

INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AS A TOOL FOR CREATING BRIDGE BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT: CASE OF MAGNESIA ON THE MEANDER

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage sites are in increasing demands among people. Developments in advertisement along with the improvements in transportation make these sites more accessible and thrilling. Tools and approaches of displaying cultural and natural heritage sites, in our case archaeological sites, have changed skin eventually to adapt contemporary situation. Nonetheless this change has become insufficient and been in need of revision since the growing interest in archaeological sites enhances audience's expectations. This condition reveals that new methods of interpretation and presentation should be sought for effective, pleasant and didactic experience. Besides, legislations and charters encourage and even make obligatory to have interpretation and presentation methods in the cultural and natural heritage sites. Especially ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, known as the Ename Charter (2007) is the most thorough charter on the topic, with its definitions and principles.

The interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites is an important asset for an archaeological site to be fully grasped by the visitors and scholars, and sustainably protected for a long period of time. This is mainly because the subject matter represents "the past" in "the present" time and without any interpretation, no one would understand what messages the heritage site has been carrying for centuries.

However, interpretation and presentation approach is not enough by itself. Every archaeological site needs a "site management plan" for an integrated and sustainable planning. As it is indicated in charters and legislations, site management plan is the leading authority where interpretation and presentation is a sub-brunch of it. It can be resembled to human structure. If the management plan would be the brain, interpretation would be the skeleton and presentation would be the muscles. They are all creating one body and they cannot operate without each other's absence.

In this paper, a specific case, that is Magnesia on the Meander, will be investigated in the light of the principles of Ename Charter and evaluations will be made for the benefit of proper interpretation and presentation of the site.

Keywords: interpretation, presentation, Magnesia on the Meander, Ename Charter

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Abbreviations

MAM: Magnesia on the Meander

1. INTRODUCTION

Archaeological sites are mainly considered as the documentation areas by the scholars. However, for a discipline that is related to the human and social life cannot only be restricted within academic archaeology level. What was done or created centuries ago still has architectural importance and most importantly sociological relevance for today's situation. Once the artifacts, whether they are Nature's work, or the act or work of Man (Tilden 1957), are unearthed, they are in need of bonding with the people. This link can be tied only with special and careful interpretation and presentation of the archaeological heritage. Thus the interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites to the public is an important way to express the spirit of these places. (Yulin 2008)

Non-specialist audiences' journey starts before the visit and will not end once they leave the site. Interpretation and presentation is like a helping hand from professionals to non-professionals in that sense. As Sam Ham puts it "Interpretation involves translating the technical language of a natural science or related field into terms and ideas that people who aren't scientists can readily understand." (Ham 1992) Eventually if the data was not passed to the people, the continuity of the flow would be banned and "cultural heritage" would lose its "heritage" entity and become "cultural information" trapped in a defined period of history.

Once the artifacts are unearthed, they have a great demand in binding with the people. Since they are silent rocks, they need an intermediary to create connection. Thus the interpreters consisted of several disciplines become the intermediary. Having interpretation as "content" and presentation as "language", the interpreters let the artifacts talk to the visitors. The more the visitors get the archaeological site, the more attraction and appreciation the site gets.

There are several ways to realize interpretation and presentation of cultural and natural heritages. This paper mainly focuses on the "archaeological heritage sites". Besides not every archaeological sites are treated in the same manner. They have many variables determining the most appropriate way(s) of interpretation and presentation. Among these variables, the setting of the archaeological site is the most decision making one. Thus in this study, archaeological sites are detailed down according to their settings, and one example among them is focused on, which is Magnesia on the Meander (MAM).

2. INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

2.1. Types of Archaeological Sites According to Their Settings

Interpretation and presentation approaches may vary according to the setting of the archaeological sites they are located at. They can be classified into three main categories as "Urban Settlements (İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Alanya ... etc), Rural Settlements (Uzuncaburç, Afrosdias, Assos ... etc) and Natural Settlements (Magnesia on the Meander, Xantos, Priene, Milet ... etc)".

