

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Castel del Monte
<i>Location</i>	Puglia Region, Bari Province
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of Italy
<i>Date</i>	23 October 1995

Justification by State Party

This exceptional monument brings together and enhances all the cultural elements of its time in a variety of fields - from architecture to mathematics, from philosophy to astronomy, from crafts to technology. Each of these aspects contributes to making this remarkable building unique, without precedents or successors - the octagonal plan, repeating the number 8 with obvious esoteric significance, its favoured situation in the Bari region, the allure of its architecture, the exceptional technology involved, the installations with which it was endowed, and even its mysterious origins. This last element should probably be linked with the personality and the works of the Emperor Frederick II, who ordered, and probably inspired, the building.

Its state of conservation is also exceptional: it is in fact one of the rare monuments that has retained its original characteristics intact, despite the loss of its marble facings and, more generally, its ornamental work. Although its more mundane use and its state of abandonment over the centuries have resulted in a perceptible level of degradation, they have nonetheless spared the castle utilitarian acts of organization and restructuring that would doubtless have changed its overall appearance.

Note The State Party does not make any proposals concerning the criteria under which the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List in the nomination dossier.

Category of property

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Castel del Monte nomination represents a *monument*.

History and Description*History*

Frederick II succeeded his father, the Hohenstaufen Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, in 1197 at the age of three. During his reign, which lasted until 1250, he brought order to his unruly kingdom of Sicily, which included much of southern Italy and introduced a period of intense cultural activity that has been described as the "Southern Renaissance." He was a man of great culture, speaking and writing in several languages, with high attainments in mathematics, astronomy, and the natural sciences. He brought scholars and artists from the Arab lands, Greece, and elsewhere to his court, caused the works of Aristotle, Averroës, Ptolemy, and Galen to be translated into Latin, and founded the University of Naples. His many talents earned him the title of *Stupor Mundi* (Wonder of the World).

He was also an able ruler, who brought social and economic stability to his people. However, his policy in Italy, unlike that in Germany, where he encouraged the feudal system, was that of an absolute monarch. For this reason, and also for defensive purposes, he built a number of strong castles in his lands of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, the largest and most influential of which was Castel del Monte. It was finished in 1240 and became the permanent seat of his court.

With the death of Frederick in 1250 the Hohenstaufen hold over the kingdom was weakened, and the Angevin dynasty ruled until the mid 15th century. Castel del Monte was no longer the seat of power and its subsequent history is that of most castles from this period, serving as a defensive stronghold and then a barracks up to the 19th century, and slowly losing its resplendent decoration through pillage, vandalism, and neglect.

Description

The castle is sited 29 km south of Barletta in the Commune of Andria on a rocky peak which dominates the surrounding countryside. Its plan is in the form of a regular octagon surrounding a courtyard and with a tower, also octagonal, at each angle.

The walls are built from huge dressed blocks of a brilliant quartz-bearing limestone. There is a cornice at mid-height which encircles the walls, separating the two internal storeys. Each of the storeys has eight chambers of equal size, corresponding with the eight sides of the structure. The trapezoidal rooms on the lower storey have prominently ribbed ogival vaulting, supported on embedded columns. Those on the upper storey correspond exactly with those below but are more elaborately ornamented, the vaulting being supported on caryatid capitals in the Burgundian or Champagne style which surmount triple columns in Greek marble; the apex of the vaulting is decorated with a unique capital, also in Burgundian style. Each of the rooms has a marble bench at the base of the columns and a decorative marble cornice. Of especial interest is the unique hydraulic installation for baths and toilet facilities, clearly oriental in origin.

Each of the facades is pierced by two windows, those on the lower level being single-arched openings (except on those sides with the front and rear entrances) and those on the upper level being twin ogival openings. The octagonal towers have only narrow arrow slits, arranged so as to command the best field of view. Internally they contain service rooms and staircases.

The main entrance, in coralline breccia, reproduces the form of a classical triumphal arch framing a pointed arch, described by one eminent scholar as being "a sort of prelude to the Renaissance." Elements such as these are blended with complete success throughout the building with features that owe their origins to the east, such as the use of marble and mosaic, much of which have disappeared over centuries of neglect and vandalism.

