

INFORMATION MODULES

„Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ and
UNESCO World Heritage Site

Erfurt City Council: UNESCO Coordination Office

Version 1.0

25 August 2023

PAPENFUSS | ATELIER

Introduction >

What are information modules?

Information modules are ready-made texts that can be copied and used in one's own communication without quoting the source. They are aimed at anyone who communicates on the topics of „Jewish-Medieval Heritage Erfurt“ and UNESCO World Heritage, i.e. who writes and publishes content or conveys knowledge.

The information modules serve to speed up the creation of texts for one's own website or print products, press releases and editorial articles or the content of a public tour, etc. Their use helps to produce correct content in a consistent format. Their use helps to convey correct content of consistently high quality on the topics to one's own target groups.

How is the document and the information modules structured?

The document comprises three parts on the topics:

- > UNESCO World Heritage
- > Jewish-Medieval Heritage Erfurt
- > Discover and experience world heritage

Each section contains information modules

- > as a summary, which offers the respective topic in compressed form in ready-copied text modules, and
- > individual modules on the sub-topics of the three parts.

The copyable text modules are mostly available in the following versions and are marked accordingly:

- > Emotional
- > Short version
- > Extended version
- > Long version
- > Good to know

The texts are factual and formulated in generally understandable language. For the „emotional“ version, a popular address has been chosen.

A combination of information modules of individual topics and versions as well as the stylistic adaptation to your own communication are of course possible.

Questions?

Do you have questions or need further information modules beyond the texts created here? Then please contact the UNESCO coordinators in the city of Erfurt:

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Overview Information Modules >

The following overarching themes with sub-themes have been defined for communication. They are the guideline for relevant topics and contents in the communication work for the „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ on the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Topics

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

JEWISH-MEDIEVAL HERITAGE ERFURT

DISCOVER AND EXPERIENCE WORLD HERITAGE

Sub-themes

UNESCO – tasks and goals

Nomination process of the Erfurt application

Offers around the World Heritage Site

World Heritage and World Heritage Convention

Central objects of the application

Events

World Heritage List

Old Synagogue – Medieval Mikveh Erfurt – „Stone house“

News and activities

World Heritage worldwide, in Germany and Thuringia

Supplementary objects of inscription

Gravestone – Erfurt treasure – Hebrew manuscripts – The Erfurt Bronze Lamp – The Erfurt Judeneid (Oath of the Jews)

Procedure for inscription on the World Heritage List

Everyday life and community

Criteria for inscription (OUV)






Consequences of inscription for Erfurt

Duties and added value of the title

Information modules

UNESCO World Heritage

Overview >

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE Information modules	Text versions				
	Emotional short version 	Short version 	Extended version 	Long version 	Good to know 
<i>Compressed text modules as a summary of the topic</i>					
UNESCO and World Heritage → p. 06	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Individual modules on the sub-themes</i>					
UNESCO – Tasks and objectives → p. 07		✓	✓		
World Heritage and the World Heritage Convention → p. 08		✓	✓		
World Heritage List → p. 09		✓	✓		
World Heritage worldwide, in Germany and Thuringia → p. 10		✓	✓		
Procedure for inscription on the World Heritage List → p. 11		✓	✓		
Criteria for inscription (OUV) → p. 12		✓	✓		
Duties and added value of the title → p. 13		✓	✓	✓	✓

UNESCO and World Heritage

EMOTIONAL SHORT VERSION



1,157¹ UNESCO World Heritage sites in 167 countries reflect the diversity and richness of humanity as the world's ideal heritage. What they have in common is their outstanding universal value, i.e. their significance not only for individual states but for the whole of humanity.

SHORT VERSION



UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Communication Organization) was founded after World War II to promote understanding of other cultures and to strengthen global solidarity. Its most successful programme is the Inventory of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This list includes more than 1,000 sites worldwide whose significance is so exceptional that they are considered the heritage of all humanity and should be preserved as such. These include, for example, the Great Wall of China, the Pyramids of Giza, the Statue of Liberty in New York and Cologne Cathedral.

EXTENDED VERSION



The term „World Heritage“ is based on the 1972 World Heritage Convention of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). By signing the Convention, Member States undertake to protect the cultural and natural heritage sites located within their borders as a common heritage of the world and to preserve them for future generations.

To be classified as a World Heritage Site, a property must be of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and have an appropriate system of protection and management.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee decides on the applications of the individual Member States at its annual session.

The title of UNESCO World Heritage Site is an honorary title that is associated with worldwide prestige, but above all with the obligation to protect and preserve a site. Since 1972, over 194 States Parties have ratified the Convention.

The first inscriptions on the World Heritage List were made in 1978, and now more than 1,000 sites in 167 countries are listed.

¹ Status 07/2023

The figures refer to the status in July 2023. 1,154 sites were on the World Heritage List at the end of 2022. In an extraordinary session, the World Heritage Committee nominated 3 more sites as World Heritage Sites and at the same time classified them as being in danger. These include the „Ancient Kingdom of Sheba“ around Marib (Yemen), the „Rachid Karami“ International Fair in Tripoli (Lebanon) and the „Historical Centre of Odessa“ (Ukraine).

➤ *Press release, 25 Januar 2023*

² In June 2023, the USA announced its return to UNESCO for July 2023. Since 10 July 2023, with the signing of the United Nations Constitution on Education, Culture and Science (UNESCO), the USA has once again become a full member of UNESCO, which as of that date has 194 Member States.

➤ *UNESCO press release of 11 July 2023*

UNESCO – Tasks and objectives

SHORT VERSION

UNESCO, with its headquarters in Paris and currently 1942 members, is a specialised agency of the UN. It was founded on 16 November 1945. UNESCO's declared aim was and is to encourage the peoples of the world to live together in peace by emphasising common ground and building greater understanding and tolerance. UNESCO's range of tasks includes the four main programmes for education, science, culture and communication. One of its central tasks is the preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

EXTENDED VERSION

UNESCO, with its headquarters in Paris and currently 1942 members, is a specialised agency of the United Nations for education, science, culture and communication. It was founded on 16 November 1945, immediately after the Second World War, under the impression of the immense worldwide loss of cultural property. Accordingly, the guiding principle enshrined in the UNESCO Constitution is:

Since wars originate in the minds of men, peace must also be anchored in the minds of men.³

UNESCO's declared aim was and is to move the peoples of the world towards peaceful coexistence by emphasising commonalities and building greater understanding and tolerance.

UNESCO's aim is to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security by promoting cooperation among peoples in education, science and culture in order to strengthen throughout the world respect for law and justice, for human rights and for fundamental freedoms, which have been confirmed to the peoples of the world without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion by the Charter of the United Nations.³

UNESCO offers the broadest range of programmes of all UN specialised agencies: It covers the four areas of education, science, communication and culture. One of its central tasks is the preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Sites of outstanding importance are listed on the „World Heritage List“. It is based on the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention).

³ Article 1.1 of the UNESCO Constitution

World Heritage and World Heritage Convention

SHORT VERSION

The term „World Heritage“ is based on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972, the guiding principle of which is to preserve and protect from destruction cultural and natural properties of „outstanding universal value“ for all mankind. By signing the World Heritage Convention, the States Parties undertake to protect the World Heritage sites located within their borders as a common heritage and to preserve them for future generations. It is UNESCO’s most successful programme: since 1972, over 194¹ States Parties have ratified the Convention, and more than 1,000 World Heritage sites in 167 countries are on the World Heritage List.

EXTENDED VERSION

In 1972, UNESCO adopted the „Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage“, which entered into force in 1975; 194¹ States Parties have ratified the Convention to date. The guiding principle of the World Heritage Convention is not to place the preservation and conservation of cultural and natural properties of exceptional importance in the hands of individual states, but to regard them as the common heritage of the world and to place them under protection.

As an international treaty, the World Heritage Convention is the basis for the World Heritage List as a list of cultural and natural monuments with „outstanding universal value“, the so-called World Heritage Sites. By signing the Convention, the States Parties undertake to identify their national heritage and to protect the World Heritage Sites located within their borders from destruction and to preserve them for future generations.

The World Heritage Convention is UNESCO’s most successful and best-known programme. The first inscriptions on the World Heritage List were made in 1978, and over 1,000 sites in 167 countries are now listed.

➤ *Preamble of the World Heritage Convention*

World Heritage List

SHORT VERSION

The World Heritage List is based on the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention). Sites that are of exceptional importance because of their testimonial value for a specific period of human or natural history are included on the „World Heritage List“. More than 1,000 sites in 167 countries worldwide are now listed on the World Heritage List.

