

ICOMOS and National Parks

What can an organization devoted to monuments and sites do to help national park managers and personnel? Where do their interests cross and where can the experience gained in one field help those who are involved in the other?

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, believes that there are many mutual concerns and would suggest that there are mutual benefits to be gained from a close and continuing association and exchange of views among experts on parks and their conservation and presentation, and experts on the conservation and presentation of monuments and sites.

First of all, what is ICOMOS? Most Europeans understand the "monument" concept but others, Americans for example, are frequently confused as to what ICOMOS is and what it does because of the word "monuments" in the organization's title. In

much of the world and in ICOMOS statutes as well, a "monument" is defined as any building or construction having archeological, architectural, historical or ethnographical interest. The ICOMOS statutes continue by explaining that monuments include the setting and all fixtures, fittings and furnishings which belong to the building or the construction. There seems to be general agreement as to what "sites" are. ICOMOS uses the word "sites" to refer to a group or groups of buildings, whether urban or rural, or a landscape fashioned by nature, by man or by the combined action of nature and man, to include historic parks and gardens. Obviously many national parks contain monuments and sites and some parks are, in fact, either monuments or sites.

In recent years, specialists have come to agree that a monument and its setting cannot be separated in spite of the claim to the

contrary put forth by some. Venice cannot be divorced from its lagoon nor can the Taj Mahal be separated from the air quality of its vicinity (an important consideration in view of recent proposals to construct nearby a petrochemical plant which might well have done irreparable damage to the fragile form of the building itself).

The International Council on Museums (ICOM) rather than ICOMOS concerns itself with the collections and objects which are housed or exhibited inside monuments as well as with those collections of buildings or monuments known as open air museums. ICOMOS is concerned with the town complex of Nara in Japan but not with the contents of its fine museum; ICOMOS is concerned with the Kremlin in Moscow and with the Hermitage in Leningrad but not with their museum collections which are of considerable interest and concern to ICOM.

ICOMOS is a non-governmental organization associated with UNESCO, ECOSOC, the Organization of American States, and the Council of Europe. ICOMOS works closely with the International Centre for Conservation in Rome and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), both of which are, like ICOMOS, assigned key roles under the recently adopted UNESCO Convention on the World Heritage of cultural and natural property.

Individuals and organizations are both members of ICOMOS. In Canada and in the United States, the national park services are ICOMOS members and provide much of its leadership and financial support in those countries. In other countries, the variety of individual and institutional ICOMOS members reveals the breadth and scope of the organization's activities. In Paraguay, for example, the National Tourism Directorate and the Ministry of Education are members of ICOMOS. In France, organizations as diverse as the Institute of Geology Library at Strasbourg and the National Guild of Stonemasons, the Academy of Architecture, and the Urban and Rural League are among the almost 100 organizations which belong to the ICOMOS French National Committee.

ICOMOS has national committees in 53 countries and the Vatican. Each of these national committees works with the particu-

lar problems affecting "monuments and sites" within its national boundaries in an effort to link public authorities at every level—national, regional, state and local—as well as departments, institutions, organizations and individual professionals in architecture, art, urban planning and technical conservation and preservation activities. ICOMOS national committees provide a medium for the exchange of information and a mechanism for stimulating and cultivating interests, whether between experts or among decision makers. ICOMOS committee activities are based on establishing standards for conservation and preservation activities, primarily on the basis of the 1964 Venice Charter. ICOMOS Committees promote research into the materials and methods of conserving historic properties and on the exchange of information among specialists. This clearing-house activity may well be the organization's most significant contribution to worldwide programs for the conservation of monuments and sites.

National committee activities are also linked to those of a series of specialized international activities each of which fosters the exchange of information in a particular field among specialists.

During recent years, national committees have met, in many cases with their counterparts from other countries, to discuss issues such as the particular problems faced by small towns, which was the topic for a 1975 meeting at Rothenburg, Germany; the significance of vernacular architecture, which was considered at another 1975 meeting in Plovdiv, Bulgaria; or the ways in which young people can be better and more closely involved with the conservation of historic properties, the topic for a meeting to be held soon in the German Democratic Republic.

At the international level, committee interests not only cut across the national and regional borders but across the borders which separate various disciplines as well. There is an International Committee on Stone (a joint committee undertaken in cooperation with the International Centre in Rome and the International Council of Museums), an International Committee on Wood, one on Photogrammetry, another on Historic Towns, and others on Cultural Tourism, Historic Gardens and Landscapes, and on

An Italian specialist in mud brick conservation techniques notes an area of concern to colleagues participating in the 1976 ICOMOS Colloquium in Yazd.





