

# MANIFESTO ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE TANGIBLE HERITAGE OF ABU DHABI EMIRATE

BY THE ABU DHABI AUTHORITY FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE  
(ADACH)

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## **Preamble**

The Manifesto on the Conservation of the Tangible Heritage of Abu Dhabi Emirate ('the Heritage Conservation Manifesto') is prepared as a statement of the principles and guidelines promulgated by the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) for the protection of the tangible cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi Emirate.

### ***Heritage Conservation as an Abu Dhabi Government Policy***

As the official government agency in charge of conserving and promoting the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi as per Establishment Law 28 of 2005, ADACH plays a primary role in planning and implementing all culture and heritage-related activities, drawing on the experience it has accumulated over the years.

The government of Abu Dhabi has recognized the importance of maintaining Abu Dhabi's values, culture and heritage, and placed it among the nine Pillars of the Abu Dhabi Policy Agenda 2030. 'Culture, Values and Heritage' is one of the seventeen policy areas of the Agenda, under 'Social Development'. ADACH strives to fulfill these goals throughout the full spectrum of its activities, addressing all facets of heritage, both tangible and intangible, in an integrated approach. Recognizing the interdependence between intangible and tangible heritage, ADACH has also developed specific strategies and programs to address their particular characteristics.

### ***The Conservation Mission***

ADACH has adopted the 'Conservation Mission', as an integral part of its mandate for protecting the emirate's tangible heritage. Conservation is a scientific discipline, and the broad term encompassing various activities undertaken for sustaining the cultural significance inherent in the fabric of historic sites and collections. This includes documentation and analysis; planning, design and implementation of interventions (such as consolidation, repair, restoration, rehabilitation, refurbishment, reconstruction, etc.) and monitoring, as well as the appropriate reuse of historic sites. In this sense, the management and conservation of historic sites are inter-dependent and integrated processes.

ADACH is developing a comprehensive set of policies for the conservation and management of the cultural heritage, in accordance with international charters and conventions and best practice in the field, the fundamental principles of which are reflected in the Heritage Conservation Manifesto.

## **ADACH Principles of Heritage Conservation and Management**

In its mission to achieve international professional standards in the conservation of Abu Dhabi's heritage, ADACH has evolved as a specialized body with relevant experience and expertise. ADACH follows the principles below to drive the Conservation Mission forward:

### ***1. Local Values and Identity***

Local identity, memory and sense of place are crucial elements to the social well-being of a nation, and recognized in international documents related to human rights and the environment. In fast-changing societies such as the UAE, maintaining the continuum of these elements becomes all the more critical.

### ***2. Scientific Expertise***

The conservation of historic sites is a highly specialized field and a complex process, requiring appropriate skills, scientific methodologies, technical infrastructure and a suitable cultural framework. These elements will ensure professional standards, and help avoid mistakes that would result in irreversible loss of unique heritage resources. This system can work effectively if the expertise and methodologies are recognized and supported by all stakeholders involved, and conservation efforts are allowed to take place within the required scientific framework. For this, the requirements set forth by ADACH as the expert authority must be respected and works must only be executed by those with the appropriate experience and skills.

### ***3. Research and Documentation***

Conservation work must be informed by sound research on the history and archaeology of the historic sites and documentation of the physical fabric to record evidence of significant layers. This is crucial in identifying the values and significance inherent in a site, and ensuring that the original and significant elements are not lost or falsified through conjectural and inaccurate interventions. Documentation must also cover the sites' existing condition, to identify actions to address damages and threats to the sites.

### ***4. Values and Significance***

A proper comprehension of the values and significance of historic sites is necessary to ensure correct interventions, as the purpose of intervention must always be to preserve these values that are important to the community. These may include a wide range of cultural and contemporary values, such as identity, rarity, architectural, artistic, technical, documentary, economic, functional, social, educational and political. Tangible sites also embody many intangible values, as their form and features reflect the traditions of the communities that created and used them. Furthermore, heritage is an evolving concept, whereby new values can be added to the spectrum, such as those of the recent past. ADACH recognizes that Abu Dhabi's recent past has great significance for the country, and that its modern architectural heritage is also worth conserving for posterity.

### ***5. Authenticity and Integrity***

Best practice in conservation always favors minimal interventions over intrusive ones, so as to maintain the authenticity and integrity of sites. The introduction of new additions and changes in the original fabric should use materials, forms and techniques that are compatible with the original, but

distinguishable from it, so as to maintain honesty about the period to which interventions belong. Reversible interventions are also favored, for similar purposes of minimizing impact to the original fabric.

#### **6. *Contemporary Relevance of Heritage***

As an evolving concept and one that provides a sense of identity and well-being to the community, cultural heritage is highly relevant to our contemporary world. The survival of the tangible remains of history connects the past, present and future, in a continuum that provides stability and a reference point in today's fast pace of change. Cultural heritage also has relevance for the sustainability challenge, as a socio-cultural, environmental and economic resource to be wisely used and conserved for future generations. This great potential should be embraced and put to optimal use by all stakeholders

#### **7. *Adaptive Reuse***

Historic sites should be rendered functional for the present day wherever possible, through means of adaptive reuse that will provide them with new life. Here, the principle of preserving authenticity and significance of the historic fabric must be balanced with necessary adaptations of the site features to accommodate new uses and contemporary needs.

