

Guidelines for the Conservation and Restoration of the Archaeological Site of El Pilar

Preliminary version

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Subjects:

1. Analyze the international conservation and restoration norms.
2. Discuss and distinguish the resources applicable to El Pilar site.
3. Define the most significant terms of conservation.
4. Identify the applicable guidelines in order to guarantee the preservation of architectural monuments and maintain a natural environment.

I. International Norms

Today there are many documents that summarize and define the principle actions of the development and conservation of archaeological monuments and sites. One example is the document known as “Carta de Venecia” (The letter of Venice), or “The International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Sites and Monuments” (1964). Many call it inadequate, it continues to be very useful, at least the fundamentals. All subsequent documents have been based on this document. I do not want to say that this letter is a theoretical treatise of restoration and applicable techniques, but rather a series of prohibitions and guidelines. We have prepared this document for El Pilar, taking into account the following documents:

- Carta de Venecia, UNESCO, Venecia mayo 1964.
- Carta de Australia (Burra Charter) ICOMOS, Australia, 1981.
- Normas de Quito, Ecuador, noviembre-diciembre, 1967.
- UNESCO, Nairobi, 1976.
- UNESCO, Antigua Guatemala Septiembre, 1977.
- El Salvador, Junio, 1976.
- La Valette, 1992.
- ICOMOS, New Zealand, Octubre, 1992.

2. Definitions

I.1.1 Monument, cultural property of the nation Norms of Quito

Numbers 3 & 4 literally say:
(need information)

The term monument as I have said before is not a measure of size, such as “enormous”. It is a measure of importance and cultural significance, not of size. Monument is a category. Its literal significance is memory. It is a witness of the past that expresses the sense and the acknowledgement of an ancient culture. It gives a testimony of a typical history because the memory of a particular culture reflects their physical work.

Conclusion

- The support and recognition of the state is indispensable for the conservation of El Pilar.
- A plan should be put in place, appropriate and educational for the adjacent communities to identify themselves with their past.
- It is indispensable that the communities guard and conserve the site. In exchange for their participation, they would receive the benefits of the tourism and development. In other words, we should continue to support Amigos de El Pilar.
- El Pilar, as a national monument is worthy of being conserved, using all the necessary scientific resources .

I.1.2.Conservation & Restoration

Letter of Venice
(need information)

The objective of conservation and restoration is to safeguard. Restoration is only one step in safeguarding. This implies permanent care (Art.3&4). To conserve does not end with the restoration of the monument; it also attempts to go much farther trying to guarantee its permanence for future generations.
Premises:

1. The principal objective of conservation is to perpetuate the historic testimony without the denaturalization of its cultural meaning.
2. Tourism can be a useful resource that we should use as a generator of currency and well being. But it is not the most important object.
3. Visitors represent a factor of deterioration. This is why we should work in the prevention and protection of this danger.

4. Restoration is only one method of safeguarding as mentioned in article 9 to help “keep an exceptional character”.
5. To restore is not always the correct thing to do. If the monument is well preserved, our mission will be use the appropriate methods to maintain and guarantee its permanence.

To restore

It literally means to recover or to repair. For the architectural pieces we cannot use this meaning literally. We need to analyze the reality of each archaeological monument. Now it is opportune to mention Cesar Brandi, when he said “To restore means to intervene with any object with the idea of giving it back its efficiency whatever product of human activity ”(Gonzalez,1977:3) This is seen as a correct definition, but it also has some limitations. Here we have to consider some primordial aspects:

1. For the efficiency of any object or product of the human activity, it has to be given back it's function, for which it was made.
2. The restoration, as mentioned by Brandi, is a process of intervention that will make efficient any product of human creation. It is indispensable that the object be restored to reclaim its efficiency.
3. In our case, archaeological sites are usually in danger of destruction. Consequently they are unique and irreparable sites.
4. The original social function cannot be determined until the iconographic characteristics or special features that help us to identify their use are interpreted.
5. The prehispanic works of archaeological investigations that are ongoing, inform us about the social functions, but its social function cannot be restored. Now we are talking about the structural function.
6. Letter of Venice

With the mention of concepts, it is necessary to review one more time the Brandi definition. So the efficiency will depend of our decision. Numeral 4, Norms of Quito: A small piece of wood can be useful and efficient for firewood. It also can be use to prop up a damaged and old table. Its efficiency will depend of the object. The social function or the usefulness for which one it has been destined.

The archaeological sites are inevitably tourist attractions.

Conclusions for El Pilar

- To restore, is to return the object its efficiency, as a monument; this includes as a principal, a subjective aesthetic aspect. If it is in ruin, however we cannot reconstruct its efficiency or social function.
- The structural efficiency is not related with symbolism, but to the material, with which it is built, and its equilibrium with the environment.
- We can return the monument to its structural efficiency. For example, the flights of steps is efficient to walk into the building. The base of a column is efficient to support it. The walls are efficient to hold the roof. Every structural element is efficient for something specific.
- If an element does not exist because it is destroyed or damaged, we do not have the right to reconstruct it. If an element exists and has lost its structural capacity, it can be restored with support of evidence.

