

DIVISION C / WORKING GROUP ASTRONOMICAL HERITAGE IN DANGER

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1. Motivation and Creation of the Working Group

The working group has been conformed at the beginning of 2016. The objective of the WG is to make a list of sites with relevant astronomical value for Humanity that are currently at risk. The purpose of this list is to influence governments, nongovernmental organizations, international agencies, local authorities and decision makers to achieve protection and care of these sites.

2. Main Remarks During the year 2018 and 2019:

After the IAU general assembly in Vienna in August 2018, the process of reviewing the situation of the IAU WGs began. Our WG submitted its continuity proposal and its goals for the 2018-2021 triennium. In April 2019, the continuity of the WG was approved.

Beyond this, during 2019 actions were taken to start meeting the objectives proposed in the continuity plan of the working group. In particular, some of them were emphasized:

- achieve greater visibility

- achieve a greater relation with the community of experts linked to cultural astronomy to foster debate on and commitment to the idea of astronomical heritage
- achieve a better relationship with other IAU instances that work with related issues, such as the proposed names for astronomical objects.

In this sense, we worked together with the Inter-American Society for Astronomy in Culture (SIAC) to include in its 2019 annual meeting in La Serena, Chile, a forum for discussion on astronomical heritage and its links with cultural astronomy. It was achieved that it was imparted, under the organization of renowned experts (Priscila Faulhaber, Stanislaw Iwaniszewski, Barthelemy d'Ans and Ricardo Moyano) an advanced workshop-course (“Astronomy, territory and cultural heritage”) of 20 hours, for researchers in the area focused on this topic. The course was attended by 35 researchers from all over Latin America.

In the same direction, work was being done on the organization of a round table on astronomical heritage at the joint meeting of the XII Oxford Conference and VIII SIAC Conference that was to be held in Argentina, during April 2020. This important event (the Oxford conference is the largest world event in cultural astronomy and this is the first time that it will be held in conjunction with a SIAC meeting) will now take place in March 2021, due to COVID-19. It will be a critical opportunity to meet the goal of engaging the global community of experts in cultural astronomy with astronomical heritage at risk.

On the other hand, during 2019, in Argentina we worked together with the local committee for the contest to baptize ExoWorlds and their stars. With the support of SIAC and the networks of those who work in cultural astronomy in Argentina, members of aboriginal communities were specially invited to participate in the contest and to propose meaningful and contextual names in their languages. In fact, the decision was made not to accept names in aboriginal languages that were not proposed by speakers or members of the communities that speak those languages. Specific instructions were written, participation was stimulated through specific networks and proponents were helped to submit their proposals. Thanks to this, proposals were received from five different towns. One of the proposals, by Abel Salteño, teacher and leader moqoit was the winner.

In the first part of 2020, a paper in these issues was presented at the 235th AAS Meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii: “My Favorite Archaeoastronomical Sites in the United States: Preservation”, from Thomas Hockey.

Beyond that, it is sought that the list contains basic information about the sites that dialogue with the one that the UNESCO requires for the presentation of applications to the world heritage list.

3. Future

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a major challenge for everyone. In particular, this is true for the goals that we set for the 2018-2021 triennium. In this sense, during the rest of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 we will focus on the following aspects:

1. Ensure the holding of the proposed round table for the XII Oxford Conference-VIII SIAC Conference, which will now be held in March 2021.
2. Promote, through electronic tools, the knowledge by the experts in cultural astronomy of the basic format of the case proposal for list of astronomical heritage at risk prepared by the WG. The preliminary structure that has been designed to request such information is a provisional characterization that, in about 400 words, accounts the following information:
 - Name of the site:
 - Country:
 - Short description (including cultures involved, age, contemporary usage, etc.)
 - Astronomical Relevance:
 - Is it declared a World Heritage Site?:
 - Situation of risk (main threats):
 - Suggested actions to avoid risk:
3. Achieve greater visibility within the community of professional and amateur astronomers. In this sense, it is key to put them in contact with the results of the investigations of those who dedicate themselves to cultural astronomy. This can show them the relevance of issues related to identity, ethnic and cultural conflicts and colonialism for astronomical heritage.