Urban settlements are the ones where the today's city is laid on the ancient roots. The size of cities, from Roman Period to our day, changes in time by needs and circumstances. Therefore the archaeological sites can be inside, side to side or under the modern city. By this co-occurrence, they contribute to the cultural and historical layers of the multilayered city. However in some cases the archaeological sites, especially the ones under the earth, are destroyed which results in weak cultural layer in the modern city.



Figure 2. a. The historical places painted in red on the central part of İzmir, b. View from Agora to the city

Rural archaeological settlements are in close relationship with villages or small towns. The modern settlement may have emerged out of the ancient city or in close vicinity of it. Whether they are in one form or another, their relation is mutual. The archaeological site provides cultural development which may result in economic development and cultural tourism as well, if it is managed properly. By these benefits, the ancient city becomes the apple of the residents' eye.



Figure 3. a-b. Uzuncaburç Ancient City (Silifke, Mersin) [1] [2]

In some cases the village and archaeological site can no longer live together, especially if they are in strong relation physically. Then the village is evacuated outside the ancient site. For instance, Eskihisar Village (Stratonikeia, Muğla, Turkey) is emptied due to coal mines underneath and Geyve Village (Afrodisias, Aydın, Turkey) due to archaeological excavations.



Figure 4. a. Geyve Village, Afrodisias in 1958, photo taken by Ara Güler.
b. View from Afrodisias, 2014 [3]

Some archaeological sites are part of landscape, they are **natural settlements**. Every archaeological site has its own spirit and it changes through time. With the contextual change, some natural settlements get picturesque into the landscape while some get savage appearance. However this may contribute to the site as a value or cause neglect.

In this paper, the focus is on a specific case Magnesia on the Meander, which is a natural archaeological site.



Figure 5. a. Euromos (Milas, Turkey) b. Magnesia on the Meander (Aydın, Turkey) (Excavation Archives) [4] [5]

2.2. Brief Summary of Interpretation and Presentation

Although there have been charters and legislations concerning archaeological sites and notions of interpretation and presentation separately, from Venice Charter (1964) to the Burra Document (1999), there is only one international document on the subject of interpretation and presentation of heritage sites, that is ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, known as the Ename Charter (Quebec, 2007). The charter aims to create guidelines for the public interpretation and the sustainable presentation of heritage sites. In Turkey, there is not any directly related legislative law on the topic. Still there is a legislation called “Amendment Act No. 2863 Concerning to Revision of Legislation Called as Law Concerning to Conservation of Natural and Cultural Entities”³⁴The aim of the legislation is to designate proper definitions related with movable and immovable cultural and natural heritage sites that have to be conserved, organize the necessary regulations and actions, set up the responsible organization that has the authority which decides on principle and implementation legislations, and specify its duties.

The term interpretation, however, is not first mentioned in these legislations. It was first described in the context of cultural heritage by Freeman Tilden as “An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.” (Tilden 1957) Additively, Tilden also sets out six principles in order to create a ground work for interpretation. They are:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something with in the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

³ The original name in Turkish is “2863 Sayılı Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Kanunu ile Çeşitli Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkındaki Kanun”

⁴ It was revised with “5226 Sayılı Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Kanunu ile Çeşitli Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkındaki Kanun” in 2004.

2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

Interpretation is then explained in The Ename Charter after fifty years as follows:

“Interpretation refers to the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural heritage site. These can include print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programs, community activities, and ongoing research, training, and evaluation of the interpretation process itself.

The Ename Charter basically was prepared for introducing the definitions of “Interpretation, Presentation, Interpretive Infrastructure, Site Interprets and Cultural Heritage Sites” and producing principles for integrated heritage sites both for dissemination in popularity and conservation of the remains whether they are tangible or intangible. These principles are considered to be the main guidelines for evaluating MAM in this paper. The seven principles defined by the charter are:

- Principle 1:** Access and Understanding
- Principle 2:** Information Sources
- Principle 3:** Attention to Setting and Context
- Principle 4:** Preservation of Authenticity
- Principle 5:** Planning for Sustainability
- Principle 6:** Concern for Inclusiveness
- Principle 7:** Importance of Research, Training, and Evaluation

In the light of these principles and interpretation understandings, presentation process can begin. They are interconnected concepts; while the first is the skeleton of the system, the other is the muscles. Together they create the body. How a body cannot stand without skeleton and how skeleton would not operate without muscles, the two concepts complete each other for proper heritage understanding.

