations, farm yards, irrigation systems and anything touched and dwelled by people.

Cultural place – when cultural landscape provide ‘sense of place’, it becomes the cultural place. Therefore cultural place is more close to dweller who is residing in the place.

Performing Place – the place experienced by performing narratives (religious, mythical, historical, everyday narratives) in the landscape.

Fourfold – ‘But “on the earth” already means “under the sky”. Both of these also mean “remaining before the divinities” and include a “belonging to men’s being with one another.” By a primal oneness the four-earth and sky, divinities and mortals – belong together in one’. (Heidegger, 1971)

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