#### **8. *Innovation and Creativity***

The continuing study, conservation and use of historic sites lend opportunities for developing innovative solutions based on new technologies and creative reinterpretation of age-old solutions for inhabiting the environment in a sustainable way. This approach should be applied in various practices including application of new building technologies based on traditional materials, forms and techniques, new design and building within historic contexts, contemporary interpretation of traditional forms in design and engaging cultural heritage in the arts.

#### **9. *Engaging the Economic Value of Heritage***

Contrary to the popular notion that heritage conservation conflicts with economic profitability, there are many methods being developed to reconcile these two concerns. With the right expertise and collaboration, scientific requirements of conservation can and should be balanced with those of generating economic revenue through tourism and other appropriate uses of historic sites. The use of a heritage resource should support the preservation of its values for future generations to benefit from.

#### **10. *Community and Inclusivity***

Cultural heritage is a common resource for the community as a whole, and involves many stakeholders' participation to achieve its successful protection, conservation and management. Much of the significance of heritage resources are formed by the values placed on it by the community, and the ultimate purpose that heritage conservation serves is the appreciation and public benefit that the community derives from it. Thus, it is a goal for ADACH to reach out to the wider community, to make their cultural heritage accessible and relevant for their lives today.

### **ADACH's Mandate for the Protection, Conservation and Management of Heritage**

ADACH's establishment Law, no. 28 of 2005, defines its legal mandate as 'looking after the intellectual and artistic activity, as well maintaining, protecting and managing the cultural heritage in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi'. Within this context, the law defines 'cultural heritage' as the 'product of various traditions, material and moral achievements of the past and present, and 'cultural Property' as 'all movable and real estate property deemed significant to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi cultural heritage and citizens, such as the architectural, artistic, historic and religious monuments; features of natural history, artistic masterpieces, manuscripts and books and other objects of cultural value'. The 'management of cultural heritage' is defined as 'management and supervision cultural properties by identification, protection, conservation, study, documentation, maintenance, promotion and sustainable use in the present and future'. For more information on the vision, mission and core business areas of ADACH, see [www.adach.ae](http://www.adach.ae).

### **Internal Organs of ADACH**

ADACH has several internal organs working in coordination toward the shared responsibility of the protection of the tangible cultural heritage. These departments and their major roles are as follows:

- Strategic Planning and Development Department: Policy development, strategic planning and project inception;
- Conservation Department: Planning, execution and supervision of conservation works for historic sites and collections; training and capacity building for conservation;
- Historic Environment Department (incorporating the Archaeology, Historic Buildings and Cultural Landscapes Sections): Management of the tangible heritage, including physical protection of the sites, inventory keeping, historical research, surveying, excavations and development control (PCR);
- Museums: Management of collections and operation of museums under ADACH;
- Project Management Department: Management and execution of strategic development projects, with a focus on physical rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic sites.
- Intangible Heritage Department: Researching and advising on the intangible cultural values related to the heritage, through mediums such as oral history and ethnographical research.
- Legal Department: Advising on legislation, policy and legal enforcement of protective measures for historic sites.

## External Stakeholders of ADACH

ADACH strives to carry out its mandate in coordination and collaboration with external stakeholders within the Emirate.

- **UAE Federal Government:** Culture is a local mandate in the UAE, and ADACH is the primary responsible body for this field on the level of Abu Dhabi Emirate. ADACH liaises with the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Community Development as the relevant federal body, as and when needed, to ensure alignment of the Emirate-level policies with the Federal government policy, and to contribute to the UAE's international representation, on subjects such as the nomination of the Cultural Sites of Al Ain on UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- **Abu Dhabi Emirate Government Stakeholders:** ADACH seeks support from other agencies for its initiatives, and provides the same to other agencies. Where agency missions overlap, collaboration is based on mutual respect of each agency's core mandate and competencies, with a view to achieve most efficient and beneficial results for the Emirate. The basic forms of collaboration are as follows:
  - o **Abu Dhabi Executive Council:** Reporting to the Executive Council in terms of budget, development and monitoring of strategic plan and initiatives;
  - o **Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD):** Collaboration in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)/ Preliminary Cultural Review (PCR) process, and in cases where natural and cultural environmental concerns converge;
  - o **Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) and Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC):** Collaboration where historic sites protected and conserved by ADACH are also promoted tourism destinations, and in cases where tourism and heritage management concerns converge;
  - o **Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC):** Collaboration in ensuring that planning and development of the Emirate's physical environment is aligned with cultural heritage concerns;
  - o **Department of Transport (DOT):** Collaboration in ensuring that planning and development of transport systems in the Emirate is aligned with cultural heritage concerns;
  - o **Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) and municipalities (Abu Dhabi City, Al Ain City and Western Region):** Collaboration in ensuring that the implementation and operational aspects of the Emirate's development is aligned with cultural heritage concerns;
  - o **Western Region Development Council (WRDC):** Collaboration in ensuring that the planning and development of the Western Region is aligned with cultural heritage concerns.
- **Non-Governmental Stakeholders**
  - o **Private property owners and developers:** Ensuring private developers follow the PCR process, guiding and fostering partnerships toward supporting cultural heritage concerns.
  - o **Professional groups and societies:** Information exchange, collaboration on research and advocacy activities;
  - o **Research institutions and universities:** Information exchange, collaboration on research, advocacy, training and education activities;
- **Wider Public:** Outreach and interaction with the community at large, as end users of the heritage resources and contributors to the reproduction of the local culture; collaboration with the media to facilitate this outreach.