

DRAFT 2

20.02.2004

ICOMOS ENAME CHARTER

FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

Preamble

Definitions

Objectives

Principles

PREAMBLE

Just as the Venice Charter established the principle that the protection of the extant fabric of a cultural heritage site is essential to its conservation, it is now widely recognised by many professionals and participants in this field that Interpretation—namely, the communication of the full significance, multiple meanings, and values of cultural heritage sites—is also an integral part of the conservation process.

While a significant number of international charters, declarations and guidelines have stressed the importance of sensitive and effective interpretation, they do not define the standards and basic principles by which interpretation should be undertaken.

Therefore, the aim of the ICOMOS Ename Charter is to emphasize the fundamental role of Interpretation in heritage conservation. The Charter identifies universal principles of professional ethics, authenticity, intellectual integrity, social responsibility, and respect and sensitivity for cultural uniqueness and local significance.

The Charter further seeks to encourage a wide public appreciation of cultural heritage sites as centres of learning and reflection about the past, as well as vital local resources for sustainable community development.

DEFINITIONS

Interpretation is the carefully planned public explanation or discussion of a **cultural heritage site**, encompassing its full **significance**, both **tangible** and **intangible**. Interpretive communication media can range from text panels, to live guides and interpreters, to complex Virtual Reality applications, but whatever the choice of specific media, they should provide information about the site that would be otherwise unavailable. Interpretation should be a combination of the treatment of the site's fabric, the use of the site and activities connected with it, and explanatory information based on research activities and collections.

Interpretive Infrastructure refers to all physical installations connected with the Interpretation of a cultural heritage site. These may include provisions for physical access, spaces for visitor reception and educational activities, and specific interpretive facilities and materials, both on- and off-site.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ICOMOS-ENAME CHARTER

The ICOMOS Ename Charter seeks to establish professional and ethical principles of public heritage interpretation in order to:

1. **Facilitate** wider public understanding of cultural heritage sites and foster public appreciation for the need for their conservation.
2. **Protect** the authenticity and significance of cultural heritage sites through respect for original fabrics, natural and cultural setting, and reversibility of interpretive infrastructure and visitor facilities.
3. **Communicate** the full context of cultural heritage sites and the various dimensions of their significance, both tangible and intangible—from the local and particular to the universal and general.
4. **Coordinate** the presentation of well-documented scientific evidence about heritage sites with an awareness of and respect for local cultural traditions and spiritual values.
5. **Contribute** to the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage sites, enhance the quality of life of the local host community, and foster their productive engagement with the interpretation process.

6. **Improve and develop** techniques and technologies of heritage interpretation that are appropriate and sustainable in their social contexts and establish standards for professional training.

7. **Recognize** that the effective interpretation of heritage sites across the world is an important medium for intercultural exchange.

DRAFT

PRINCIPLES OF THE ICOMOS-ENAME INTERPRETATION CHARTER

Principle 1: Understanding and Communication

The appreciation of cultural heritage sites is a universal right. The communication of their significance should be as broad as possible through effective, sustainable Interpretation suited to a wide range of visitor and stakeholder groups.

1.1 Interpretation should be aimed at enhancing the visitor's understanding both of the significance of the cultural heritage site and the need for its conservation.

1.2 Interpretation should aim to encourage visitors to reflect on their own perceptions of the past and their relationship to the site. Effective interpretation should evoke emotions and insights—as well as facts.

1.3 Interpretation for the public is an integral part of the conservation process. If possible, it should be acknowledged through relevant legislation and the provision of funds for interpretive programmes connected with every public heritage project.

1.4 The involvement of local communities and all stakeholders in heritage interpretation programmes should be facilitated and encouraged.

1.5 The opportunity to appreciate the heritage of any specific place or region under appropriate and culturally-sensitive circumstances is a universal right that should be respected.

1.6 Where appropriate, every effort should be made to ensure that heritage interpretation is accessible to a wide public, including the physically disabled and visitors with other special needs.

DRAFT

Principle 2: Evidence

The Interpretation of heritage sites must be based on accepted scientific evidence, with due regard for the coexistence of alternative cultural traditions.

2.1 Interpretation must be based on a multidisciplinary study of the site and its surroundings and must also indicate clearly and honestly where conjecture, hypothesis or philosophical reflection begin. The goal of interpretation is to show the range of historical information, traditions, and meanings attributed to the site.

2.2 Documentation of all elements in a interpretation programme should be compiled and made available to visitors as well as researchers. This documentation should be in the form of an analytical and critical report, appropriate for local standards and resources, in which the material and historical basis for every element of the work of interpretation is identified.

2.3 The use of artists' visualisations or computer models should be based upon a detailed and systematic analysis of the extant physical remains, including archaeological and historical data, analysis of the building materials, structural engineering criteria, written sources, and iconography. Such visual renderings are hypotheses and should be identified as such.

2.4 Cultural traditions and local historical perceptions are part of a site's significance. Interpretation should recognize and respect the co-existence of scientific and cultural values, since they can both deepen and enrich the visitor's appreciation of the site.

Principle 3: Context and Setting

The Interpretation of cultural heritage sites should relate to their wider social, cultural, historical, and natural contexts and settings.

3.1 The aim of Interpretation is to explore the significance of a site in its multi-faceted historical, social, political, spiritual, and artistic contexts. It should take into consideration all aspects of the site's cultural and natural significance and values without emphasizing any one value to the exclusion of others.

3.2 The contributions of all periods to the historical significance of a monument should be respected and conveyed. Although particular eras and styles may be highlighted, earlier and later periods of the site's history should also be interpreted.

