

Heritage Sites of Astronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the context of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention

Thematic Study, vol. 2

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with contributions by

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Starlight over the church of the Good Shepherd, Tekapo, New Zealand. © Fraser Gunn

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Preface

This Thematic Study is the second volume in a gradual development of themes and issues relating to astronomical heritage in particular and science and technology heritage in general. It also represents progress towards a “global thematic study on science and technology heritage”, a complex topic that can only be approached step by step in the context of a broader, gradual development of ideas.

This Thematic Study results from a collaborative project between the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), an advisory body to UNESCO for cultural heritage, and the International Astronomical Union (IAU), the world’s foremost professional organization for astronomy, through its Commission (C4) on World Heritage and Astronomy. It is published on behalf of both ICOMOS and the IAU.

The main aims of the project are to gain an improved understanding of the character and composition of different forms of astronomical heritage and to identify optimal methods for, and potential problems in, defining this type of heritage in the context of the World Heritage Convention. As a result of the collaboration, the international team of authors is drawn from two complementary scientific and professional communities both of whom have provided invaluable input and expertise. The need to combine methodologies and develop common lines of approach has presented a range of challenges and each of the contributing authors named on various chapters and case studies has played a vital role in helping us to rise to them.

These contributing authors provided the first drafts of their articles working to a common specification. In some cases, the articles have been heavily reorganized and amended in order to impose a suitable degree of consistency of approach and style and depth of analysis (as well as of length).

Versions of the case studies are also available on the UNESCO–IAU Portal to the Heritage of Astronomy (<http://www.astronomicalheritage.net/>). Updates, together with and further reports and case studies, will also be posted on the portal from time to time, forming part of an electronic resource that will continue to be developed into the future.

The overall aim of the ICOMOS–IAU Thematic Studies on astronomical heritage is to highlight issues that might arise if State Parties were to prepare nomination dossiers concerned with the astronomical values of the properties concerned. This second volume in the series builds upon the first by exploring in more detail some of the unresolved issues raised there. In order best to do this, the case studies presented here are structured in the form of segments of draft dossiers. It must be strongly emphasized, therefore, that the presence or absence of any property as a case study in this volume carries no implications whatsoever regarding the outcome of the nomination process should it ever be put forward for inscription on the World Heritage List, either alone or through a serial nomination.

Clive Ruggles and Michel Cotte, March 2017

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Illustrative materials

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Further information

Further information relating to astronomy and archaeoastronomy and/or the context of the World Heritage Convention can be found on the following websites:

UNESCO Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative	whc.unesco.org/en/astronomy
Portal to the Heritage of Astronomy	www.astronomicalheritage.net
UNESCO World Heritage Centre	whc.unesco.org
International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)	www.icomos.org
International Astronomical Union (IAU)	www.iau.org
IAU Commission on World Heritage and Astronomy	www.astronomicalheritage.org
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	www.iucn.org
International Society for Archaeoastronomy and Astronomy in Culture (ISAAC)	www.archaeoastronomy.org

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