Conservation

Article 1.4: Burra Charter

Article 4: Venice Charter
(need information)

- Both letters coincide with “conservation is a permanent care maintenance.”
- With this base we have to avoid the exposure of architectural monuments if the state does not offer them the permanent care that they need.
- Restoration gives priority to the monuments in high risk, either for natural damage or because of the archaeological investigations.
- The site conservation in a long term has to be a government responsibility, but BRASS is working in a plan of conservation for this site.

To facilitate the understanding of the monument

Venice Charter, Art.15: (need information)

- The visitor is included, beside the archaeologist and the restorer.
- We can not start to restore until we have the forms and details of the structure, and until we know the state of stability.
- Make easy to the visitor the condition of the site as a didactic document.
- On El Pilar there will be available complement works that will help to explain the monument without transforming its authenticity or cultural meaning, or its esthetical aspects.

I.1.3. Definitions

The conservation and restoration of prehispanic monuments consist in applying all the scientific resources that cooperate with it permanence. Assists helps to conserve its integrity and cultural meaning. Also its historic testimony, offering to the visitor an understanding of the monument by maintaining it with constant

and special technical care.

II. Methods

II.1. Investigation and Documentation:

Letter of Venice , Art.9: (need information)

El Pilar has been investigated by a multidisciplinary team, the archaeological investigation had included a restorer who coordinates the following actions:

- All the investigating actions will be tied to a topography system established previously.
- The graphic documentation has to be coordinated for the multidisciplinary team.
- These has to be present a permanent restorer and a conservator.
- In case of a discovery of mosaic pieces, which have to be located on a map with a detailed location for future investigations. They should be placed in a safe place.
- All the architecture has to be well documented.

II.2. Stabilization or Consolidation

Consolidation: In the architectural restoration field, it means to stabilize the structures. It can include the following process:

- “Embone”: It comes from Italian and means to do something right. It is the application of a rustic material (stones and agglutinant) that is applied to old stuffings. It is prudent in all cases to apply an embone coat in order to protect the monuments from the rain.
- To gather: It is a process where we integrated the agglutinant to “juntas de sillares”.
- Resine on stucco: It is the mixture of water and lime sand. It consists in applying this resin to cracks.

II.3. Anastilosis or Reintegration

Art. 15, Letter of Venice(need information)

-Anastilosis:

This method consists in the recovery of the dislocated pieces and to put them back together in their original place. This operation we call reintegration. The methodology is between archaeology, restoration and iconography in the case of mosaic sculpture.

For example, the structure 22 of El Pilar, where a mosaic sculpted face was discovered. The investigation has not finish but we are sure that we have some pieces that will need to be reintegrated, in order to create the original image.

II.4. Integration or indispensable complements

Art.9 & Art.13 Letter of Venice (need information)

Comentary: The mentioned concepts are used incorrectly, like the use of concrete or iron in structures that were never present. Aspects that broke the architectural harmony.

Article 8. Burra Chater. "Conservation requires the maintenance of an appropriate visual setting: e.g. Form, scale, Colour, texture and materials. No new construction, demolition, or modification which would adversely affect the setting should be allowed. Environmental intrusions which adversely affects appreciation or enjoyment of the place should be excluded."

The visual aspects are very important, it is the harmony between the following elements: form, scale, color, texture and materials. In other words: architectonic composition (Venice Chater).

Article 9. Venice Chater. "Reconstruction is limited to the reproduction of fabric, the form of which is known physical and/or documentary evidence. It should be identifiable on close inspection as being new work".

Conclusion: The complements have to have harmony with the form, scale, color, texture and materials. It will require a close inspection.

Case of El Pilar:

- It will depend on the architectonic composition.
- It will need to apply a line with aluminum nail in order to distinguish the original parts from the added ones.
- The object will be to understand the restored piece without erasing its historical value.
- It would not be add structural complements if it does not exist. Like destroyed roofs, or a flight of steps that are no longer In Situ.
- The complements only are justified only for esthetical or technical reasons.
- The technical reasons are related to the monument stability.
- The esthetical reasons are related with the architectural interpretation which is transmitted to the visitors. It will be limited for the evidence that was found.
- The quantity of complements will depend on an analysis of the functional interpretation.

A continuación falta traducción más detallada

III. Restoration Treatments applicable to the structures of El Pilar.

III.1. Previous steps to be investigated and restored

- 1) It will be marked with 2X2 m squares. And will determine the units to be excavated.
- 2) Documentation coordinated between archaeology and restoration, using field notes, drawings and photographs.

III.2. Stabilization or Consolidation

- Embones
- Use of horizontal stamps
- Regarding the structural damages
- Gather the stones of the walls
- Resine on stucco

III.3. Anastilosis or Reintegration

III.4. Integration or indispensable complements

Protective covers: The monuments that were built on El Pilar were made with limestone. It is recommended that during the investigations and restorations, we use temporal or permanent protectors. Depending on the monument state.

IV. Materials

IV.1. Stone

IV.2. Limestone

IV.3. Portland concrete

IV.4. Sand or Sascab

IV.5. Water

IV.6. Mortars

Final note

The plan of conservation of monument and the site, should be integrated with the objectives to conserve the natural state, then the experience has taught that the architectural monuments will conserve better the environment and the microenvironment