⁴ Status 07/2023

The figures refer to the status in July 2023. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee will meet from 10-25 September 2023 at its 45th session in Riyadh, after which the number of cultural and natural heritage sites worldwide will also change. For the latest information, please visit the UNESCO website www.unesco.org/en

⁵ Stand 07/2023

The figures refer to the status in July 2023. With a positive decision by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on the Erfurt application „Jewish-Medieval Heritage Erfurt“, the number of World Heritage Sites in Germany will also increase from the current 51 sites to 52 sites. Current information can be found on the website of the German UNESCO Commission. www.unesco.de/kultur-und-natur/welterbe

EXTENDED VERSION

The UNESCO World Heritage List is based on the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention). The guiding principle of the World Heritage Convention is to preserve for the future cultural and natural properties that have an „outstanding universal value“. The so-called World Heritage Sites are places of special significance for all people. World Natural Heritage sites are unique natural landscapes, World Cultural Heritage sites are unique human cultural achievements. As part of the World Heritage List, they bear witness to a specific period of human or natural history. As a worldwide inventory of cultural and natural sites, they reflect the richness and diversity of human heritage. World Heritage sites therefore do not belong to a particular state alone, but are the ideal possession of the whole of humanity.

The World Heritage Convention is UNESCO's most successful and best-known programme. A total of 1,157⁴ sites in 167 countries are on the World Heritage List. In Germany, 51 sites⁵ may adorn themselves with the World Heritage title.

World Heritage Sites predominate on the World Heritage List, especially in Germany and Europe. Of a total of 1,157⁴ World Heritage sites⁴, 900 are World Cultural Heritage sites⁴ and 218 are World Natural Heritage sites⁴. The remaining 39 sites⁴ are so-called „mixed World Heritage Sites“, as they represent both World Cultural Heritage and World Natural Heritage in their uniqueness.

World Heritage worldwide, in Germany and Thuringia

SHORT VERSION

VARIANT 1 – WORLD HERITAGE WORLDWIDE

The first inscriptions were made in 1978. Today, a total of 1,157 sites in 167 countries are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

VARIANT 2 – WORLD HERITAGE WORLDWIDE AND IN GERMANY

A total of 1,157 sites in 167 countries are on the World Heritage List. In Germany, 51 sites are entitled to the World Heritage title.

VARIANT 3 – WORLD HERITAGE WORLDWIDE, IN GERMANY AND THURINGIA

Worldwide, 1,157 sites in 167 countries are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, 51 of them are in Germany, Thuringia is currently represented with 4 sites.

OPTION 4 – WORLD HERITAGE IN THURINGIA

With the Wartburg Castle, the Bauhaus sites in Weimar, the Classical Weimar and the Hainich National Park, there are currently 4 World Heritage Sites in Thuringia.

EXTENDED VERSION

VARIANT 1 – WORLD HERITAGE WORLDWIDE

A total of 1,157 sites are on the World Heritage List in 167 countries. World Heritage sites predominate on the World Heritage List, especially in Germany and Europe. Of the total of 1,157 World Heritage Sites⁴, 900 are World Cultural Heritage Sites⁴ and 218 are World Natural Heritage Sites⁴. The remaining 39 sites⁴ are so-called „Mixed World Heritage Sites“, as their uniqueness represents both, World Cultural Heritage and World Natural Heritage.

OPTION 2 – WORLD HERITAGE WORLDWIDE, IN GERMANY AND THURINGIA

In Germany, 51 sites may adorn themselves with the World Heritage title. Taken as a whole, they bear witness to the richness of Germany's natural and cultural heritage. Germany is one of the countries with the most World Heritage Sites in the world. In terms of numbers, it is on a par with France and is only surpassed by Italy (59 sites) and China (57). Of the 1,154/1,157 World Heritage sites, more than half are located in Europe and North America (52%), Africa has less than 100 World Heritage sites (6%).

In Thuringia, the Wartburg, the Bauhaus sites in Weimar, the Classical Weimar and the Hainich National Park are currently four sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. With a positive decision by the World Heritage Committee in September 2023, the „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ would become a further site on the World Heritage List with the inscription from Thuringia.

Procedure for inscription on the World Heritage List

SHORT VERSION

An application for inscription on the World Heritage List can only be submitted by a Member State itself. In Germany, only one German proposal for inscription is submitted per year. Within the framework of their cultural sovereignty, the Länder nominate potential sites for a German proposal list, the so-called Tentative List. The KMK, representing the Länder, decides in which order the Tentative List is to be processed and which proposal is to be submitted to UNESCO for a decision.

The applications are forwarded to the Federal Foreign Office via the KMK and sent to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris. It checks the applications for formal correctness. A group of experts reviews the application. For cultural heritage, this task is performed by members of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Their expert opinion is the basis for the decision of the World Heritage Committee, which decides at its annual session on the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

EXTENDED VERSION

Only member states can apply for inscription on the World Heritage List. In Germany, only one cultural or one natural heritage site is nominated for inscription per year. The respective application is submitted to UNESCO via the Federal Foreign Office for a decision. In Germany, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz), i.e. the 16 federal states, decides which application is to be submitted and votes among themselves on the fixed order in which the list of nominations is to be processed. The time between inclusion in the German Tentative List and submission of the application to UNESCO can thus take several years.

When the time has come for the application to be submitted to UNESCO via the Foreign Office, the staff of the World Heritage Centre in Paris first check it for correctness and completeness. The application, consisting of the application dossier and the management plan, is then sent to a group of experts who examine the application from a technical point of view on site and draw up an expert report.

In this report, they justify why, in their view, the application should be decided positively or negatively, or whether certain information should be submitted later or revised. For cultural heritage, this task is carried out by members of ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites.

The ICOMOS expert report is the basis for the decision of the World Heritage Committee, which, as the final step of the application, decides at its annual session on the inclusion of new sites, i.e. also on the respective German application to the World Heritage List.

Criteria for admission (OUV)

SHORT VERSION •••

VARIANT 1

OUV means Outstanding Universal Value and refers to a cultural and/or natural significance that is so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and is of universal importance to present and future generations of all humankind. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of paramount importance to the entire international community.

The Committee shall establish the criteria for inscription of properties on the World Heritage List.

VARIANTE 2

The OUV concept is based on the 3 pillars of „uniqueness“, „authenticity“ (historical genuineness) and „integrity“ (intactness) of a cultural monument or natural heritage site. All 3 pillars must be fulfilled for a site to meet the requirements for inscription on the World Heritage List.

EXTENDED VERSION •••

To be classified as a World Heritage Site, a property must be of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The overarching conditions include the criteria of „uniqueness“, „authenticity“ (historical authenticity) and „integrity“ (intactness). The so-called „Outstanding Universal Value“ of a cultural intactness or natural heritage site is made up of these elements. UNESCO has developed ten criteria for evaluation, the first six of which are particularly relevant for cultural sites and cultural landscapes. The Committee considers a property to be of Outstanding Universal Value if the property meets one or more of the ten criteria.

The OUV of a good is thus reflected in a number of characteristics. Not all characteristics of a property contribute to the OUV, but those that do are to be adequately protected by the States Parties. The OUV is developed with the World Heritage nomination, established with the inscription on the World Heritage List and summarised in a declaration by the World Heritage Committee.

The OUV is inviolable and non-negotiable.

In addition, a site must have an adequate system of protection and management to ensure the safeguarding of the OUV.

➤ [Website Jewish Life Erfurt](#) → [Introduction World Heritage](#) → [Criteria](#)

Duties and added value of the World Heritage title

SHORT VERSION

The World Heritage title is an honorary title. It signifies a commitment to the preservation of a site as the heritage of all humanity. The protection and care as well as the communication of the World Heritage idea are central tasks associated with the award of the title.

EXTENDED VERSION

By conferring the title of World Heritage, States undertake to protect their World Heritage sites and to conserve them for future generations. Even after the World Heritage title has been awarded, the work on and in the World Heritage site is therefore not over: Numerous actors at the level of the Länder and municipalities as well as other institutions perform a wide range of tasks in order to protect, conserve and communicate the World Heritage sites in the long term and to ensure their sustainable use. The title is not associated with any concrete financial support from UNESCO. It is an honorary title that is associated with worldwide prestige, but above all with the obligation to preserve a site.

⁶ In Germany, the sponsors of World Heritage sites are the respective municipalities, the federal state or associations. Depending on the ownership structure, „mixed“ responsibilities of municipality and federal state are also possible. The sponsors are responsible for the financing, management and administration, monument conservation and mediation of a site. As initiators of applications, they usually also bear the costs of the application procedure for the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cf. KMK: Handreichung der Kultusministerkonferenz der Länder zum UNESCO-World Heritage, October 2017, p. 14 www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/Themen/Kultur/Broschuere_Welterbe_end.pdf

LONG VERSION

By conferring the title of World Heritage Site, States undertake to protect their World Heritage Sites and to conserve them for future generations. If States Parties fail to fulfil their obligation of protection and conservation, UNESCO may place a site on the „Red List of World Heritage in Danger“.

Even after the World Heritage title has been awarded, the work on and in the World Heritage site does not end: Numerous actors at the level of the Länder and municipalities as well as other institutions perform a wide range of tasks in order to protect, conserve and communicate World Heritage sites in the long term and to ensure their sustainable use.

In Germany, the responsible bodies for World Heritage sites are usually the municipalities or the Länder.⁶ They ensure the basis and are responsible for the management of a site, the implementation on site and for the sustainable and monument-compatible development of World Heritage sites and their buffer zones.