3.3 All communities and stakeholder groups connected with the history of a site should be included in its interpretation, including minorities, women, and immigrants, in addition to the predominant culture.

3.4 The history of the surrounding landscape, natural environment and the overall geographical setting are integral parts of the built heritage and, as such, should be taken into account in the interpretation of a site.

3.5 Intangible elements of a site's heritage such as food, music, dance, cultural and spiritual traditions, literature, and role of the natural environment should be noted and included in its interpretation.

3.6 The universal or cross-cultural significance of heritage sites should become part of their interpretation, providing outside visitors as well as local residents with a sense of personal connection.

3.7 Likewise, while the heritage of any specific place, monument, site, or region may have a universal significance, the cultural practices, knowledge, beliefs, activities, and sacred artifacts of local communities should be noted and respected.

DRAFT

Principle 4: Authenticity

The Interpretation of cultural heritage sites must respect their authenticity and seek to protect their original fabric.

4.1 Interpretation should contribute to the conservation of the authenticity of a cultural heritage site by communicating its significance without recourse to irreversible alteration of its original fabric.

4.2 The public interpretation of a cultural heritage site should always make clear to the visitor the extent of the authentic material remains and clearly identify modern recreations or restorations of missing elements. Elements of the interpretive infrastructure, when superimposed on the extant fabric, should cause no damage to it, and should be clearly differentiated from it.

4.3 If an interpretation programme involves the introduction of new materials or change to the physical setting of a cultural heritage site, these alterations should be reversible and removable without leaving permanent traces, so that the authentic material evidence can be reinterpreted in the future in accordance with changing perceptions and new evidence.

4.5 Authenticity is a concern relevant to human communities as well as material remains. The design of a heritage interpretation programme should respect and safeguard traditional cultural functions of the site and ensure the privacy and dignity of local residents.

Principle 5: Sustainability

The Interpretation of cultural heritage sites must be well planned and sensitive to their natural and cultural environment. Social, financial and environmental sustainability should be among the central goals of any interpretive project.

5.1 The development and implementation of interpretive programmes must be an integral part of the overall management plan for a cultural heritage site. The potential impact of visitor numbers on the cultural significance, physical characteristics, integrity, and natural environment of the site must be fully considered, as well as the social, economic and cultural well being of the host community.

5.2 Alternative interpretive plans should be discussed early in the site planning process, to assess their economic and technical feasibility.

5.3 The scale, expense and technology of interpretive programmes must be appropriate to the location and available facilities. It is essential that a site's interpretive infrastructure be soundly constructed, responsibly maintained, and kept in good repair.

5.4 Kiosks, walking paths, information panels, and other visible interpretive infrastructure must be sensitive to the character of the site and its setting, while remaining easily identifiable. The light and sound from kiosks, screens and speakers must be restricted to the immediate area of the interpretation, so as not to adversely affect the surroundings or disturb nearby residents. Specific interpretive circulation routes may be necessary to minimise impacts on the sites's spatial integrity and physical fabric.

Principle 6: Inclusiveness

The Interpretation of cultural heritage sites must actively involve the participation of all stakeholders and relevant communities.

6.1 The efforts and interests of proprietors, governmental authorities, site managers, scholars, tourism operators, private investors, and the local community in a cultural heritage site must be taken into account in the development of its interpretive program, for the balanced and mutual benefit of all.

6.2 The raising of visitor attendance figures or increasing visitor revenue should not be the sole criterion to judge the success of an interpretive programme. Interpretation should serve a wide range of educational and cultural objectives.

6.3 The rights and interests of the local host community, at regional and local levels, property owners, and other communities who may exercise traditional rights or responsibilities at the site should be respected. They should be involved in the planning process, to ensure that the interpretive programme will not be in conflict with contemporary cultural practices.

6.4 Interpretive activities should provide equitable economic, social and cultural benefits to the host community, at all levels, through education, training and the creation economic opportunities. To that end, the training and employment of site interpreters from the host community should be encouraged.

6.5 Every interpretation programme should be seen as an educational resource and its design should take into account its possible use in the curricula of local schools, special activities, events, and seasonal volunteer involvement.

6.6 The local community should be kept informed of interpretive developments and new features at the heritage site.

DRAFT

Principle 7: Research, Education, and Training

The Interpretation of a cultural heritage site must be an ongoing endeavour, including continuing research, training, and evaluation.

7.1 Opening day is the beginning, not the end, of the interpretation process. The interpretive programme and infrastructure should be constructed so that content updating, expansion, and revision are possible. Continuing research and consultation are important to furthering the understanding and appreciation of a site's significance.

7.2 On-going programmes of evaluation and monitoring are needed to assess visitor reaction to interpretive presentations, as well as to evaluate the physical impact of interpretive infrastructure and interpretive activity on the historic fabric at a particular site or community.

7.3 The training of qualified professionals in the sub-fields of heritage interpretation, such as conservation, content creation, management, technology, guiding, and education, is a crucial objective. Standard curricula should be formulated. In addition, basic academic preservation programmes should include a component on Interpretation in their courses of study.

7.4 Training programmes and courses should be developed with the objective of updating and informing heritage and interpretation professionals of recent developments and innovations in the field.

7.5 International cooperation is essential to developing and maintaining standards in heritage interpretation techniques and technologies. To that end, regular international exchanges of professional staff, cooperation on selected pilot projects, and the establishment of an international forum for the exchange of information and experience about Interpretation should be encouraged.

DRAFT