Castel del Monte is of especial interest because of the absence of features that are common to the overwhelming majority of military monuments of this period (outer bailey, moat, stables, kitchen, storerooms, chapel), the mathematical and astronomical rigour of its plan and form, and the eclecticism of its cultural elements, deriving from antiquity, the Cistercian tradition of northern Europe, and the Umayyad "desert castles" and fortified monasteries in the Near East and North Africa.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The monument was acquired by the Italian State in 1876 and is protected under several state laws. Under the terms of Law No 1089/39 concerning the artistic, archaeological, and cultural heritage of the Italian State it was declared to be of great artistic and historical importance by the decree of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali in 1978. A large area around the castle is protected by another ministerial decree of 1968 in conformity with Law No 1497/1939 concerning the protection of natural heritage. Both measures are integrated by a 1985 decree. This constitutes an effective buffer zone to the nominated monument.

Management

Management of the monument is in the hands of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Architettonici, Artistici e Storici della Puglia. This regional agency of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali is responsible for the maintenance and guardianship of the monument, which is open to visitors. It also carries out appropriate conservation work, the scale and nature of which depends upon the financial resources made available by the State.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Castel del Monte has been the subject of various campaigns since 1878, after it came into State ownership. Consolidation and stabilization work took place between 1879 and 1902. In 1928-32 a number of later drystone walls were removed and the soil level round the perimeter was raised. Final consolidation work took place in 1962-65, and the last major campaign, in 1975-81, concerned repairs to the roofs, consolidation of the walls, waterproofing of the towers, and repair of the *cocciopesto* (crushed brick) surface of the courtyard. Currently there are no major conservation projects in hand, but there is a rigorous programme of systematic maintenance.

Authenticity

Thanks to its history subsequent to the end of Hohenstaufen rule Castel del Monte has been subjected to almost no structural alteration. The interior has been degraded by the removal or decay of its marble and mosaic decoration, but there have been few later interventions. Conservation work since 1878 has been of a high order, consistent with Italian standards, and so the authenticity of the monument is high.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Castel del Monte in January 1996. The specialist who undertook the mission, who is a leading expert in the military architecture of this period, also provided an evaluation of the cultural significance of the monument.

Qualities

Castel del Monte is exceptional in every way. It is one of the largest castles of its period anywhere in Europe, yet at the same time it is unique by virtue of the absence of many functional features associated with military buildings of the period. Its plan, form, and site are manifestations of a desire on the part of its founder, Frederick II of Sicily, to symbolize the philosophy and values of his reign and, in the words of the ICOMOS expert, "inscribe the monument in the cosmos." It also represents a unique and wholly successful blending of three cultures - that of classical antiquity, Muslim architecture deriving from the east, and the Cistercian Gothic of northern Europe.

Comparative analysis

There are many castles of this period surviving in Europe and the Near East; the Castello Maniace at Siracusa and the Castello Ursino in Calabria are fine examples of Frederick II's constructions. Castel del Monte, however, may justifiably be considered to be unique: there is no other castle of the period that unites different cultural traditions so harmoniously, is so perfect in form, or whose role is so conspicuously symbolic rather than functional.

ICOMOS comments and recommendations

At its 11th Meeting in 1987 the World Heritage Committee deferred consideration of this nomination, since "the Italian Government had not yet given assurances regarding the protection of the landscape which surrounds Castel del Monte and which is an integral part of the site." ICOMOS is satisfied that the protection accorded to the area designated in the 1968 ministerial decree under the provisions of Law No 1479/1939 provides the assurances sought by the Committee in 1987.

The ICOMOS expert mission report expressed concern about a planned three-storey car-park (with one storey reserved for buses), which is a municipal project, and about the restaurant built some years ago without authorization within 800 m of the foot of the hill on which the castle stands. The plantation of conifers, carried out by the Regional Government of Apulia, is also considered to be inappropriate, since records show that the castle was originally built at the crest of a treeless hill.