As the World Heritage List continues to grow in number, UNESCO strives to protect the title „World Heritage“ from arbitrariness. For this reason, all World Heritage sites are reviewed at regular intervals. Once again, ICOMOS and, in the case of natural heritage sites, IUCN, the World Union for Conservation of Nature act on behalf of UNESCO. The monitoring group of ICOMOS Germany is responsible for the German World Heritage Sites.

There is no concrete financial support from UNESCO associated with the title. The UNESCO title is above all an honorary title that comes with worldwide prestige.

INDIVIDUAL MODULES

→ Duties and added value of the World Heritage title

GOOD TO KNOW 

„LIST OF WORLD HERITAGE IN DANGER“ OR ALSO „RED LIST“.

In addition to the World Heritage List, UNESCO also maintains the List of World Heritage in Danger. It is also known as the „Red List“. This list includes cultural or natural heritage sites that are threatened by serious dangers and require extensive measures for their preservation. There are currently 557 sites on the „List of World Heritage in Danger“, including the Old City of Jerusalem, the cultural landscape of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan or the Everglades National Park. Due to continuing dangers, three sites were most recently nominated as World Heritage in an extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee and at the same time classified as being in danger, including the „Ancient Kingdom of Sheba“ around Marib (Yemen), the International Fair „Rachid Karami“ in Tripoli (Lebanon) and the „Historic Centre of Odessa“ (Ukraine)⁸.

There have only been three deletions from the World Heritage List so far⁷: In 2007, the Arabian oryx antelope wildlife sanctuary in Oman was deprived of its World Heritage title after the reserve was reduced in size by 90 per cent in order to extract oil there. In 2009, the „Dresden Elbe Valley Cultural Landscape“ lost the World Heritage title due to the construction of the Waldschlösschen Bridge, which was considered a serious encroachment on the cultural landscape. In 2021, the Committee decided to remove the Maritime City of Liverpool from the World Heritage List. It considered the site's Outstanding Universal Value to be permanently damaged by a multitude of construction projects.

➤ *Website German Commission for UNESCO → World Heritage → Being a World Heritage Site: Vulnerability factors and compatibility tests in World Heritage*

GOOD TO KNOW 

REGARDING THE QUESTION: DOES THE WORLD HERITAGE TITLE ENTAIL FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

No. The title „UNESCO World Heritage“ is an honorary title that is associated with worldwide prestige. In certain cases, UNESCO grants financial support to states for the application, care and maintenance of World Heritage sites, but only if they are unable to do so on their own and the sites in question fill a thematic gap on the World Heritage List or are located on the territory of a state that has no or only a few World Heritage sites. Germany, with its current 51 World Heritage sites, is not one of them.

GOOD TO KNOW 

ON THE QUESTION: WHO IS SPECIFICALLY RESPONSIBLE ON THE GROUND FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF A WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

The owners of World Heritage sites are the respective Länder or municipalities. The municipalities are usually central in the initiation of applications as well as in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

As their sponsors, they are responsible for the management of a site, its implementation on the ground, and for the sustainable and monument-compatible development of World Heritage sites and their buffer zones.

⁷ Status 07/2023

The information given refers to the status in July 2023. Current information can be found on the UNESCO website ➤ www.unesco.org/en

⁸ Press release of the German UNESCO Commission of 25.1.2023







Inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger also ensures better access to UNESCO's technical and financial assistance to ensure the protection and conservation of sites in danger.

➤ *Press release, 25 January 2023*

Information modules

“Jewish Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“

Overview >

Information modules	Text versions					
	Emotional short version 	Short version 	Extended version 	Long version 	Good to know 	Sources and further information 
<i>Compressed text modules as a summary of the topic</i>						
„Jewish Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ → p. 17	✓	✓	✓	in progress		
<i>Individual modules on the sub-themes</i>						
Nomination process of the Erfurt application → p. 18		✓		✓	✓	✓
Central objects of the application → p. 21					✓	✓
› Old Synagogue → p. 23		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
› Medieval Mikveh Erfurt → p. 29		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
› „Stone house“ → p. 33		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supplementary objects of inscription → p. XY		in progress	in progress			
Everyday life and community → p. XY		in progress	in progress			
Consequences of inscription for Erfurt → p. XY		in progress	in progress			

„Jewish Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“

EMOTIONAL SHORT VERSION ☆

Erfurt, the capital of Thuringia, is proud of its Jewish history: impressive buildings, a worldwide unique treasure and unique manuscripts have been preserved over seven centuries and can be experienced in Erfurt today. Erfurt is thus applying for the title of „UNESCO World Heritage Site“.

SHORT VERSION ●●●

VARIANT 1

The abundance and significance of the Jewish medieval remains in Erfurt are unique in the world. With the medieval buildings of the Old Synagogue, Mikveh and „Stone House“, the city of Erfurt has been nominated for the title of „UNESCO World Heritage Site“.

VARIANT 2

In Erfurt, the early heyday of Central European culture can be traced before it was abruptly ended by the „Plague Program“ in the middle of the 14th century. With the medieval buildings of the Old Synagogue, the Mikveh and the „Stone House“, the Jewish medieval testimonies in Erfurt are unique worldwide in their abundance and expressiveness. For this reason, the Thuringian state capital Erfurt has decided to apply for the title of „UNESCO World Heritage Site“ for its Jewish medieval heritage.

VARIANT 3

The cohabitation of Jews and Christians between coexistence, persecution and expulsion has shaped Europe over centuries and had effects all over the world. Today in Erfurt, Jewish ritual rite, Jewish everyday life and Christian-Jewish coexistence, but also conflicts, persecution and expulsion of Jews in the Middle Ages are documented with more authentic testimonies than at any other place in the world.

EXTENDED VERSION ●●●

In the largely intact historic old town of Erfurt, unique architectural evidence of the important Jewish community from the period between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 14th century has been preserved. These include the Old Synagogue, one of the oldest, largest and best-preserved medieval synagogues, the mikveh, which was first built in the 12th century, and a Jewish secular building from the 12th and 13th centuries, the so-called „Stone House“.

As the central objects of the Erfurt application, the architectural evidence is supplemented by a wealth of material evidence such as gravestones, manuscripts and the „Erfurt Treasure“, which is unique worldwide. In their combination, the testimonies fulfil all the elements that are necessary to express the extraordinary universal value.

The objects in their entirety provide information about Jewish community and everyday life as well as the coexistence of Jews and Christians in medieval sites - in a complexity that is not comparable to any known site. They reflect the cohabitation of Jews and Christians between coexistence, persecution and expulsion in a medieval city in Europe.

Erfurt sees its UNESCO application as an acknowledgement of Germany's special historical responsibility to recall and permanently honour Europe's Jewish-Christian roots. Sites that focus on Judaism and its history are under-represented on the World Heritage List, especially when it comes to European Jewry. → see p. 20

Nomination process of the Erfurt application

SHORT VERSION

In 2008, the city of Erfurt decided to apply for the title of „UNESCO World Heritage Site“. In 2014, the site „Old Synagogue and Mikveh in Erfurt - Testimonials of everyday life, religion and urban history between continuity and change“ was included in the German proposal list for future World Heritage sites. At the beginning of 2021, the World Heritage application including the management plan entitled „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ was submitted to UNESCO. The decision on Erfurt’s application will be made by the World Heritage Committee in September 2023 at its 45th session in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh.

At the beginning of 2021, the World Heritage application including the management plan entitled „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ was submitted to UNESCO via the Thuringian State Chancellery, the Conference of Ministers of Culture and the Foreign Office.

From September 2021, the application was evaluated by ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites. Components of the evaluation were an extensive site inspection in Erfurt, an expert report on the submitted documents and a series of further question rounds, which were answered in writing. Prior to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS issues a technical vote. This vote in turn forms the basis of the UNESCO Commission’s decision.

Originally, the World Heritage Committee was to decide on the Erfurt proposal at its annual session in the second half of June 2022. This session was to be chaired by Russia and held in Kazan, Russia. However, due to the war in Ukraine, it was initially postponed at the end of April 2022.

At an extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee in January 2023, the 45th session of UNESCO was scheduled to take place between 10 and 25 September 2023. The session will take place in Riyadh under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia. The exact date on which the Erfurt proposal will be decided is not yet known.

→ Nomination process of the Erfurt application

LONG VERSION ...

In 2008, the city of Erfurt decided to apply for the title of „UNESCO World Heritage Site“ for its Jewish medieval heritage. The first step towards the UNESCO title is inclusion in the German Tentative List. This list contains all future World Heritage sites with which Germany is applying to UNESCO for inclusion in the World Heritage List. At that time, the Free State of Thuringia had already agreed to apply for the Jewish heritage, which had previously been underrepresented on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. In 2012, the Erfurt application for its „Jewish-Medieval Heritage“ was handed over to the Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (TMBWK), which brought it into the proceedings of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) for inscription on the German Tentative List.