Presentation is explained in The Ename Charter as follows:

“Presentation more specifically denotes the carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site. It can be conveyed through a variety of technical means, including, yet not requiring, such elements as informational panels, museum-type displays, formalized walking tours, lectures and guided tours, and multimedia applications and websites.”

In the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (ICOMOS, 1990) the importance of presentation is mentioned as a vital way to raise awareness about our roots and grow maturity for our contemporary living. Furthermore, the Charter suggests

presentation as the best tool for cultural heritage protection. Since it is a modern way of realizing ancient information, it should be held carefully and updated routinely. In order to achieve a thorough, appreciated and readable presentation, Renée Sivan marks out four principles to be adopted. These principles are listed as in the order of implementation as follows (Sivan 1997):

- Presentation should be considered in its entirety
- Presentation is subjective
- Presentation is relevant with the site's size
- Keeping the intervention on the site is a must

By these principles, a heritage site can get more provocative in terms of public attention while respecting the ruins and cherish the cultural importance as well.

Presentation reaches the audience with the appropriate methods. After the interpreter understands and evaluates the site as a whole, the right method or tool is needed to be chosen. With the rapid technological developments, today there are several ways to convey presentation while it was mainly reconstruction in previous years. Today virtual environment instruments– holograms, videos or other mediums – can help clear presentation. Though the presentation techniques have evolved through time, it is not a linear but interconnected development. Even the earliest techniques are used along with the contemporary ones.

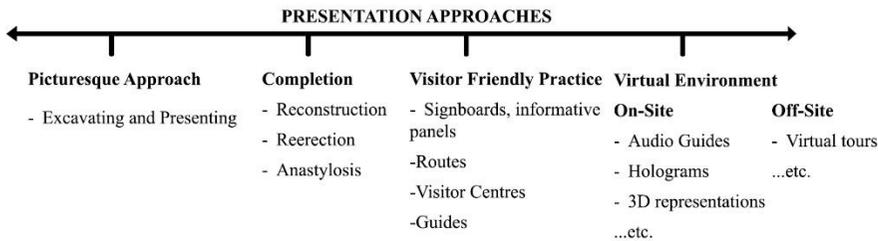


Figure 6. Chart of presentation approaches

All of the charters and legislations discussed indicate interpretation and presentation approaches as a branch of “management plan”. A management plan’s task is to integrate strategies related with the protection and enhancement of the site by highlighting its importance and development. Hence before getting into the interpretation and presentation process, a site should have a management plan as a dominator.

3. MAGNESIA ON THE MEANDER

3.1. General Information on the Site and Its Environs

The ancient city of Magnesia is located in the boundaries of Tekinköy of Germencik District of Aydın. Magnesia on the Meander, the oldest archaeological settlement of the district, is situated on the road between Ortaklar and Söke. The main part of the site is situated under the northeast fertile plain of Mount Thorax (Gümüşdağ) and the bank of the River Lethaios (Gümüşçay), a tributary of Menderes. (Bingöl 2007)

The archaeological site is an example of natural settlements, and yet it is not into the wild completely. Ortaklar is the closest main center to the settlement, which is 4 km north. Söke is at the southern part and Kuşadası on the west. While the high road is directly passing by

Magnesia and Tekin Köy as well, also train lines İzmir-Söke and Denizli-Söke can be used for access.



Figure 7. Chronology of the geological procession and formation of Büyük Menderes Delta [6]

3.1.1. Historical Development and Systematic Researches in MAM

The foundation of the new city of Magnesia⁵ dates back to 392 BC and was ruled by several dynasties until its abandonment in 14th century AD. (Bingöl 2007) However it is known as a prosperous Roman city. Due to the successive different reigns in control, from Macedonian to Aydınöğulları, buildings are in diversity with regard to their typology and period.

