

Cerveteri and Tarquinia (Italy)

No 1158

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Italy
Name of property: Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia
Location: Province of Latium
Date received: 30 January 2003

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, these are *sites*. The submission includes two archaeological sites and two museums. It is a serial nomination.

Brief description:

Two large cemeteries belonging to the Etruscan culture and representing different typologies covering about one thousand years of burials.

Some of the tombs are monumental, cut in rock and with impressive tumuli on top. Many are with carvings on their walls and others with extraordinary wall paintings.

Great amount of movable finds from the tombs are on display in the relevant museums in the nearby towns of Cerveteri and Tarquinia. Those include also detached wall paintings and decorated coffins (sarcophaguses).

The core of the sites is fenced, but large parts are outside the fenced and visited areas.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The nomination is of two Etruscan cemeteries, dating from 9th century to 1st century BCE. The Etruscans were a people who lived in west-central Italy from 9th century BCE onward. Their culture reached its height at the 6th century BCE.

There is no definite answer to the question of the origins of these people. Scholars divide in support of three main opinions: that of Herodotus in the 5th century B.C.E., who considered the Etruscans to be immigrants from Lydia or the Greek part of Asia Minor; that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in the 1st century B.C.E., who looked at them as an Italic people native to the area they occupied; and a third theory, little supported, which sees them as migrants from north of the Alps. It is certain that no community of the same ethnic and social characteristics occurred elsewhere in Europe or Asia. The Etruscan spoke a non-Indo-European language of unknown origin.

The two nominated cemeteries including their construction, artistic decoration and objects found in them are some of the best testimonies of this great Etruscan culture.

The necropolis near the town of Cerveteri is called Banditaccia and the one next to Tarquinia is called Monterozzi. Each of these cemeteries is different in the characteristics of the tombs and therefore cover together the Etruscan burial culture.

Cerveteri: Thousands of tombs exist in this vast cemetery. They are organised in a city like plan, with 'streets', small squares and 'neighbourhoods'. The tombs are of different types depending on period, family status and other criteria. The earliest known are series of rock cut trenches holding pottery ossuaries containing ashes of the deceased.

Most famous are the tumuli, tombs often containing more than one tomb under an imposing mound. Tumulus II, from the 7th century, for example, houses the 'Funerary Couch Tomb', 'Dolia Tomb' and 'Greek Vase Tomb'.

A famous tomb is the one called the 'Hut Shaped Tomb', from the 4th century. It presents an excellent rock cut hut with all structural and building elements, such as gabled roof, main crossbeam, wood and straw roofing materials as well as stone couches next to the walls. This tomb and others, imitating houses, are the best and only evidence of the residential architecture of the Etruscans.

The 6th century Tomb of the Greek Vases is accessible through a rock cut *dromos* (corridor) and it imitates an Etruscan temple.

The Tomb of the Moulding (cornice) has two thrones with footstools, cut in the rock, at the sides of its door. It also imitates a contemporary domestic interior.

The tomb of the Capitals has an imitation of wooden floor, on its ceiling (considered as the first example of a parquet floor).

The most famous among the thousands of the Banditaccia tombs is the 'Tomb of Reliefs'. This 4th century tomb is accessible via long rock cut stairway leading to a big hall (6.5 x 7.8 m) with a ceiling supported by two columns with Aeolic capitals. It includes 13 double funerary niches and additional place for 34 bodies on a specially carved ledge. The 13 niches have double cushions with red painted stucco. Various objects are depicted on the stuccoed walls, including weapon, religious objects and daily life ones.

This is just a small selection of tombs – of which a few more are described in the nomination file. Only a visual presentation can do justice to these tombs which are so important to understand daily life, architecture, religion and mythology of the Etruscans.

Tarquinia: The other cemetery, known as Monterozzi or the necropolis of Tarquinia, is famous for its painted tombs. This in spite the fact that they constitute only 3 % of the known 6 000 tombs in the cemetery. The tombs are all cut in the rock and accessible via sloping or stepped corridor. Most of them were made for a single couple and constitute of one burial chamber.

The earliest painted tombs are from the 7th century but only in the 6th century they fully developed and completely covered with painting. About 50 out of the 200 known painted tombs are accessible to the public. A few of these are described below:

The 4th century tomb of the Lionesses, discovered in 1874, consists of small chamber with gabled roof. The painting

depicts flying birds and dolphins and mainly scenes from the life of the Etruscan aristocracy.

The 6th century tomb of the hunting pavilion - showing the view seen through the transparent fabric of the pavilion.

Hunting and Fishing Tomb, composed of two chambers. In the first one, depiction of Dionysian dancing in a sacred wood, and in the second, a hunting and fishing scene and the portraits of the tomb owners.

Jugglers' Tomb – paintings inspired by the games taking place during the funerary ceremonies.

The painted tombs of the aristocracy, as well as the more simple ones, are another extraordinary evidence of what objects can not show: daily life, ceremonies, mythology as well as artistic abilities.

History

The necropolis of Cerveteri (Banditaccia) developed from the 9th century BCE. It expanded from the 7th century on, following a precise plan. The ancient history and development of the Tarquinia (Monterozzi) necropolis is similar.