The KMK’s discussions on updating the German Tentative List began in 2012. Each federal state was allowed to propose a maximum of two new World Heritage sites. The KMK had specially convened an advisory board to provide technical support. In 2013 and 2014, the proposals from all the federal states were reviewed by experts from various disciplines. In spring 2014, the advisory board made a recommendation on the composition and order of the new tentative lists, which were officially agreed upon by the KMK. In spring 2014, the advisory board made a recommendation on the composition and order of the new tentative lists, which were officially agreed upon by the KMK.

In June 2014, Erfurt’s site „Old Synagogue and Mikveh in Erfurt - Evidence of Everyday Life, Religion and Urban History between Continuity and Change“ was included on the German Tentative List for future World Heritage Sites. As Erfurt was sixth on the list it

was clear at this point that the submission of the application was to be planned for 2021. At the beginning of 2021, the World Heritage application including the management plan entitled „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ was submitted to UNESCO via the Thuringian State Chancellery, the Conference of Ministers of Culture and the Foreign Office.

From September 2021, the application was evaluated by ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites. Components of the evaluation were an extensive site inspection in Erfurt, an expert opinion on the submitted documents and a series of further question rounds, which were answered in writing. Prior to the meeting of the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS issues a technical vote. This vote in turn forms the basis of the UNESCO Commission’s decision.

Originally, the World Heritage Committee was to decide on the Erfurt proposal at its annual session in the second half of June 2022. This session was to be chaired by Russia and held in Kazan, Russia. However, due to the Ukraine war, it was initially postponed at the end of April 2022.

At an extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee in January 2023, the 45th session of UNESCO was scheduled to take place between 10 and 25 September 2023. The session will take place in Riyadh under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia. The exact date on which the Erfurt proposal will be decided is not yet known.

- *Website City of Erfurt → Press release on the Erfurt application for inclusion in the German Tentative List (17.7.2012)*
- *Website City of Erfurt → Press release on Erfurt’s application for inclusion in the German Tentative List (12.6.2014)*

→ Nomination process of the Erfurt application

GOOD TO KNOW

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

20 years after the adoption of the World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage List has become increasingly unbalanced. The vast majority of the inscribed properties were located in developed regions of the world, especially in Europe, while cultural sites clearly predominated. UNESCO has therefore been striving for years to make the World Heritage List more representative, more balanced and thus more credible. To this end, it adopted the „Global Strategy“ in 1994, which changed the conditions for inscription on the World Heritage List.

UNESCO's stricter evaluation and decision-making processes also made it necessary to adapt the German strategy for submitting applications for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Priority is therefore given to applications from sites that represent a type of World Heritage that is not yet represented or is under-represented. When updating the German Tentative List, the KMK (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs) also decided to give preference to applications from underrepresented categories. This should increase the chances that Germany's nominations will be considered in the future. Sites that focus on Judaism and its history are underrepresented on the World Heritage List, especially with regard to European Jewry.

- *Website UNESCO → Global Strategy*
- *Handbook of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder on UNESCO World Heritage (10/2017)*
- *Website Kultusministerkonferenz → Press release „Future World Heritage nominations selected from Germany“ (12.6.2014)*

GOOD TO KNOW

AIMS OF THE APPLICATION

The primary aim of the application is to strengthen the status of the Old Synagogue Erfurt, the Mikveh and the „Stone House“ as individual monuments as well as testimonies to the Jewish religion and culture in Central Europe. At the same time, the presence of Judaism in Europe since antiquity is to be made more visible to the general public. The confrontation between Jews and Christians has decisively shaped Europe in its present form. With its World Heritage application, the state capital is fulfilling Germany's special responsibility to recall the common roots of Jews and Christians in Europe and to pay appropriate tribute to the contribution of Jewish citizens to scholarship and economic prosperity.

GOOD TO KNOW

MOTIVATION FOR THE APPLICATION

The worldwide unique abundance of preserved buildings and material evidence in Erfurt is a stroke of luck for the city's history. At the same time, it is a special responsibility to adequately present and communicate the relationship between Jewish and Christian city residents, which was again and again threatened by violence, destruction and expulsion in the Middle Ages.

Erfurt sees the World Heritage List as a suitable instrument for drawing attention to the history of its Jewish inhabitants in the Middle Ages, which is exemplary for the history of Ashkenazi (Central European) Jewry.

Central objects of the application

GOOD TO KNOW

CRITERIA FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

For inscription on the World Heritage List, a property must meet the overarching conditions of „uniqueness“ (OUV - outstanding universal value), „authenticity“ (historical genuineness) and „integrity“ (intactness) and meet at least one of the ten criteria defined by UNESCO. In addition, a site must have an adequate system of protection and management to ensure the safeguarding of the OUV. → see p. 12

The „Jewish Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ is nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List according to criterion (iii) and criterion (iv).⁹ With the confirmation of the nomination by the World Heritage Committee, the properties should „represent a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to an extant or extinct culture“ (iii) and „an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which symbolizes one or more significant periods of history or humanity“. (iv).

The Old Synagogue, the Mikveh and the „Stone House“, together with the complementary material evidence, comprise all the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value.

Criterion (iii)

The synagogue, the Mikveh and the „Stone House“ in the historic centre of Erfurt are exceptional testimonies to Jewish ritual, Jewish everyday life and Christian-Jewish coexistence, but also to the persecution and expulsion of Jews in the Middle Ages. The three buildings, together with the Erfurt treasure, illustrate in a unique way the medieval everyday life of an important Jewish community in Ashkenaz.

Criterion (iv)

The ensemble is an early and rare testimony to Jewish sacred and secular architecture in the Middle Ages. The buildings illustrate adaptation to vernacular architecture and local conditions; they have been preserved through re-use. Nevertheless, the long-hidden original substance bears witness to their original purpose and, in connection with the treasure find, to Jewish everyday culture. The traces of a key event in European history, the wave of pogroms in 1348–50, are preserved and can be traced in a unique way on the original buildings as traces of fire and repairs.

➤ *“Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ - UNESCO Nomination dossier: Short summary of the nomination, pp. 7–9*

The form and material of the objects have been largely preserved. The urban integration of the buildings of the Jewish community into the medieval city is still impressively visible today. Their construction and use by the Jewish community or Jewish citizens of the town and their adaptation to local building traditions and techniques is attested to by the original preserved medieval building fabric. The traces of a key event in European history, the pogrom wave of 1348–50, can be traced in a unique way on the basis of original building fabric and archaeological findings. *(Excerpt from the statement on authenticity)*

⁹ The applicant (for the „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ this is the City of Erfurt) drafts a proposal for the OUV as part of the application. The actual version of the OUV is summarised in a final statement by the World Heritage Committee with the decision for inscription. The final version of the OUV is only bindingly defined with a positive decision by the World Heritage Committee and inscription on the World Heritage List. The proposed draft OUV of the City of Erfurt could deviate from the final version of the World Heritage Committee in the event of inscription.

→ Central objects of the application

The features of the three components illustrate the wholeness and intactness of the nominated property. They are located in the middle of Erfurt's Old Town, whose medieval appearance is very well comprehensible in the buildings, street layout and general townscape. The Erfurt Old Town ensemble of monuments unites important historical buildings, including several hundred individual cultural monuments that have been built since the 12th century. The ensemble is thus located in an urban and architectural context that has been preserved as far as possible in its original form. *(Excerpt from the declaration of integrity)*

The properties are of an appropriate size to ensure the protection of the features and processes that convey the significance of the asset. It is not at risk of adverse development or neglect. The redevelopment of the Old Town, which was severely neglected during the GDR period, was intensified in the 1990s and has been largely completed. Where plans for further development exist or corresponding projects are underway, they are under the supervision of the heritage authorities of the City of Erfurt and the Free State of Thuringia. *(Excerpt from the declaration of integrity)* The laws and other regulations of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Thuringia guarantee the continuous protection of the property. As part of the „Old Town of Erfurt“ monument ensemble, municipal statutes and planning and the urban development concept safeguard the outstanding universal value of the nominated property and the protective function of the buffer zone. *(Excerpt of requirements regarding protection and management)*

➤ „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ - UNESCO nomination dossier: *justification for inscription, pp. 61–89*

GOOD TO KNOW

REGARDING THE QUESTION: WHY HAVE THE MANUSCRIPTS OR THE ERFURT TREASURE ITSELF NOT BEEN NOMINATED FOR THE WORLD HERITAGE TITLE?

In principle, the title „UNESCO World Heritage Site“ is only awarded to buildings. Therefore, material evidence such as the Hebrew Manuscripts, the gravestones or the Erfurt Treasure are not part of the application. However, as historical sources, they round out the knowledge of Ashkenazi, i.e. Central European Judaism in the Middle Ages, and thus belong to Erfurt's Jewish medieval heritage.

→ Central objects of registration

Old Synagogue

SHORT VERSION ●●●

VARIANT 1

With a construction date of around 1094, the Old Synagogue is one of the oldest, largest and best preserved medieval synagogues in Europe.