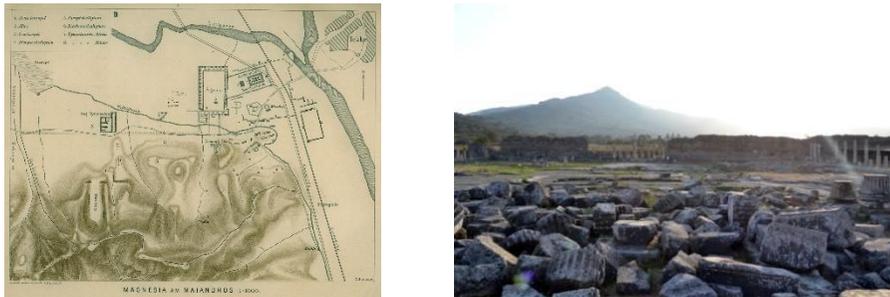


Figure 8. a. Mount Thorax and Magnesia, C.Humann 1904 (Excavation Archives)
b. Mount Thorax and Magnesia, 2014

From the 18th century onwards, many researchers had come to ancient city of Magnesia but the exact location couldn't be found. At the beginning of the 19th century, Leake and Hamilton made a research on the remains present on the slopes of Mount Thorax and the assessments on the research were published in 1824. It is the first time on this publication that the remains on the slopes were announced to have been belonged to the ancient city of Magnesia. Having been specified on the map precisely, the remains of Magnesia got a lot of scientific attention and received field trips throughout the century. The first excavation in the city was held by French Government in 1842 on the leadership of Ch. Texier. Following this limited study, in 1890 German Archaeological Institute at Athens designated O. Kern to run a small scaled excavation on the site and with the help of F.F.H von Gaertringen, In the coming year, Berlin Museums decided to set off a broader continuous excavation project led by Carl Humann between 1891-1893. After almost one century of silence, in 1984 The Ministry of Culture and Tourism assigned Prof. Dr. Orhan Bingöl from Department of Classical Archaeology at Ankara

⁵ There was Palaimagnesia inhabited by Magnets. The location is unknown but it is assumed to be close to today's Magnesia. (Bingöl 2007)

University to run systematic excavations. From 2015 to now, Prof.Dr.Orhan Bingöl has been managing the site on behalf of Karabük University.

During the studies until now, the excavations on Theatron, Latrine (Public Toilets), Area of Sacrifice, Altar of Artemis and Propylon (Ceremony Gate) were completed, whilst the studies on east Stoa of Agora, Market Basilica and The Sanctuary of Artemis (The Temple of Artemis, Temenos and Stoa) have been continuing with the researches and restorations. (Bingöl 2007)

