

# ITALY

## The *Trulli* of Alberobello

### Brief description

The *Trulli*, limestone dwellings found in the southern region of Puglia, are remarkable examples of drywall (mortar less) construction, a prehistoric building technique still in use in this region. The *Trulli* are made of roughly worked limestone boulders collected from the neighbourhood fields. Characteristically, they feature pyramidal, domed or conical roofs, built up of corbelled limestone slabs.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** 1996

#### Agency responsible for site management

- Municipality of Alberobello  
Responsible of Historical Centre Office of Alberobello  
Piazza del Popolo 31  
70011 Alberobello  
Puglia  
Bari, Italy  
E-mail: [settoreurbanistico@comune.alberobello.ba.it](mailto:settoreurbanistico@comune.alberobello.ba.it)  
Website: [www.comune.alberobello.ba.it](http://www.comune.alberobello.ba.it)

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** C (iii), (iv), (v)

#### Justification provided by the State Party

Alberobello, the town of Trulli, sets itself as an exceptional set of spontaneous architecture. It is one among the better preserved and homogeneous urban built-up areas in Europe.

Its peculiar features and the fact that Trulli are still inhabited make it unique. It testifies the extraordinary and luckily survival of a prehistoric building technique in a geographical area - the Italian peninsula - which is universally acknowledged to be one among the most important architectural and town planning regions. Any other comparison with similar sites, albeit possible, must take this peculiarity into account.

Nonetheless, in order to better evaluate the importance of the town of Trulli for all mankind, this has to be confronted with several built-up areas scattered in the whole planet and namely in the

Mediterranean region. In other words, the town of Trulli is undeniably part of a much wider set of sites testifying of the so-called spontaneous or vernacular architecture without architects. It is indeed the direct heir of that architecture recalled by Seneca's famous aphorism "Happy was that era, before architects came, before builders came".

Bernard Rudofsky, one among the first researchers in this field, says that such architecture without architects is not "a pure mix of traditionally disparaged or completely ignored building examples. This is indeed the silent heritage of a life style having an enormous value for those who succeed in grasping it. This architecture originates from human experience and therefore its interest goes far beyond its mere technical and aesthetic features. Besides, this architecture is not ruled by any dogma. The exceptional longevity of the vernacular architecture is due to an unceasing redistribution of know-how harshly seized and channelled into almost instinctual reactions to the exterior reality. Differently from the decorative arts and the noble architecture, it is not influenced by fashionable trends and its evolution along the years is almost imperceptible. It normally tailors itself to man size and needs, avoiding frills, avoiding the hysteria of the planner. Once a life-style has been identified, this implying a special kind of housing, it is not worth changing it without a valid reason". Rudofsky is seriously worried about the preservation actions to undertake in order to safeguard these exceptionally valuable architectural works. He says: "in some places the simple fact of resorting to local building materials assures the continuation of building techniques that have been ennobled by the passing of time. On the contrary, when foreign material and foreign techniques are introduced, local traditions fade away, uses are subsided by trends and the vernacular dies. The point is not whether one should regret losing the vernacular - since most of the people do not care about it at all - but whether life as a whole is impoverished by this disappearance. In other words: isn't true that the disappearance of architectural species, typical of a certain region, upsets mankind equilibrium to the same extent to which the extinction of some species of plants and animals upsets the equilibrium of the environment? From this viewpoint the town of Trulli has to be included in a larger genealogy gathering very different and far away (both in time and space) housing sets whose common feature is that of originating from an inexhaustible spontaneous building know-how. Our first reference is to the architecture of caves: from the Almanzora dwellings in Andalusia to those of Mesa Verde in Colorado,

from the sassi of Matera to the tuff cones of Urgup in Cappadocia. The second reference is to the stone architecture in general: from the fortress of Sacsahuaman of Cuzco to the Maltese sanctuaries of Mnajdra and of Hal Tarxien, from the Spanish and French dohen to those (more than 2,000) of the Indian Dekkan highland – from the Etruscan tombs to the prehistoric navetas (collective tombs) of Minorca, from the Sardinian villages of nuraghi to the Southern Spanish and Moroccan cemeteries – from the aboriginal tumuli of the Canary Islands to the extraordinary buildings of the Tirinto Royal Palace in Greece. A third reference can be made with the architecture of large Mediterranean urban settings: from Velez-Blanco in the Spanish province of Almeria, to Casares in Andalusia; from Pentadattilo in Calabria to the several urban settings of the Cyclades islands in the Aegean Sea; from the stores of Medenine in Tunisia to the dhnmusi of Pantelleria – from the Berber North African villages to those of the Sierra Nevada, ending with the Sicilian necropolis of Pantalica in the province of Siracusa.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Qualities: The Trulli of Alberobello represent the remarkable survival of what is essentially a prehistoric building technique, that of dry stone walling, for domestic use in a western European country. The extent and homogeneity of the nominated areas are also exceptional, and policies are in force that ensures the continued existence intact of the buildings. These are not the only Trulli in Apulia - there are several thousand in rural contexts - but Alberobello is the major urban concentration and one where protection and conservation policies and programmes are actively pursued.

