
As per Decision: WHC-14/38.COM/16, the Office of UNESCO in Mexico has coordinated the implementation of the HEADS Thematic Programme’s activities since 2013 by organizing international meetings, providing technical advice for candidatures, and advancing Rock art conservation and documentation policies to the benefit of the thematic programme. As requested by the World Heritage Committee, the following report outlines the outcomes of the projects of the follow up of the HEADS Programme that have taken place between 2013 and 2015.

A – MAJOR RESULTS

The 2013 - 2015 period of the HEADS Thematic Programme has achieved major results in terms of the development of the awareness and promotion of research that recognizes the importance and relevance of the earliest heritage related to Human Evolution to the origin of our cultural diversity across all continents. A variety of activities have taken place in support of the thematic priorities and objectives of the HEADS Action Plan.

The following figures illustrate the progress in building and reinforcing the community of interest between Science and the World Heritage Convention since the programme’s inception in 2008 and the major results specifically achieved in the 2013-2015 period:

2009 - 2015

- 21 international meetings
- Cooperation with 265 researchers from 5 continents
- 10 prehistoric sites inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2009
- 4 volumes of the World Heritage Paper Series published with 2 in preparation featuring a sum total of 103 contributions
- 4 site events to submit detailed results on an annual basis to the World Heritage Committee

2013 – 2015

- 6 international meetings
- Cooperation with 173 experts from 5 continents and more than 30 countries.
- 4 prehistoric sites inscribed on the World Heritage list since 2014
- 2 volumes of the HEADS World Heritage Paper Series published with 2 in preparation featuring a sum total of 87 contributions
i. Development of the prototype of the Rock Art World Archive in Mexico

The project, which will implement the digital platform already developed, is ready to be implemented by 32 states of Mexico and will be led by the Office of UNESCO in Mexico in collaboration with national and the academic institutions responsible for the preservation of rock art heritage in Mexico.

In Mexico, there are more than 1000 instances of rock art manifestations that have until now remained unrecorded in a systemized documentary register.

In the course of three years, the programme will develop a web platform that is interoperable with state and national archives as well as archives from research centres and academic institutions. The programme’s goal is to compile, by means of a digital archive, the documentary, graphic, archaeological and anthropological memory of rock art manifestations in Mexico. The programme also provides for three pilot studies in three Latin American countries in coordination with the Office of UNESCO in Mexico.

The work that will be developed by archaeologists, anthropologists, institutional managers, local and indigenous communities and interoperable database management specialists in Mexico, could be replicated in more than 150 countries in the world.

ii. Regional and/or thematic international meetings

1. International Expert Meeting Nomination for the Nomination Process of Tehuacan-Cuicatlán to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The transition from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural societies. The origin of food production and the World Heritage Convention

This international meeting was held in Puebla, Mexico on 18 to 22 August 2014. It brought together a group of 39 experts from 13 countries to help identify and define the Outstanding Universal Value of Tehuacán-Cuicateal in comparison with other world heritage sites, with the goal of beginning the nomination process of the property to the World Heritage List as a mixed site.

This meeting also acted as an important step in strengthening international and regional cooperation, and deepened the comparative analysis of the origin of food production in all continents. By bringing together such a distinguished group of scholars in the field, the meeting provided key insights into understanding the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to sedentary societies and highlighted the importance of the preservation of related archaeological sites.

2. Settlement Dynamics in Human Evolution: human history from dispersals and migrations to adaptations to sedentary societies, implications for the World Heritage Convention

This international meeting of experts was held in Ankara, Turkey from 11 to 13 November 2014 in order to reconsider the way in which sites related to the transition from hunter-gatherers to food production are conceptualized by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and represented on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

3. Interdisciplinary Preservation Practices for Rock Art

The International Meeting Interdisciplinary Preservation Practices for Rock Art in Mexico was held at the Office of UNESCO in Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico from 5 to 6 June 2015. This meeting brought together 12 international and national experts in rock art preservation from 4 countries and 8 institutions.

During four scientific sessions, each of the invited experts presented a case study from their professional experience on integrated approaches for the preservation of rock art. In addition to the presentation of case studies, four round table discussions were organized, during which the experts discussed the main challenges facing the study, research, and preservation of rock art in Mexico, how these challenges could be overcome, and how to design and implement, on a national and international level, a standardized protocol for the preservation of rock art.

Due to the impressive variety in time, space and style of rock art in Mexico, it was agreed that Mexico could serve as a pilot country for the implementation of the Rock Art World Archive (RAWA).


4. Exploring Frameworks for Tropical Forest Conservation: managing production and consumption for sustainability

The International Meeting Exploring Frameworks for Tropical Forest Conservation: managing production and consumption for sustainability was held at the Institute of Ecology in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico from 6 to 8 December 2015. This meeting brought together 40 experts in archaeology, biology, botany, historical ecology, forest management, as well as traditional and local producers, representing 8 countries and 36 institutions.