VARIANT 2

The Old Synagogue, with its 11th-century components, is the oldest synagogue in Central Europe preserved up to the roof. An extraordinary museum was created here in 2009 and a place where the medieval testimonies of Erfurt's Jewish community are accessible to the public.

VARIANT 3

With a construction date of around 1094, the Old Synagogue is one of the oldest, largest and best-preserved medieval synagogues in Europe. Its architectural history reflects the history of Erfurt's Jewish community up to 1349.

VARIANT 4

With its oldest components dating from around 1100, the Old Synagogue is the best-preserved Jewish prayer house in Central Europe with construction beginning in this early period.

EXTENDED VERSION ●●●

The Old Synagogue in the historic centre of Erfurt is one of the oldest, largest and best preserved medieval synagogues in Europe. It is one of the few surviving synagogue buildings of the European High Middle Ages with construction beginning in this early period. On the basis of the original building stock, various construction phases can be traced, from the time of origin around 1100, the extensive history of use after the devastating pogrom of 1349, to the most recent reconstruction measures in the 19th and 20th centuries. The building's history thus impressively reflects the history of a Jewish community in tension with its Christian environment, beginning with the origins around 1100, through rise and prosperity, but also riots and persecution, up to the complete extinction of the community during the pogrom of 21 March 1349.

Today, the Old Synagogue is an extraordinary museum and a place where the medieval material testimonies of Erfurt's Jewish community are accessible to the public. With the establishment of a museum, the synagogue has found an appropriate use again today.

→ Old Synagogue: History of building and use

LONG VERSION ...

GENERAL

The Old Synagogue is located in the historic centre of Erfurt, in the core of the monument ensemble „Old Town of Erfurt“, The two-storey building, made of ashlar and quarry stone, is situated on the site of today's Waagegasse No. 8, between Benediktsplatz in the south-east, Michaelisstraße branching off to the north-west, and the fish market and town hall in the south. The synagogue was the centre of community life and thus of Jewish settlement. The location of the synagogue without direct visibility from the street is characteristic of medieval synagogue buildings in a quarter inhabited equally by Jews and Christians.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CLASSIFICATION

With a construction date of around 1094, the Old Synagogue is one of the oldest, largest and best-preserved medieval synagogues in Europe. It is one of the few surviving synagogue buildings of the High Middle Ages in Europe. Of these, it is the oldest and also has the most extensive original building stock. The building is thus one of the rare architectural testimonies that still vividly illustrate this decisive phase of European Jewish history.

After the pogrom, the place of worship was converted into a storehouse. The use of the building as a storehouse continued in a barely changed form for the next 500 years. From the late 19th century until 1990, the former synagogue was used for gastronomy. The alterations, additions and extensions had severely damaged the synagogue and impaired its original appearance; the original shape of the synagogue remained barely recognisable for a long time. But at the same time, this was also its salvation. The building remained virtually unknown in the general perception, fortunately also during the National Socialist era.

It was not until the late 1980s that the synagogue returned to the public eye. The Institute for the Preservation of Historical Monuments documented and evaluated the existing substance. Building investigations by the Freies Institut für Bauforschung (Free Institute for Building Research) from 1992 onwards, under the direction of Elmar Altwasser, proved that the Old Synagogue had been largely preserved and was of special structural quality. However, there was an acute danger of collapse. In 1998, the city of Erfurt acquired the building, which it had extensively researched and renovated in the following years. The special significance of the Old Synagogue and its stories demanded special conservation.

Already during the renovation, it was decided to preserve the traces that reflect the history of Erfurt's Jewish community. Since 2003, a concept for the use of the Old Synagogue has been worked on. Since 2009, a museum on the history of Erfurt's Jewish community in the Middle Ages has been established in the Old Synagogue, in which the Old Synagogue itself is the most important exhibit.¹⁰ The traces of the various uses have been preserved and integrated into the museum concept. The museum use explicitly takes into account the building fabric and complements it in terms of content. → see p. 28

¹⁰ The Old Synagogue Museum was opened on 27 October 2009.

→ Old Synagogue: justification for inscription (summary)

GOOD TO KNOW

The following features illustrate the building's Outstanding Universal Value as a component of the nominated property: The Old Synagogue is one of the few surviving synagogue buildings of the High Middle Ages in Europe. The Old Synagogue is of an appropriate size to reflect a full picture of its significance as the oldest, largest and best preserved synagogue in Europe. As a medieval ritual building, the Old Synagogue represents a unique testimony to Jewish tradition. Its use and function as a congregational synagogue are fully legible. The location in the middle of the medieval town is comprehensible. The high degree of intactness and authenticity is measured on the one hand by the predominantly preserved medieval inventory in material, substance and architectural form, and on the other hand by the legibility of all relevant construction phases. The architectural form and design of the Old Synagogue from its period of use between about 1100 and 1349 are mostly preserved. The substance of the synagogue can be traced back to the four medieval building phases, with the majority dating from the period between 1270 and 1300, the heyday of Jewish life in Erfurt. Distinctive design features illustrate its medieval character, such as the high quality of craftsmanship of the representative façades, the double and round-arched windows (1st and 2nd construction phase), the slender, pointed-arched window jambs made of sandstone, a monolithic tracery rosette and the gable line visible as a building seam, which mark the originally steep gable roof (3rd construction phase in each case). From the time after 1300, fragments of three narrow lancet-arched traceried windows and the fully profiled lancet-arched north portal (walled up) are preserved. In the interior, remains of the light cornice and spolia have been preserved, on the basis of which the Torah shrine and the bima can be reconstructed.

The conversion of the building into a storehouse is a unique example of the profanation that took place after the plague pogroms in 1349.

After its rediscovery, the Old Synagogue was repaired, restored and put to museum use by the city of Erfurt in accordance with its status as a listed building. It is therefore not affected by adverse developments or neglect. The requirements for protection and management of the Old Synagogue as a nominated property of the „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ are comprehensively protected by laws and conventions at international, national, federal and municipal level.

➤ *„Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ – UNESCO nomination dossier: brief summary of the nomination, pp. 61–71*

→ Old Synagogue - building history: 11th–14th century

GOOD TO KNOW

The building history of the Old Synagogue reflects the history of the Jewish community of Erfurt in the Middle Ages and also bears witness to later conversions and changes to the building. Its medieval substance was essentially preserved even through the conversions.

BUILDING PHASE 1 – 11TH CENTURY

The oldest parts of the wall of the Old Synagogue date from the late 11th century. They are thus the first ever evidence of a Jewish community in Erfurt: timbers from this building phase could be dated dendrochronologically to the year 1094. The masonry, decorated with incised joints, can be traced in the lower area of the western wall over a width of about eight metres. As was customary in the Middle Ages, the original floor was below street level. As a sign of humility, people descended a few steps into the synagogue when entering.

BUILDING PHASE 2 – 12TH CENTURY

It is no longer possible to reconstruct exactly what the building looked like in this early period. The same applies to the second building phase from the 12th century, in which the Old Synagogue was rebuilt and renewed. Only a short piece of wall in the west wall with a double window (biforium) made of sandstone dates from this building phase. The masonry does not have any incised lines. The only architectural decoration in it is the twin window, the biforium, in whose lintel timbers from the first building were newly installed.

BUILDING PHASE 3 – AROUND 1270

Around 1270, the Jewish community had a representative new synagogue built, incorporating the older parts of the building. Among other things, the five lancet windows and a large window rose on

the western façade bear witness to this. They still characterise the appearance of the synagogue today.

The high interior of the synagogue was spanned by a wooden barrel vault, the original plaster edge of which still exists under the roof on the west wall. The only surviving piece of furnishings in the interior is the light cornice, a circumferential band on which oil lamps or candles were placed to illuminate the synagogue. It is clearly visible on the east side of the room. The Torah shrine was most likely also located here. This was destroyed during the conversion into a warehouse in order to create a gateway. The location of the reading desk, the bima, cannot be reconstructed because of missing traces in the floor. In the Middle Ages, however, it usually stood in the middle of the room. Two preserved arch stones suggest an octagonal bima.

BUILDING PHASE 4 – AROUND 1300

Around 1300, the synagogue was extended several metres to the north and raised. The extension probably housed other rooms necessary for religious community life, such as the women's synagogue, traditionally separated from the men's prayer room, or the school for teaching Hebrew to boys, or a room for meetings of the Jewish court. It was separated from the actual synagogue room by large pointed arches profiled with pear bars.

The extension had a arches with pear shaped profiles symmetrically structured façade to the north. The entrance to the synagogue was originally in the middle of the north wall. Above the preserved gateway were five high lancet windows, of which, however, only three are rudimentary: When the synagogue was converted into a warehouse after the pogrom of 1349, the windows were reduced in size for the installation of storage floors, using the old

→ Old synagogue - history of use: After 1349 until today

jambes and arches.