The ICOMOS expert mission recommended that the late, two-storey *Trullo Sovrano*, the *Casa d'Amore*, and the *trulli* at present being restored by the Municipality as a museum complex, together with the open space between Aja Piccola and Monti (the traditional market place for the town) should be included in the nominated area. This proposal was accepted by the State Party, which supplied a revised plan for the nominated area.

#### Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (iii), (iv), and (v):

The Trulli of Alberobello constitute an exceptional example of a form of building construction deriving from prehistoric construction techniques that has

survived intact and functioning into the modern world.

#### Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1996): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (iii) (iv) and (v) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value being an exceptional example of a form of building construction deriving from prehistoric construction techniques that have survived intact and functional into the modern world. Further the Bureau recommended that the Italian authorities consider the up-grading of the streetscape. The Bureau decided to rename this property to "The Trulli of Alberobello"

Session (1996): The Committee decided to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value being an exceptional example of a form of building construction deriving from prehistoric construction techniques that have survived intact and functioning into the modern world. The name of this property has been changed to "The Trulli of Alberobello".

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

#### Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined
- It is not necessary to trace a buffer zone as the site is surrounded by a building texture, made of Trulli too, and mingled with recent buildings which are protected in the same way as the ancient site. These areas are not only situated in the area of the landscape restrictions, but they are also subject to the Plan of Obligatory Restoration.

The urban regulations provide for obligatory retrieval plans for each building intervention in the perimetric area. Furthermore, there is a municipal tool that controls retrieval of Trulli handicrafts; it's a true Handbook for the Restoration of Trulli that contains their history and studies their building typology, also defining the restoration techniques. The norms contained in it are applied to restore all the Trulli in the town of Alberobello

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

- There is a high level of authenticity in the properties that constitute this nomination. By virtue of the simplicity in design and construction of the *Trulli* it has been possible over a long period to preserve their authentic form and decoration intact. The provisions of the General Housing Plan for Alberobello operate to prevent inappropriate additions to or modifications of historic buildings. Only lime whitewash, the traditional material, is used for external decoration. Whilst the overall urban fabric has survived to a remarkable degree, there has been a certain measure of loss of authenticity in individual buildings as a result of disregard for regulations regarding doors, windows, and other features by their owners. Legal action is slow and so municipalities are reluctant to move except in the most flagrant cases. It is in terms of function that the authenticity has unavoidably been lost. At the present time 30% of the *Trulli* are commercial use, largely in connection with tourism, 40% are abandoned and only 30% in residential use. It is recognized that this last figure will continue to decline
- Programmatic interventions are aimed at increasing the levels of integrity and authenticity of the site, though works of environmental cleaning. There are no projects that would compromise the integrity and authenticity of the site

### 3. Protection

#### Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The norms which protect the site are dictated by state (legislative decree 22 January 2004, Code for cultural heritage and landscape), regional and municipal laws. All the Historical Centre is undergoing Retrieval Plans provided for by the Piano Regolatore Generale approved in 1980, which found out some areas to submit to Retrieval Plans of both the Historical Centre and of the Environment. In order to carry on such plans the whole Historical Monumental Centre and the environment have been checked, any building unit has been recorded and the whole building tissue has been studied both from the urban and from the environmental point of view. The restoration techniques of *Trulli* have been studied, codified and included in the Handbook for the Restoration of *Trulli*
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Revision of General Master Plan; It's necessary to revise it finding out in the town planning equalization the useful instrument to eliminate non authentic existing superfetations and cubage

### 4. Management

#### Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, urban centre, rural landscape. The Museum of the Territory and the Trullo Sovrano, included in the limited area of the site, require a payment visit. Rione Monti and Aia Piccola are two intact quarters: they are in part inhabited and in part used as a commercial area