In the framework of the Post-2015 Development Agenda of the United Nations and in collaboration with the Institute of Ecology (INECOL), The National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) and the German
Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ), this meeting was organized to provide an interactive and interdisciplinary forum for the sharing and synthesis of research and progress in tropical forest conservation and sustainable development from social, economic, and environmental perspectives.

The meeting was separated into four primary themes, the most relevant of which was “Interpreting the Past to Inform the Present and Implication for the Future: lessons from archaeology and historical ecology” which highlighted the very potent impact early human populations played in the formation tropical forest environments, especially in South and Southeast Asia and South America and the challenges of preserving sites of this kind for future appreciation and study. The meeting was concluded with working group sessions one of which was dedicated specifically to “Archaeological research toward the conservation of cultural heritage in the tropical forest”.


iii. Publications and Awareness Raising

iii.a 4 Issues of the World Heritage Paper Series


We are all familiar with iconic prehistoric sites in Africa, Latin America and Europe but less so with such sites in Asia. This must change, as Asia holds a wealth of data, which includes some startling challenges to traditional archaeological paradigms of the emergence and dispersal of modern humans. This issue of World Heritage Papers tackles these questions head-on – exploring recent research programmes, ideas and debates that are lifting the profile of Asia in human evolution studies, while addressing the practical issues of site protection and management. The result is a fascinating compendium that reflects the international and interdisciplinary approach that inspires all work under the World Heritage Convention. This issue builds on the vibrant archaeological research presented at the conference, entitled 'Human Origins Sites in Asia and World Heritage Convention,' held at the Jeongok Prehistory Museum in the Republic of Korea in September 2012.


The purpose of this publication in its two volumes is to present the reader with a panorama of Human Origins in Eurasia, by bringing together key papers written by
leading scientists in the domain of research into human origins. The first volume focuses on the topic of Human Origins in Eurasia, whilst the second volume focuses entirely on the case of the Swabian Jura Aurignacian, particularly important in relation to some of the major research issues surrounding the dispersal of modern humans on the continent. The perspective of this publication is on Eurasia as a whole, transcending modern, political, cultural and regional frontiers, and thus allows for a greater and more profound study of prehistoric archaeological sites.


The purpose of this publication is to present the reader with a panorama of Human Origins in the Americas, by bringing together key papers written by leading scientists in the domain of research into human origins. As a region, the Americas hold many properties with strong links to human origins; some of which are insufficiently represented on the World Heritage List. Thus their value is under-recognized and it is often challenging for State Parties to conserve this heritage and manage its specific vulnerability. This publication addresses many of the aforementioned properties, explaining their links to human evolution.

4. HEADS 6: The Origins of Food Production; to be published in July 2016; II Volumes

Sites related to the transition from hunger-gatherer societies to sedentary societies hold important links to the overall scientific narrative of Human Evolution and are often insufficiently represented on the World Heritage List. Thus their value is under-recognized and it is often challenging for State Parties to conserve this heritage and manage its specific vulnerability. This publication will address properties related to the Neolithic transition from a multi-regional platform and explains their links to human evolution. This publication will provide an important step in strengthening international and regional cooperation and capacities to understand the forager-farmer transition in general, and the future protection and sustainability of global early sites associated with food production in specific. It will feature the most current research from many multidisciplinary perspectives including biological, genetic and micromorphological in an evaluation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of agricultural-related heritage sites.

iii.b Other publications

1. Exploring Frameworks for the Archaeology of the Tropical Forest.

The purpose of this publication is to present the reader with a synthesis of the presentation made at the International Meeting of the same name while providing a panorama of the current state of Tropical Forest Conservation, by bringing together key papers written by leading experts in the domain of tropical forest research from social, environmental, and economic perspectives. In regards to
archaeological research conservation of cultural heritage contained in tropical forests, this volume will highlight the role of human behaviour in the shaping of tropical environments from the Pleistocene to modern day, making them as much cultural as natural environments.

iii. Prehistoric sites inscribed on the World Heritage list since 2014

1. Decorated Cave of Pont d’Arc, known as Grotte Chauvet-Pont d’Arc, Ardèche (France)
2. Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point (United States of America)
3. Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquís (Costa Rica)
4. Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia)

iv. Candidatures proposed for 2016

1. Massif de l’Ennedi: paysage naturel et culturel (Chad)
2. Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape (China)
3. Antequera Dolmens Site (Spain)
4. Gibraltar Neanderthal Caves and Environments (United Kingdom)

v. Candidatures proposed for 2017

1. Dilmun Burial Mounds (Bahrain)
2. Caves with the oldest Ice age art (Germany)
3. Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica

B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for the kind and generous collaboration of the following government bodies, academic institutions, foundations, etc for their contribution to the continued development and success of the HEADS Thematic Programme:

- The Government of the Republic of Korea
- The Government of Ethiopia
- The Government of South Africa
- Turkish National Commission
- Government of Puebla
- Carlos Slim Foundation
- University of Tübingen
- Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)
- Institute of Ecology (INECOL)
- The National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO)
- National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONAMP)
- German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- National Institute for Anthropology and History (INAH)