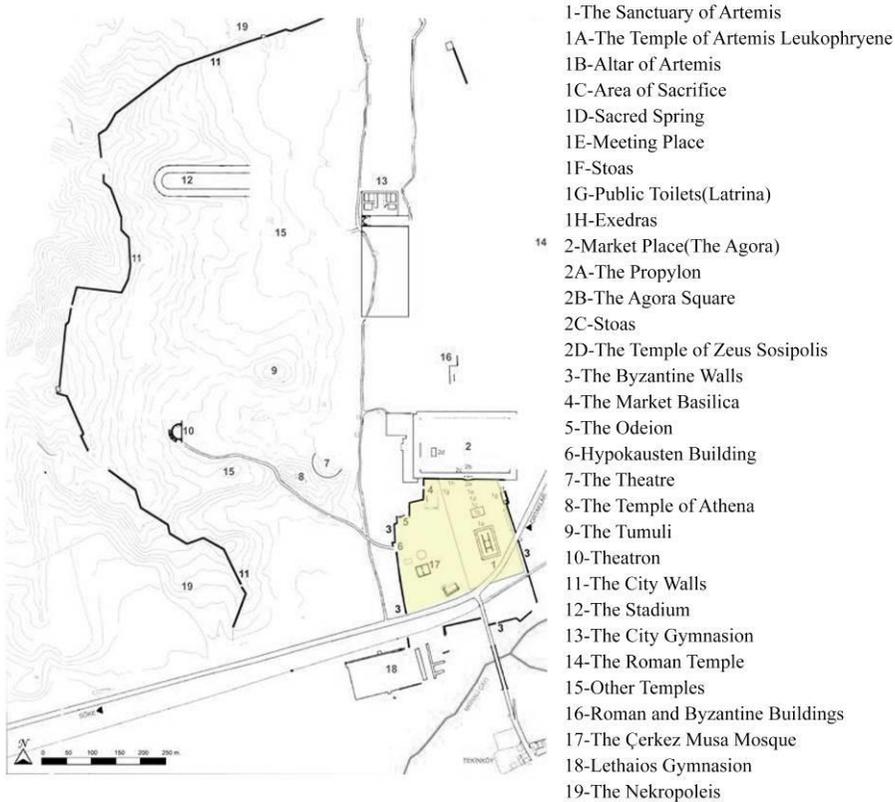


Figure 9. Site Plan of MAM. The concentrated and systematic excavations continue in the marked area defined by defensive walls (Excavation Archives)

3.2. Examining MAM Through The Ename Charter

In the light of the definitions and principles mentioned before, it is evident that MAM needs a proper interpretation and presentation. For this purpose, analyses through the seven principles of Ename Charter will be taken as guidelines.

In the first principle **Access and Understanding**, it is declared that “Interpretation and presentation programmes should facilitate physical and intellectual access by the public to cultural heritage sites.” In the past, present and the future, “people” are the ones who bring cultural heritages into existence. Therefore they are in a way responsible of creating a physical and moral bond with the audience literally. Interpretation and presentation should provide them their own adventure and experience. While serving for this necessity, demographic data,

cultural and linguistic diversities should be taken into consideration in a delicate way not put shadow onto the importance and values of the heritage site. In MAM some intimate posters for advertising the site help for attracting any kind of visitors. Hence the intellectual studies should be elevated also in the presentation of the site.



Figure 10. a. Advertising signboard at the main entrance of MAM (Excavation Archives)
b. Stadion, 2014

Physical access should be possible for everyone, and if not off-site presentation needs to be done. MAM has a strong physical accessibility which is unyielding. There is the high road and railroad tangent to the site. Yet the access to the inner parts of the site, such as Theatron, Gymnasion, Stadion, are not easy and buildings adjacent to the railroad, such as Nekropolis and Lethaios Gymnasion, are not visited at all. Therefore entire site should be accessible for each visitor in this perspective.

Second principle on the **information sources** tells that “Interpretation and presentation should be based on evidence gathered through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions.” It is for no doubt that interpretation and presentation should be done in the light of science. Hence it should be blended with culture and reach the audience in a sincere manner. The work needs to be prepared and documented carefully regarding the local traditions and historical backgrounds as well. In MAM, some informative panels were renovated in the summer 2016 however they need to be spread out the site. Besides along with the printed materials, other ways of connecting needs to be found. Story telling can be a proper way to get integrated with the people. Magnesia, an archaeological site which is rich in mythological traditions, can be fed from it for thematic representation.

One example of mythological reference of MAM can be “the Epiphany”. Carl Humann suggested that a representative “epiphany” was taken place annually at the Festival of Isiteria. At this ritual, the sculpture of Artemis was illuminated through the pediment opening and revealed to the citizens. It is also thought that since Artemis is the goddess of night and moon, the illumination could be achieved by moonlight at a specific time of the year.

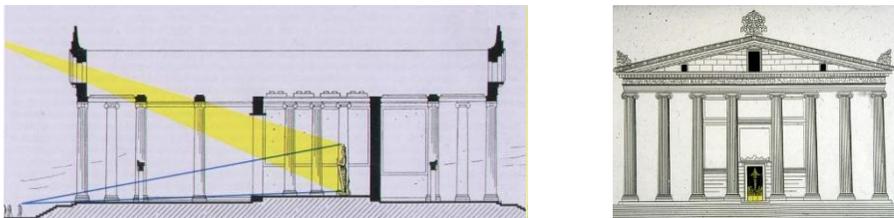


Figure 11. a-b. Theoretical representation of the Epiphany in section and elevation of the Temple of Artemis (Excavation Archives)

Context and setting constitutes the third principle, which starts with “The Interpretation and Presentation of cultural heritage sites should relate to their wider social, cultural, historical, and natural contexts and settings.” A city is consisted of many layers. Unless it is taken with every aspect and dimensions, the interpretation would be lacking. Multilayered historical sites should be reflected via their physical features and spirits. In our case, where the building forms vary from an Archaic Temple to mosque of Beyliks Period, the rich cultural and architectural value need to be readable by both professional and non-professional audiences.