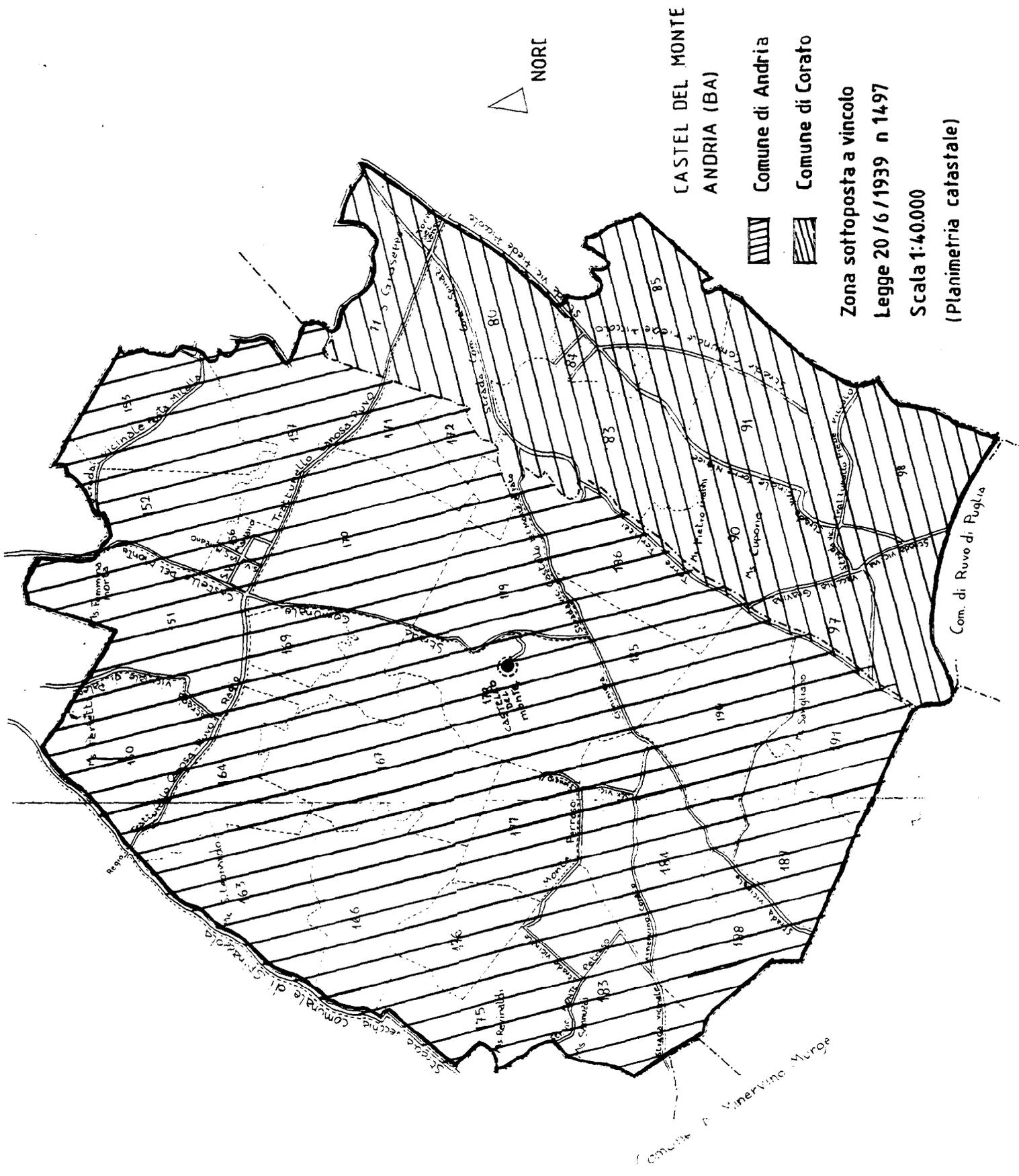
Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i and iii*:

In its formal perfection and its harmonious blending of cultural elements from northern Europe, the Muslim world, and classical antiquity, Castel del Monte is a unique masterpiece of medieval military architecture, reflecting the humanism of its founder, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen.

Inscription should be accompanied by a request to the State Party that the proposed car-park be relocated to a site where it would be less visually obtrusive and that urgent consideration be given to the removal of the tree cover on the hill.

ICOMOS, October 1996



Castel del Monte : carte de localisation du bien et de la zone de protection /
 location map of the property and protection zone



Castel del Monte : façade principale
Castel del Monte : main façade