USE AS A WAREHOUSE AFTER THE POGROM OF 1349 UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY

In 1349, the synagogue was severely damaged in the devastating pogrom. After the pogrom, the place of worship was converted into a warehouse. The city of Erfurt took possession of the building and subsequently sold it to a local merchant. He converted the synagogue into a warehouse by building in a vaulted cellar, adding two solid wooden ceilings and erecting a new roof truss. In order for carts to reach the storehouse from the front building in Michaelisstraße and on to Waagegasse, two large gateways were broken into the east and north walls. Almost all of the synagogue's furnishings fell victim to the reconstruction. The building was used as a storehouse for the next 500 years in a form that hardly changed.

GASTRONOMIC USE - 19TH CENTURY TO 1990

From the late 19th century until 1990, the former synagogue was used for gastronomic purposes and remodelled accordingly: A dance hall was built on the upper floor, kitchen and dining rooms on the ground floor and even two bowling alleys in the basement and ground floor. For this purpose, the upper wooden ceiling of the store was removed and replaced by a surrounding gallery. The rich furnishings on the upper floor with stucco figures and colourful painting are still largely preserved. Until 1990, the building was continuously used for gastronomy, which led to smaller and larger changes and installations.

DISCOVERY AND RESCUE - AFTER 1990

For a long time, the original shape of the synagogue was hardly recognisable due to the alterations, additions and extensions. However, it was probably this circumstance that saved the building from destruction during the Third Reich. It was not until the late 1980s that the synagogue came back into the public eye. The Institute for

the Preservation of Historical Monuments documented and evaluated the existing substance. From 1992 onwards, building investigations were carried out by the Freies Institut für Bauforschung und Dokumentation (Free Institute for Building Research and Documentation) under the direction of Elmar Altwasser. It was proven that the Old Synagogue is largely preserved and of special structural quality.

However, due to its use as a warehouse and restaurant as well as decades of neglect, there was an acute danger of collapse. The new owner, who had acquired the synagogue together with the entire building complex from the TLG (Treuhand Liegenschaftsgesellschaft) back in 1990 and wanted to set up a pub brewery with a large restaurant here, made no effort to renovate the building. Due to the looming uniqueness of the building, the city of Erfurt endeavoured to save the synagogue and put it to appropriate use. After difficult negotiations, the Old Synagogue was purchased by the city in 1998.

REDEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTION OF A MUSEUM: 1999 TO 2009

In the following years, the city of erfurt had the building extensively researched and renovated. The special significance of the Old Synagogue and its history demanded special conservation. When it came to the question of the use of the Old Synagogue, the city of Erfurt decided on a museum use, the concept for which had been worked on since 2007. The traces of the various uses were to be preserved and integrated into the museum concept. A museum on the culture and history of Erfurt's Jewish community in the Middle Ages was established in the synagogue.

The renovation of the building was carried out consistently in accordance with the principles of monument preservation. In order to make the synagogue visible from the outside, numerous extensi-

→ Old synagogue - history of use: After 1349 until today

ons were removed. In addition, the renovation included the entire history of the building, i.e. also its history of use after the expulsion of the Jews. A „reconstruction“ of the interior during the time it was used as a synagogue was deliberately avoided in favour of authenticity and integrity. Thus, the interior still shows the different historical layers of time. The use of the building as a museum explicitly takes into account the building fabric and complements it in terms of content, so that today the building is a vivid testimony to Jewish culture in Erfurt in the Middle Ages.

The Museum Old Synagogue Erfurt was opened on 27 October 2009. With the establishment of a museum on the history of Erfurt's Jewish community in the Middle Ages, the synagogue has now found an appropriate use again.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION



DIGITAL SOURCES

- *Website Jewish Life in Erfurt → History of the Old Synagogue*
- *Website Jewish Life in Erfurt → Animation film on the building history of the Old Synagogue*
- *Website Jewish Life in Erfurt → Virtual tour through the Old Synagogue:*

PUBLICATIONS

- *„Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ - UNESCO nomination dossier: justification for inscription, pp. 26–35, 61–71, 78–80, 136*
- *Landeshauptstadt Erfurt (Hg.): „Kleine Reihe“ der Alten Synagoge: „Alte Synagoge und Mikwe zu Erfurt“, 1. Auflage 2013 (German)*
- *Landeshauptstadt Erfurt (Hg.): „Kleine Reihe“ der Alten Synagoge: „Geschichte aus Stein und Pergament – Die Alte Synagoge in Erfurt“, 1. Auflage 2016 (German)*
- *Thüringisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie (Hg.): Die mittelalterliche jüdische Kultur in Erfurt. Band 4: Die Alte Synagoge, 1. Auflage 2009 (German, english summary)*

→ Central objects of the application

Medieval Mikveh Erfurt

SHORT VERSION •••

VARIANT 1

The Erfurt Mikveh is one of the few surviving examples of medieval monumental communal Mikvehs, the architectural structure of which is so far unique in Europe. Its function as a ritual bath is still fully visible today.

VARIANT 2

The Mikveh belongs to the series of medieval Jewish ritual baths in Europe. Its size and structural quality underline the significance of the building as a representative community facility. The shape of the building, for which there is no parallel to date, is unusual.

VARIANT 3

The Erfurt Mikveh belongs to a series of early medieval Jewish ritual baths in Europe. It is one of the few surviving medieval monumental communal Mikvehs. It differs from the other surviving shaft or cellar Mikvehs by its special design, adapted to the local topographical conditions, for which there is no parallel.

EXTENDED VERSION •••

The Jewish community probably had a Mikveh directly on the banks of the Gera as early as the 12th century. Documentary evidence from the middle of the 13th century shows that the Jewish community paid taxes for the ritual bath and for the property. Along with the synagogue and cemetery, it is an important part of the Jewish community. It was used for ritual purification after touching the dead, with blood or other impurities in a religious sense. It differs from the other surviving shaft or cellar Mikvehs in its special design, which was adapted to the local topographical conditions and for which there is no parallel.

The pogrom of 1349 left clear traces on the building. Obviously, the Mikveh, like many buildings in the Jewish quarter, was massively damaged. Jews who settled in Erfurt from 1354 onwards continued to use the Mikveh, while the Old Synagogue had already been converted into a warehouse. The city council forced the Jews to leave Erfurt in 1453/54. By then at the latest, the Jewish use of the Mikveh came to an end. The basin was filled in, and the room above it was used as a cellar until the 20th century. In 2007, archaeologists discovered the medieval Mikveh. Since September 2011, it has been open to visitors and accessible on guided tours.

→ Medieval Mikveh Erfurt / History of building and use

LONG VERSION ...

The medieval Mikveh in Erfurt dates back to the 13th century, and its medieval building fabric has been preserved in large parts to this day. Built directly on the banks of the Gera in high quality craftsmanship, it had a longitudinal ground plan and probably a gable roof over the inner barrel vault. An older piece of wall in front of the south wall indicates a predecessor building, which the community probably erected in the 12th century. Presumably the other walls were dismantled for the new building and the stones reused as building material. An alleyway, now built over, led from the Mikveh to the Old Synagogue, the first place of worship of the Jewish community.

Written sources show that the Jewish community had to pay taxes for the bath and the land, first to the bishop, later to the city of Erfurt. The Mikveh is mentioned, among other things, in the Mainz Heberolle of 1248/49, and in the free interest registers for Severi it can be traced back to around 1250. The Jewish community is named as the owner of the property on Krautgasse (directly north of Krämerbrücke), where the cold bath („Frigido balneo“) was located. From the medieval tax lists we learn that the area around the Mikveh was densely populated. As everywhere in the Jewish quarter, Jews and Christians demonstrably lived next door to each other.

The walls of the bath show an exceptionally good quality. The vault and the upper part of the walls consist of limestones laid in even layers. The north wall of the building, which is about 9 m long and just under 3 m wide inside, has a niche, presumably to hold a lamp or candle, which was placed down the passageway to the bath.

The water basin in the immediate vicinity of the river extends across the entire width of the building. Access to the water basin was via a staircase, the course of which can be reconstructed from pre-

served step traces on the north wall. In accordance with the regulations, the water supply for the bath came from the groundwater, which was always available in sufficient quantities in the immediate vicinity of the Gera. The steps meant that it was always possible to submerge oneself in the water, and seasonal fluctuations in the groundwater level were thus very easy to compensate for. The water supply in the medieval Mikveh in Erfurt still works today. However, the water level is much lower than in the Middle Ages, probably due to the flood ditch being extended for flood protection at the end of the 19th century.

The pogrom of 1349 left clear traces on the building. Obviously, the Mikveh, like many buildings in the Jewish quarter, was massively damaged. A clear joint can be seen in the north wall, which points to repair and reconstruction. The Jewish use of the Mikveh ended at the latest with the forced migration of the Jews in 1453/54 who had been newly settled in 1354. The basin was filled in and the room above it was used as a cellar until the 20th century.

In spring 2007, during construction work to redesign the green spaces northwest of the Krämerbrücke, the remains of the medieval Mikveh were identified. The excavations were completed in 2010. Afterwards, work began on the construction of a protective building that will protect the remains of the medieval mikvah from external influences and allow it to be displayed in a museum. Since September 2011, the Mikveh has been open to visitors and accessible through guided tours. In addition, the water basin can be viewed at any time from above through a window in the roof of the protective structure.