#### Management /Administrative Body

- The Municipality is setting up a qualified team working at the preparation of the management Plan. It will also be charged with the management and the running of the site
- Management under protective legislation; Consensual; Management and preservation involve public institutions and private citizens
- Plans to appoint a coordinator
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; regional; local; The Province has financed a project aimed at eliminating the TV antennas all around the area, including the area in the World Heritage List, and in a short time the works will be tested
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Improvement of collaboration among societies, citizens and administration; it will be set up a committee of the inhabitants of the historic centre and will be organized a permanent forum between these citizens and the administration, in order to improve exchange of information and to verify the state of realisation of the programs related to the management plan

### 5. Management Plan

- No management plan. It will set up a working group for management plan, in which will take part the Municipality of Alberobello, the Province of Bari and Region Apulia, with the participation of a team of experts in the skills requested
- Implementation commence: December 2006

## 6. Financial Resources

### Financial situation

- Region; Province; Municipality; Private citizens
- European Community
- The real estate market has increased, mainly with reference to restoration of existing buildings; Public funding increased
- Requests have been put forward to the institutional authorities in order to get more funds. Also looking for private investments to fulfil the objective of protection of the Municipal management
- Insufficient

## 7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 2

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: management
- Good: conservation; promotion; education
- Average: interpretation; visitor management

## 8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- About 10 years ago the administrative structure instituted a section of the technical office whose only task is to care about the Historical centre. Duties: Handling of the building paperwork concerning Trulli; Assistance and management of municipal Trulli restoration yards; Surveillance in the Trulli restoration private yards; Cooperation with the Monuments Superintendence in order to assure a better protection to the Trulli; Keep relationships with the Italian and foreign universities that make studies or choose degree theses on trulli; Look for funds aimed at professional training courses for experts in the restoration of Trulli
- Training needs: educational courses for workers on Trulli and for the projects about them. The Municipality of Alberobello is planning an educational offer in collaboration with the Societies of Professional Education on the territory

## 9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 800,000 (car park tickets, hotel stay: 35.174), 2004
- Visitor facilities: qualified guides, information office, historical-cultural museum, car parks;

The Museum of the Territory, included in the perimeter of the site, is the welcome centre and the best place to start from to visit the site. The Trullo Sovrano is also a museum and offers a highly qualified service of tourist guides. In the Quarters of Monti and Aia Piccola there are many tourist guide centres and information offices that offer assistance to the visitor

## 10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the value of the site; condition surveys; visitor management; transportation studies; many studies on the site have been carried out (from history to geological studies on the possible existence of pits). Each building unit has been checked and registered; geological survey for sites of extraction of the stones used for covering the head of trullo; restoration techniques defined and codified
- 4 years study *in situ* of the faculty of Architecture Adelaide university, Australia
- Handbook for the Restoration of Trulli

## 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Meetings with schools are organized every year so as to spread the awareness of being endowed with a World Patrimony site
- Heritage days; Celebration of anniversary entry of Trulli to the World Heritage List
- Web site available
- Local participation: The municipality of Alberobello is working together with the owners and inhabitants of the historic centre in order to eliminate TV antennas from Trulli, so to clean the skyline
- A recent agreement with the nearby cities of Andria (Castel del Monte) and Matera (I Sassi di Matera) that are also UNESCO sites, promotes the joint enhancement for tourist and cultural purposes through promotional and territorial marketing initiatives based on the common ground of belonging to the W.H.C. These actions also envisage the use of coordinated communication procedures and a

common “brand name” to the three sites that makes them immediately recognizable

## **12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)**

### **Reactive monitoring reports**

- N/A

### **Conservation interventions**

- Many restoration interventions have been made on Trulli of the Historical Centre; Also public works of improvement or philological restoration of the site are in programme
- Present state of conservation: Good

### **Threats and Risks to site**

- Visitor/tourism pressure; tourism has increased also as a consequence of the status of World Heritage
- Specific issues: the main problem is the lacking maintenance from owners that, in some cases, leave their Trulli in the historical centre in a status of abandonment
- Emergency measures taken/planned: Involvement of private owners: the Management Plan will provide for the instruments and projects that will involve private citizens in the programmes of preservation and development

## **13. Monitoring**

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: the Management Plan, will contain a functional monitoring plan

## **14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; social; economic; awareness of cultural identity and of responsibilities as managers of the site; a greater economical growth linked to tourism
- Strengths/Weaknesses of management: fragmentation of properties

### **Future actions:**

- Creation of a shared system of rules and involvement of all interested subjects in the programmes of management of the site; It will be constitutes an association of all the owners of Trulli. Organisation responsible: Municipality. Timeframe: 3 months