

URGENT

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Office of Natural Resources and
Environmental Policy and Planning
60/1 Soi Phibulwattana 7, Rama VI Rd,
Phayathai, Bangkok 10400 THAILAND
Tel: +66 2 265 6585
Fax: +66 2 265 6586

11 March B.E. 2558 (2015)

Dear Director of the World Heritage Centre,

**Subject: State of Conservation of the Historic City of Ayutthaya (Thailand)
(C576)**

Kindly refer to the letter No. CLT/HER/WHC/APA/FJ/MS/15/25 dated 13 February 2015, the World Heritage Centre requesting Thailand to provide the comments and information on the concerns raised by the ICOMOS advisory mission to the Historical City of Ayutthaya on 20 October 2014 by 16 March 2015.

According to the World Heritage Committee requested, Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, as the National Focal Point of World Heritage Convention would like to send the comments and information made by the Fine Arts Department as enclosed.

Please be assured of our full cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Kasemsun Chinnavaso

Secretary-General,

Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning

UNESCO World Heritage Centre,

7, Place de Fontenoy

75352 Paris 07 SP

France

Response to Report on the ICOMOS Advisory Mission

Historic City of Ayutthaya, Thailand from 28th April to 2nd May 2014

Regarding to the report on the ICOMOS advisory mission to Historic City of Ayutthaya, Thailand from 28th April to 2nd May 2014, the Fine Arts Department would like to express its highly gratitude to the respective experts as well as the World Heritage Centre for the report and recommendations raised by the concern on the state of conservation that may affect to outstanding universal values of the Historic City of Ayutthaya. The Fine Arts Department is very pleased to inform you its kindly response to the recommendations as follow.

Wall Paintings :

1. Undertake the application of resins to the surface of wall paintings to stop the detachment caused by the precipitation of salt crystals as a matter of urgency.
2. Construct a drainage system inside the walls so that any water which has penetrated evaporates towards the outside rather than into the rooms.
3. Provide details of both of these projects to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS before the project is undertaken.

The Fine Arts Department has already paused all mural painting restorations in order to reconsider about chemical material application particularly in resins as suggested. It also adjured the department conservation practitioners consisting of mural painting restorers, conservators, scientists, technicians, architects, landscape architects and engineers to attend the capacity building workshop which will be held as soon as possible. The Fine Arts Department will keep informing World Heritage Centre the progress and result of the workshop later on.

Flood Prevention:

1. Explore options for improving flood prevention such as: tree planting, construction of wall along the line of former town wall and the revival of other traditional practices.
2. Revise Master Plan to address flood prevention measures.

The Fine Arts Department well recognises that it is impossible to completely prevent flooding in Ayutthaya Island where the World Heritage Property is located due to various factors such as global climate change which causes the situation unpredictable, regional water management including flood risk preparedness for Chao Phraya River Basin as a whole and etc. As a result flood risk mitigation for the archaeological remains within Ayutthaya Island which were designed to stand in seasonal flooding area is perhaps one of most possibility that the Fine Arts Department can carry out.

At present UNESCO-IHE incorporating with UNESCO Bangkok supported by the Fine Arts Department is developing flood risk mitigation plan for the Historic City of Ayutthaya. The project aims to study and establish flood modeling so as to propose flood risk mitigation measures for the Historic City of Ayutthaya. Remarkably it is financially supported by Asian Development Bank and due to complete in March 2015. In parallel the Fine Arts Department is carrying the Disaster Risk Mitigation Plan for the Historic City of Ayutthaya on the basis of the result of UNESCO project. The plan is expected to complete within 2015. In addition the Fine Arts Department is going to review the Master Plan for Conservation and Development of the Historic City of Ayutthaya Phase II and will integrate Disaster Risk Mitigation Plan into the master plan as recommended by the experts from ICOMOS.

Conservation methods and approaches:

1. Define the attributes of OUV in terms of individual monuments, the relationship between them, and their associated materials and craftsmanship.
2. Put in place a detailed documentation system for the structures within the property.
3. Stop the use of cement in mortars. Undertake an analysis of traditional mortars through laboratory analysis. Introduce regular use of lime in mortars through the construction of lime pits. Analyse structure of traditional bricks and explore new sources.
4. Put in place as a matter of urgency training programme to improve the skills and expertise of craftsmen undertaking conservation activities.
5. Remove the new tiles at Wat Dusi Daram and re=instatate traditional brick paving.
6. Undertake a full assessment and documentation of modern structural interventions
7. Consider a national debate/workshop with academicians, FAD and conservation practitioners with the local UNESCO office on the conservation philosophy for protected sites, as well as living protected sites and lived-in domestic sites, and on structural engineering approaches.
8. Introduce demonstration or pilot projects to focus on reviving arts, skills and materials.
9. Put in place appropriate controls to regulate new buildings in the property and its setting.

The Fine Arts Department agrees that it is necessary to identify the attributes of the outstanding universal value of the Historic City of Ayutthaya promptly. It will also establish the detailed documentation system for the structures within the property based on the

department's existing GIS system for the ancient monument inventory. As recommended it will consider to include additional information on the assessment and documentation of modern structural interventions.

For the issues of materials and craftsmanship, the recommendations highly meet the Fine Arts Department policy on capacity building for its staff involving in conservation. The workshop and training activities will be held. Apart from that the department is considering the measurements to control the quality of conservation focusing on material and craftsmanship done by private companies i.e. the establishing of qualified conservation company list. However, quality control measures used in this case are needed to be carefully considered for the accessibility of every company.

For the removal of new tiles at Wat Dusit Daram in order to replace the traditional brick paving, the Fine Arts Department would kindly clarify that so far the evidence of original floor tile of the temple has not been found. The terracotta tile was chosen for this intervention because of the harmonisation to other architectural remains sharing the same period that are normally found terracotta paving as well as maintenance reason.

According to the recommendation on putting in place appropriate controls to regulate new buildings in the property and its setting, it is unfortunately that at this moment the issue is far beyond the responsibility of the Fine Arts Department since the department empowered its authority on building control in the Historic City of Ayutthaya to the municipality. However it is remarked that the Fine Arts Department is recalling this authority in order to review, revise and adopt the better conservation approach. Thus the Fine Arts Department can ensure that the outstanding universal value of the Historic City of Ayutthaya will be retained and transmitted to our future generation.