The ICOMOS magazine, *MONUMENTUM*, is a major international means of communicating preservation technologies and case history reports. Volume 13, the 1976 issue, is being published by the U.S. National Committee of ICOMOS as Bicentennial project. W. Brown Morton III, Chairman of the U.S./ICOMOS Committee, is shown examining the new cover design. NPS photo by Clare Ralston.

Documentation. Several new international committees are in the process of being formed. One will deal with seismology and stabilization, major problems in monument conservation in parts of the world, another will look at industrial architecture and archaeology, topics of increasing interest especially in the western world, and another will concern itself with vernacular architecture.

In 1975 the Historic Gardens Committee met in the Netherlands and gave particular consideration to the need for choosing appropriate species for use in replanting historic gardens, a topic which has given concern to historians and landscape architects who seek to insure that garden, landscape, and park renewal is an authentic expression of traditional forms of plant material. Several meetings of specialists representing ICOMOS and allied organizations have addressed the problems of stone disease or "*maladie de la pierre*," an important and expensive concern in many parts of the world. Stone disease, whose causes have to a large extent been identified, has challenged experts attempting to determine how to treat it and will continue to be an issue of priority concern to ICOMOS.

Late in 1976 the problems affecting wood, and the need for training specialists in the restoration and conservation of culturally significant wooden buildings and building complexes, will be the subject of the ICOMOS Wood Committee meeting in Stockholm.

Also in 1976, another building material, mud and mud brick, was the subject of a meeting organized by the Iranian ICOMOS Committee under the auspices of the Iranian Government. Specialists from more than 30 countries including India, Algeria, Turkey, Peru, Ghana, several countries in Western Europe and a representative of the U.S. National Park Service, from Arizona, met in Yazd for the second in a series of biennial meetings sponsored by ICOMOS, to discuss the preservation of historic properties constructed of mud brick. The preservation of such structures is an

issue of vital importance not only to restorationists and to conservators but also to ministers of housing in those parts of the world where mud or adobe or wattle and daub or rammed earth, all of which are local adaptations of the same building medium, are the basic and primary building material of housing as well as of monuments.

Obviously, the work of these international committees has or can have an impact well beyond that of historic structures alone. Tourism and its impact have wide-ranging and much desired economic benefits but have, in some cases, less desirable impacts on fragile structures in fragile environments; the need for balancing the impacts and the benefits is a concern of ICOMOS Committee on Cultural Tourism.

All of these committees, whether national with interests which cut across a wide range of problems within a single country, or international, have programs and activities which apply to parks, their problems and their management as well as to properties, no matter where they might be located. All of these committees bring together a group of specialists and institutions, many of whom are well situated to assist in the examination and resolution of problems confronting those concerned with parks as well as those concerned with the administration and conservation of historic monuments and sites.

One particular area of cooperation between park and property specialists is offered by the World Heritage Convention, a UNESCO document, now ratified by 22 nations (with the promise of even more ratifications before the end of 1976) which is designed to incorporate into a World Heritage List those properties, both cultural and natural, which can be determined to be of "outstanding universal importance." For the World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS, in cooperation with UNESCO and IUCN and the International Centre in Rome, is proposing criteria for the inclusion of such properties in the List. Properties accepted by the 15 members of the World Heritage Committee for inscription on the List will be entitled to grants from the World Heritage Fund, also established under the Convention.

ICOMOS contends that the World Heritage List, with or without funds from the World Heritage Fund, is of exceptional importance to all those who are concerned with the cultural and with the natural environments. The List, in and of itself, will serve as a means for educating the world as to the importance of the World Heritage, whether it be a park, a wildlife area, an archeological site, or a historic property, and once a property is inscribed on the List, the International Council on Monuments and Sites will be there to lend the expertise and the support of its members to programs designed to conserve and to enhance those properties.

ICOMOS publishes a specialized journal, *MONUMENTUM*, which addresses particular problem areas of conservation and appears biennially as does the ICOMOS Bulletin. The ICOMOS Newsletter, carrying news of special meetings and symposia, appears three times yearly. The President of ICOMOS, Professor Raymond Lemaire of Belgium; the Secretary General, Dr. Ernest Allen Connally of the U.S. National Park Service; Jean Salusse, treasurer of ICOMOS and president of France's Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques; and the ICOMOS Secretariat, located at the Hotel Saint Aignan, 75 rue de Temple, 75003, Paris, offer their assistance and that of their colleagues in the resolution of the problems which they share with those who are concerned with parks and the conservation and preservation of those parks or components of parks which make up a part of our heritage of monuments and sites.

Ann Webster Smith is Deputy to the Secretary General of the International Council on Monuments and Sites.