Figure 12. a. Drawing of Mount Thorax and MAM by C.Humann (Excavation Archives)
b.Artemision and Mount Thorax (Excavation Archives)

When considering context of a site, not only the contemporary situation but also the historical transfer of it should be taken into consideration. In the case of Magnesia, Mouth Thorax where the city is situated on its slopes has an important historical role and value. Before the city was established, the mount welcomed Magnets for some years. Besides the name “*Gümüşçay*” Turkish for Silver River comes from Thorax since it is also called as “*Gümüşdağ*” Turkish for Silver Mountain due to the silver mines underneath.

The fourth principle focuses on **authenticity** and argues that “The Interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites must respect the basic tenets of authenticity in the spirit of the Nara Document (1994).” It is important not to disturb local community or any other associated groups while trying to enhance the site by interpretation and presentation. Tekin Köy is in close relationship with Magnesia both physically and socially. The village’s providing work power for the site and excavation house’s being in the village are two examples of this relationship. While the visitors are not present at the site, local people are. Hence every move regarding MAM should be parallel with the village’s benefit as well.

The fifth principle on **sustainability** states that “The interpretation plan for a cultural heritage site must be sensitive to its natural and cultural environment, with social, financial, and environmental sustainability among its central goals.” While considering the physical endurance of the tangible artifacts of the site, economy and management of the site are envisioned to be durable and sustained. Archaeological sites have sustainability in their essence since they have endured for centuries. It is more than disrespectful to break their cycle by our hands. Due to the geothermal facilities growing rapidly around MAM, the ecosystem is changing. While it harms the people living in the neighborhood, it also causes deterioration in the archaeological remains as well.

Sixth principle focuses on **inclusiveness** and starts with “The Interpretation and Presentation of cultural heritage sites must be the result of meaningful collaboration between heritage professionals, host and associated communities, and other stakeholders.” Multidisciplinary approach to interpretation and presentation of heritage sites is vital due to diverse branches it is consisted of. The Charter also suggests that these disciplines can be exemplified as scholars, community members, conservation experts, governmental authorities, site managers,

interpreters, tourism operators and many more. In Magnesia archaeological excavations, multidisciplinary is encouraged, where there are archaeologists, architects, conservation specialists, visiting linguistic professors, anthropologists, restoration specialists. Thus the excavation sponsor respectfully works for the public awareness towards the site.

The seventh principle is **research, training, and evaluation**. It is expressed that “continuing research, training, and evaluation are essential components of the interpretation of a cultural heritage site.” As nothing is permanent in this life, it is vital to update the content, doing continuous research and getting feedbacks from scholars and non-professionals in a healthy interpretation and presentation process. Every year MAM excavation team welcomes visiting professionals from different fields in order to create thorough and up to date data of the site. In addition there has been organized an annual event for kids since 1996 at the site, allowing them to understand archaeology and their perception of Magnesia. These educational activities work for the benefit of both sides of the scenario.

4. CONCLUSION

From mid 20th century, archaeological sites are considered valuable not only for professionals but for public where they can learn about their culture from the first hand. Interpretation and presentation of archaeological sites, in this sense, pleases both the academic perspective as well as non-professional audience because of its being a holistic approach covering any kind of presentation techniques together, from reconstruction to hologram technology, from informative panels to narrative implementations.

In the case of Magnesia on the Meander is in need for a holistic and systematic management plan first. In the light of this plan, with thorough understanding of the spirit of the place interpretation and presentation project should be constituted. After making evaluation with the Ename Charter, the most striking points that should be stressed out in interpretation and presentation approach would be “Access and Understanding” and “Information Sources”. Being a natural archaeological settlement that is easily accessible and yet publicly unknown, by reinforcing the physical access and circulation routes along with mythological referenced interpretation and presentation approaches would highlight Magnesia’s importance by screening its essence to today’s visitors.

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