→ Medieval Mikveh in Erfurt: justification for registration (summary)

GOOD TO KNOW

The Mikveh fulfils the requirements of wholeness, as it contains all the necessary elements expressing its exceptional universal value. It belongs to the series of medieval Jewish ritual baths in Europe and here to the few surviving examples of medieval monumental communal Mikvehs. It is a unique testimony to Jewish tradition, as its function as a communal ritual bath from the Middle Ages can still be fully read today. Its size and structural quality as well as its materials and architectural forms underline the significance of the building as a representative community institution.

Today, the Mikveh is in a condition that gives an authentic impression of its original use and function. Large parts of the Mikveh are still in their original condition. The floor plan and room height of the Mikveh can be read. Sufficient building fabric from the main period of use between the 13th and 15th centuries has been preserved to make its original function as a medieval ritual bath fully comprehensible. The form and structure of the building is unusual, for which there is no parallel to date and which is considered unique in Europe. It follows the type of a monumental community Mikveh, which is characterised by its form and construction adapted to local conditions. Due to local conditions, only a second, deeper cellar level was necessary to reach the groundwater level and not, as elsewhere, a bathing shaft reaching deep into the earth. However, the location on the river meant that, unlike most other community Mikvehs, the Erfurt Mikveh was not in the immediate vicinity of the synagogue.

The location of the Mikveh in the middle of the medieval town is understandable. Only its surroundings have changed due to the loss of the buildings in the direct vicinity. Despite the no longer existing medieval buildings in the immediate vicinity, it shows a high degree of intactness, as its location directly on the banks of the Gera River is unchanged. Since the plots have not been built on but have been designed as green space, the relationship to the buildings in the old town is still present.

The Mikveh does not suffer from adverse effects of development or neglect: it was uncovered after its rediscovery, repaired and restored in accordance with the preservation order. A protective structure was then erected over the Mikveh to protect it from negative influences and to allow it to be displayed as a museum. When the protective building around the Mikveh was erected in 2010-11, the location in the cellar during the construction period was also taken into account without suggesting a historical condition that could not be reconstructed beyond doubt.

→ Mittelalterliche Mikwe Erfurt

GOOD TO KNOW

TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MIKVEH CONSTRUCTION

Up to now, a typological distinction has been made between monumental Mikvehs and cellar Mikvehs. **Monumental Mikvehs** were often equated with shaft Mikvehs, bathing shafts that reached deep into the earth and were accessed via elaborate stairways.¹¹ As in Erfurt, these buildings were independent underground facilities built by the respective Jewish community. They also have a monumental character. Even though the Erfurt Mikveh does not have such a deep shaft, it can also be classified as a monumental Mikveh due to its size and structural quality.

Cellar Mikvehs are basins accessed by stairs in cellar rooms that were often located in private houses and were obviously not used as community Mikvehs.¹² However, recent discoveries in more recently preserved Mikvehs of this type have made it possible to document numerous intermediate stages, and the boundaries between the types are fluid.¹³ Therefore, a typological distinction between community Mikvehs with a monumental character and private Mikvehs seems to make more sense.

¹¹ Shaft Mikvehs of this type can be found, for example, in Speyer (early 12th century), Cologne (12th century), Worms (1185/86), Friedberg (1260?), Andernach (13th century).

¹² One of the oldest Mikvehs of this kind is the one in Sondershausen, which dates from the 13th century. Other, more recent examples are documented in Rothenburg o.d.T. (1409d), Bamberg, Hellerstraße (15th century) and Frankfurt a.M., Judengasse (1461/62?).

¹³ e.g. in Pretzfeld with stairs reaching deep into the ground with small basins or large basins in cellars of little depth as in Siegburg

GOOD TO KNOW

For a Jewish community - not only in the Middle Ages - the ritual bath was of great importance. It was primarily the women who had to visit the bath after births and menstruation so that they could go to the synagogue after cleansing. But men, too, had to immerse themselves in the Mikveh after contact with the dead, the sick or other unclean people in the religious sense before attendance at the synagogue was permitted. Crockery also had to be cleaned in the Mikveh before first use or after ritual impurity.

Bathing in the Mikveh was carried out according to precise regulations. The completely naked body had to be completely immersed in water, and even jewellery had to be removed beforehand. Living water was prescribed. It was not allowed to draw water, spring water or groundwater was permitted, and the basin had to contain at least one cubic metre.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

DIGITAL SOURCES

- *Website Jewish Life in Erfurt → Animation film on the building history of the Mikveh (German)*
- *History of the Mikveh: virtual tour through the Mikveh (German)*

PUBLICATIONS

- *„Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ - UNESCO nomination dossier: justification for inscription, pp. 36–41, 61–71, 80–81, 138–139*
- *Landeshauptstadt Erfurt (Hg.): „Kleine Reihe“ der Alten Synagoge: „Alte Synagoge und Mikwe zu Erfurt“, 1. Auflage 2013 (German)*

→ Central objects of the application

„Stone house“

SHORT VERSION ●●●

The so-called „Stone House“, built around 1200 and remodeled around 1250, is a unique example of a medieval secular building in Jewish ownership, with its Gothic architectural forms and its painted wooden ceiling on the upper floor.

EXTENDED VERSION ●●●

In a multi-part building complex at Benediktsplatz 1 in Erfurt's Old Town is a medieval stone building, the so-called „Stone House“. This is an outstanding testimony of late medieval profane building culture, which can be assigned to Jewish owners at the latest since the end of the 13th century. As such, it complements the ritual buildings of the Old Synagogue and the Mikveh and is a further component of Erfurt's UNESCO application.

An exceptionally large number of essential structures from the time of construction around 1250 have been preserved, including the portals to the two main floors, the wooden beam ceiling, the west façade, the original stepped gable and the roof timbers. Unique in Europe is the preserved interior of the upper floor room with a pointed-arched lighting niche, barely altered exterior walls with recessed pointing, and a colored wood-beamed ceiling, the beams of which could be dated to 1247.

Today, the building complex at Benediktsplatz 1 houses offices and business premises of the city of Erfurt. As early as the 1990s, initial investigations began in parallel with the renovation work on the building complex. From 2015-2017, the entire complex was researched as part of a DFG-funded project. On the basis of the ongoing historical building research and the restorative investigations, further measures will be carried out and subsequently a utilization concept adapted to the valuable inventory will be created. Therefore, the „Stone House“ is currently not open to the public. Only in the basement of the „Stone House“ is a display depot of medieval Jewish gravestones, which can be visited on guided tours.

→ „Stone house“ / History of building and use

LONG VERSION ...

The so-called „Stone House“ is an outstanding testimony to late medieval secular building culture. The medieval stone building (Kemenate) is part of a multi-part building complex at Benediktsplatz 1 in Erfurt's old town. The Kemenate is part of a dense secular building complex, the oldest parts of which date back to the 12th century. The high medieval Jewish residential and commercial complex consists of a total of 11 buildings from the 12th and 13th centuries, eight of which are particularly relevant for the development of the quarter in the Middle Ages and the coexistence of Jews and Christians or the position of Jewish residents in the Erfurt community. Such a density of preserved medieval buildings is extremely rare north of the Alps. Since the 17th century, the entire plot has been called „Zum Paradies und Esel“.

While the other buildings of this complex have been heavily altered in most areas by their use, the „Stone House“ is characterized by a much greater preservation density of historical evidence. It was built before 1250 directly on the street behind the town hall (formerly Judengasse) as a gabled residential and commercial building. Its earliest construction phases can be dated to the 12th century on the basis of a Romanesque portal. However, the building dates mainly from the 13th century and was only modified in some parts in the 14th century. Already before 1293 it was demonstrably in Jewish possession.

The stepped gable faced the platea judeorum (today Rathausgasse). Access was originally probably through a wooden staircase on the east side. From this phase, all the enclosing walls, a pediment, as well as portals and the remains of a chimney on the first floor have been preserved.

As early as the middle of the 13th century, the kemenate was rebuilt. The entrance was moved and the original entrance on the upper floor was closed as a niche for a closet. The room received a new wooden beam ceiling, which was completely painted, and a lighting niche.

An exceptionally large number of essential structures have been preserved, especially from the construction period around 1250, including the portals to the two main floors, the wooden ceiling, the west façade, the original eastern stepped gable and the roof timbers. Unique in Europe is the preserved interior of the upper floor room with a pointed-arched lighting niche with a smoke vent, barely altered exterior walls with recessed pointing, and a colored wood-beamed ceiling. The ceiling boards are uniformly decorated with a floral motif, while the beams each have different ornamentation. The ceiling beams could be dendrochronologically dated to 1247.

The preserved interior of the upper floor room represents a rare and at the same time outstanding testimony of secular architecture in the High Middle Ages and thus one of the few preserved testimonies of medieval Jewish residential culture at all. According to current findings, the room also has the oldest profane painted wood-beamed ceiling north of the Alps.