Earliest evidence of 'modern' interest in the tombs comes from the Renaissance. It grew in the 17th and 18th centuries, when scholars and artists started to describe and paint the tombs. In the first half of the 19th century the Tarquinia cemetery was studied by scholars and this is when most of the tombs known today were discovered. The site was visited in 1834 by Ludwig I from Bavaria, who ordered the reproduction of the paintings, to decorate the new *Alte Pinakothek* in Munich.

Since the 1950s research has been carried out using geophysical, non intrusive methods.

Management regime

Legal provision:

All nominated area is State owned and well protected through State and regional legislation. No activity on the sites, of any character, is allowed, unless by special permit from the Ministry of Culture.

The buffer zones are partly state owned, partly towns and some privately owned. Even the last ones are properly protected through building laws and regulations.

Management structure:

The sites do not have management plans.

They do have a proper management structure, starting with the Ministry for Culture, through the specific *Soprintendenza* and moving to site managers. There is proper protection, maintenance and conservation activity on site, as well as monitoring.

Resources:

State resources, which are never sufficient.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The Etruscan created the first urban culture in Western Mediterranean and in the 6th century they were the greatest power in Italy. The necropolis of Cerveteri is preserved in its entirety, and represents through the tombs replicas of city and houses, including technical and decorative aspects.

The necropolis at Tarquinia represents some of the best examples of ancient painting of western Mediterranean, of the pre-Roman period. These paintings represent not only all aspects of the Etruscan life and beliefs, but provides information on the Greek painting, which is almost completely lost.

The property is nominated on the basis of *criteria i, ii, iii, iv and vi*:

Criterion i: Cerveteri shows a scheme of town planning and architecture in antiquity. Tarquinia, through the wall paintings represents extraordinary artistic skills, while their content is an excellent documentation of daily life and religious beliefs.

Criterion ii: For their impact on other Etruscan necropolises.

Criterion iii: Being an exceptional testimony of the Etruscan culture, and generally the Italian pre Roman cultures.

Criterion iv: For representing the almost non existent Etruscan architecture and town planning.

Criterion vi: For the impact of these sites on art in the Renaissance and recent periods (from Michelangelo through modern artists).

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS mission visited the site in July 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management.

Conservation

Conservation history:

Best Italian wall paintings and other conservators have worked on these sites. In the 1960s some wall paintings were detached and put in museums, but this practice has been abandoned.

Most tombs have small 'houses' protecting their entrances. The painted tombs can be seen only through glass doors. There is permanent monitoring of the state of conservation (which resulted lately in modifications of ventilation and lightning systems). All tombs and cemetery areas are fenced.

State of conservation:

Excellent state of conservation and under permanent supervision and monitoring.

Management:

There is no long term planning and no management plans. Therefore no multi annual work plans and budgeting. These are done on a year by year basis. On the other hand there is a management regime which could without any problem implement a management plan when prepared. Sites and most individual tombs are properly protected and there is good visitors' management, maintenance and monitoring.

Risk analysis:

The main risk is to the hundreds of tombs (or thousands) which are outside the main visited areas. They are legally protected and most of them behind fences but they do not receive the attention deserved due to their cultural value.

The other risk is that as result of very short term planning and relatively small annual budgets, activities are based on urgency or opportunity.

Authenticity and integrity

The sites are authentic as much as excavated archaeological sites can be. The sites were probably not gardens in antiquity but the actual parks are well planned and properly maintained.

Comparative evaluation

These are the two best Etruscan cemeteries in their quality, size and representativity of this type of Etruscan heritage. They include also some of the best preserved tombs.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The importance of the Etruscan culture, as the most important pre-Roman culture in Italy and one of the leading cultures around the Mediterranean is best represented by the nominated cemeteries.

Evaluation of criteria:

The nomination undoubtedly meets *criteria i, iii and iv*:

Criterion i: For representing through the tombs themselves, the wall paintings, rock carving and cemeteries planning a masterpiece of human creative genius.

Criterion iii: For bearing through the burial habits, daily life depicted by wall paintings and for many of the tombs being replicas of Etruscan houses – a unique testimony to a disappeared civilization.

Criterion iv: Many of the tombs represent types of buildings which do not exist any longer in any other form. The cemeteries are replicas of town planning schemes of the Etruscans . Some of the earliest existing in the region.

It seems that it does not meet the meaning behind criterion ii and there are big doubts whether impact on later art justifies its nomination under criterion vi.

Statement of significance

The sites are the most significant and representing non movable remains of the Etruscan culture.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the future

Though the sites are well managed, it is recommended that a proper document, being the sites' "management plan" should be prepared in short time.

The museums, housing the most important movable remains from the sites can not be included in the nomination. ICOMOS recommends a serious discussion on the issue of movable remains, which are complementary aspect of the non movable, as representatives of cultures and cultural values.

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That these properties be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, iii and iv*.

ICOMOS wishes it could recommend the inscription of museums as well. The museums contain the movable elements from these sites, which complement the cultural story of the Etruscans, but the convention does not permit inscription of movable property.

ICOMOS, March 2004