Traces of the persecution and expulsion of the pogrom of 1349 or the subsequent repairs and conversions have been preserved on all buildings of the nominated site, including the „Stone House“. Since the 15th century it was used as a storehouse, so its medieval structure was preserved up to the roof.

Since the 1990s, the building complex has housed the offices and business premises of the Erfurt city administration and Erfurt Tou-

→ „Stone house“ / History of building and use

rism GmbH. Parallel to the renovation work on the building complex, initial investigations began. The exceptionally good preservation of the building and the special furnishings of the hall on the upper floor quickly came to light. For these reasons, it was decided to remove the room from the plans for use and, above all, to carefully uncover the wooden beam ceiling. Since 1994, the painted beamed ceiling has been continuously uncovered and conserved as part of a project by the Erfurt University of Applied Sciences with students.

Since April 2015, the entire building complex has been researched as part of a DFG-funded project.¹⁴ The interdisciplinary project of the TU Berlin and the University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, entitled „A High Medieval Jewish Residential and Commercial Complex in Erfurt and its Painting,“ ran for two years and included building research and restoration studies with a focus on the colored painting of the room on the upper floor. The research included archival research on the history of ownership and involvement in the two medieval Jewish communities up to and after 1349. Additionally, the research included a contextualization of the overall findings in Jewish art and Jewish daily life in the Middle Ages.

The access to the building has not yet been made. Accordingly, the „Stone House“ has not yet been opened to visitors. Only the vaulted cellar of the house is used as an exhibition space for about 110 Jewish gravestones and fragments from the 13th–15th centuries. These can be viewed during guided tours. Here you can see all the gravestones from the medieval Jewish cemetery in the display depot in the cellar.

On the basis of the architectural-historical and restorative investigations, conservation measures were initially carried out within

three years after the research project. After completion of all restoration work, the room on the upper floor with the painted wooden beam ceiling and the display depot of Jewish gravestones in the basement are to be integrated into the museum concept and open to the public. Innovative solutions for a design that is appropriate for a listed building and barrier-free, and thus for a utilization concept that is coordinated with the valuable inventory and ensures a treatment of the listed building that is appropriate for a listed building, are necessary for this and are currently being developed.

¹⁴ The project was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and was jointly Barbara Perlich, TU Berlin, and the restorer and art historian Prof. Christoph Merzenich, FH Erfurt. The results of the research project were published in 2019: Barbara Perlich (ed.): Wohnen, beten, handeln. Das hochmittelalterliche jüdische Quartier „ante pontem“ der Stadt Erfurt, Petersberg 2019.

→ „Stone house“: justification for the entry (summary)

GOOD TO KNOW

The „Stone House“ meets the requirements of wholeness, as it contains all the necessary elements and structures that express its outstanding universal value: It is an outstanding testimony to high medieval secular building culture, which can be proven to have been in Jewish possession at least since the end of the 13th century. The building, which is almost completely preserved from the 13th century, is part of the building complex Benediktsplatz 1, which developed from several medieval buildings. From its Romanesque cellar to the rising masonry and one of its preserved stepped gables, the two-storey building is one of the best-preserved stone buildings of this period beyond Erfurt.

The preserved substance of the „Stone House“ dates back mainly to the time of construction before 1250 and the conversion of the Kemenate around 1250. The material and substance exhibit a high degree of authenticity, as they have been preserved largely unchanged. Its use and function as a residential and commercial building can be traced. In its form, the materials used as well as in its function, it did not differ from the buildings in the Christian neighbourhood.

An exceptionally large number of essential elements from the time of construction and the reconstruction phase have survived, which illustrate the appropriate size and integrity of the house and express its significance as a unique testimony to High Medieval secular building culture: These include all the enclosing walls, a gable as well as portals and remains of a chimney on the ground floor and the unique furnishing features on the upper floor. The Erfurt room setting and the room furnishings that have been preserved there, with a pointed-arched lighting niche, barely changed wall surfaces

with recessed pointing and a coloured wood-beamed ceiling, is also an extremely rare testimony to Jewish residential culture in the Middle Ages in Europe. The painted wood-beamed ceiling is the oldest to have survived in situ in an urban secular building north of the Alps. On European territory, only written sources otherwise attest to the use of high medieval stone houses by Jewish owners; the „Stone House“, on the other hand, has largely been preserved in its original substance.

Its location in the middle of the medieval town is comprehensible. The surroundings have been preserved intact. The „Stone House“ is in good structural condition. As part of the partly medieval building complex at Benediktsplatz 1, it is not threatened by adverse developments or neglect. With the exception of the „Stone House“, the complex is used for offices and business premises of the Erfurt city administration in a manner compatible with the preservation of monuments. The existing features in the room with the painted wooden beam ceiling are safeguarded. On the basis of historical building research and restoration studies, conservation and restoration measures will first be completed and then a utilisation concept adapted to the valuable inventory will be created in order to ensure that the listed building is treated in a manner that is compatible with its monument status.

→ „Stone house“

GOOD TO KNOW 

STONE DWELLINGS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Stone dwellings of the Middle Ages have survived comparatively rarely in Europe, although this type of building was quite typical, especially for the large trading towns of the Middle Ages in Central Europe. The building type is a stone building, usually set back from the street, on a rectangular ground plan with a beam-covered basement, ground floor and upper floor. In regionally varying forms, however, these buildings were also erected directly on the street or alley - as has also been proven in Erfurt. Access was usually from the side or via the courtyard. The original entrance to the „Stone House“ was also on the courtyard side. Half-timbered buildings or wooden constructions were used for access. In the case of the „Stone House“, the upper floor was accessed by a (wooden) construction projecting to the east. Called „Steinwerk“ elsewhere, buildings of this type in Erfurt are already referred to as „Kemenate“ in medieval sources. The „Stone House“ is thus one of a type of building that can be traced throughout the German-speaking world. In contrast to the majority of preserved stone buildings, which are mostly limited to cellars, masonry on the ground floor and rarely the first floor, the „Stone House“ is preserved with two storeys above a Romanesque cellar with rising masonry up to the stepped gable and is thus one of the best preserved stone buildings of this period north of the Alps. Although these profane stone buildings with a rectangular ground plan are mainly known from Christian use, the „Stone House“ proves that the same building type was also used by Jews as a residential and commercial building and follows local fashions with its painted wooden beam ceiling.

GOOD TO KNOW 

PAINTED WOODEN BEAM CEILINGS IN EUROPEAN COMPARISON

The ornamental ceiling painting of the room on the first floor from the time after 1247 is, according to current knowledge, the oldest painted wooden beam ceiling north of the Alps that has survived in situ in a secular building. Painted beamed ceilings of this kind are generally very rare and consistently younger than the Erfurt ceiling.¹⁵ These younger ceilings show, in addition to purely ornamental decoration with floral or geometric forms that are readily comparable to those on the Erfurt beamed ceiling, already more developed motifs such as animals, humans or mixed creatures. Painted beamed ceilings discovered during the demolition of medieval houses have often only survived as exhibits in museums. Apart from Erfurt, only three painted wooden beam ceilings from before 1250 have survived in situ north of the Alps. However, these are painted ceilings in churches: from St. Martin in Zillis (Switzerland, painting 1109 to 1114), St. Michael in Hildesheim (painting around/after 1220) and Peterborough Cathedral in Cambridgeshire (England, paintings probably after 1233). While the painted ceiling from St. Martin in Zillis is clearly older than the Erfurt ceiling, also with its painting, the other two are almost contemporary, at least with regard to their painting. Moreover, despite their early recognition of their cultural and art-historical significance, they have not been professionally restored several times over the past centuries, as a result of which original substance has been lost; in comparison, the layers of painting, including the binder, of the wooden

¹⁵ Examples include the painted wooden beam ceilings in Switzerland in Basel („Schönes Haus“, Nadelberg 6, after 1270d; Martinsgasse 13, c. 1300; „Zerkindenhof“, Nadelberg 10, early 14th century) and Zurich („Haus zum blauen Himmel“, An der oberen Zäune 19/Napfgasse 8, c. 1300; „Haus zum Spiegel“, Spiegelgasse 1, early 14th century) as well as those in Lyon, France („Maison Thomassin“, late 13th century).

→ „Stone house“

beam ceiling on the upper floor of the „Stone House“ have been preserved in their original form. Since the beginning of the 20th century, painted wooden ceilings as well as wall paintings have been largely lost in many cities due to demolition or war losses. The two lwein cycles in Schmalkalden (Thuringia) and in Rodenegg (South Tyrol) are among the few examples of wall paintings and room settings in secular buildings from around or before 1250 in Central Europe that still exist today. They were created at about the same time as the Erfurt room setting, but not in a burgher's house but in a castle (Rodenegg) or a landgraval administrative seat (Schmalkalden).

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION



PUBLICATIONS

➤ „Jewish-Medieval Heritage in Erfurt“ - UNESCO nomination dossier: justification for inscription, pp. 42–49, 61–71, 82–83, 141

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