

Syracuse (Italy)

No 1200

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Italy

Name of property: Syracuse and the rocky Necropolis of Pantalica

Location: Region of Sicily, province of Syracuse

Date received: 2 February 2004

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings* and a *site*. In the terms of Paragraph 27 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, the property consists partially of a *group of urban buildings* in the category of "towns which are no longer inhabited but which provide unchanged archeological evidence of the past".

Brief description:

The property consists of two separate elements, which are however territorially complementary:

a) *Necropolis of Pantalica*

The zone contains over 5000 tombs cut into the rock, near to open stone quarries ("lautumiae"). Vestiges of the Byzantine era also remain, and particularly the foundations of the Anaktoron (Prince's Palace).

Most of the tombs date back to the period from the 13th to the 7th century B.C.

Area of the zone: 205.86 ha
Buffer zone: 3,699.70 ha

b) *Ancient Syracuse*

The historic town area can be divided up as follows:

- the nucleus of the first foundation in the 8th century B.C., with the arrival of the first Greek colonists from Corinth: Ortygia.

Today this is an island (originally it was a peninsula), the starting point for the development of the great town of Syracuse (*Pentapolis*) and a point which enabled the control of two natural ports.

It includes:

- a 13th century fortification: the Castello Maniace;

- a cathedral, resulting from the transformation from the 7th century A.D. onwards of the Temple of Athena (built in the 5th century B.C.).
- a set of archeological sites distributed over the urban area;
- the archeological remains of *Neapolis*, with the Greek theatre, the altar of Hieron II of Syracuse, the Roman amphitheatre and the stone quarries ("lautumiae");
- the region of *Scala Greca*, with recent archeological discoveries in a clearly delimited area;
- *Euryalus Fort* and the *Fortifications of Dionysius*, a defence complex built between 402 and 397 B.C. for which the plan was drawn up by Archimedes;
- the ancient remains of Thapsos, Achradina and Tyche.

Area of the group of buildings: 635.96 ha

Buffer zone: 874.45 ha

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

Situated on the Mediterranean coast in south-eastern Sicily, and having always enjoyed a favourable climate while being relatively free of marked relief, the zone of monuments and archeological sites proposed for inscription on the World Heritage list has been inhabited since protohistoric times.

a) *Necropolis of Pantalica*

The necropolis extends over some 1200 m from north to south and 500 m from east to west in the region of Sortino. In the hilly terrain (caverns and precipices) and a natural environment of great beauty, about 5000 tombs are visible, most of which have been hewn out of the rock face.

The tombs are divided into 5 sets:

- the north-western necropolis, with some 600 tombs in groups of 5;
- the northern necropolis, with some 1500 tombs: this is the most vast and spectacular (dated to 1200-1100 B.C.);
- the southern necropolis, between the two previous ones, dating to the same period;
- the Filippotto necropolis, with around 500 tombs and the Cavetta necropolis, with around 300 tombs (the latter dates to 9th-8th century B.C.).

Archeological research has brought to light, in this zone, vestigial remains of dwellings from the period of Greek colonisation. Materials of Mycenaean origin and monumental structures were recognised, enabling the identification of the Anaktoron, or Prince's Palace.

Similarly, it has been possible to identify a period of reoccupation of the site in the 9th-10th centuries: the zone was in fact used for the defence against invasions of Sicily by the Arab armies.

b) *Syracuse*

On the side which has been inhabited from the protohistoric neolithic period, and certainly from the start of the 13th century (demonstrated by archeological research and excavations), Syracuse symbolises by its foundation the development of the Greek presence in the Western Mediterranean.

This city, founded in the 8th century (c. 734 B.C.) was, according to the Ancients, very large and extremely beautiful. The orator and politician Cicero records that it "was the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of all. Its reputation was by no means usurped, and it enjoyed a unique site, between earth and sea..."

Its central nucleus, today the island of Ortygia, controlled two natural ports which had already become famous in ancient times. Ortygia consisted of five parts, giving rise to its alternative name of Pentapolis. The two ports are still identifiable today: Porto Piccolo to the east and Porto Grande to the west. *Ortygia* covers an area 1600 m long by 600 m wide, with a central main street and a network of other streets reminiscent of the orthogonal plan of the ancient Greek city, constructed in the 7th century B.C.

The following Greek vestiges remain (from north to south):

- *Temple of Apollo* (Apollonion);
- *Ionic Temple*;
- *Temple of Athena* (Athenaeion);

The *Catacombs*, the largest except for those in Rome, date from the paleochristian period. Subsequently, many items bearing witness to the troubled history of Sicily remain (from the Byzantines to the Bourbons, with in between the Arabo-Muslims, the Normans, the government of Frederick II (Hohenstaufen) (1197-1250), the domination of the Aragons and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies):

- The church of St. John the Baptist (4th-16th centuries),
- The church of St. Martin (6th-14th centuries),
- Abeba Dunieli Palace (15th century),
- Bellomo Palace (13th-18th centuries),
- Migliaccio Palace (15th century),
- Francica-Nova Palace (15th century),
- Church of San Francesco all'Immacolata (13th-18th centuries),
- Church of the Collegio (built by the Jesuits in the 17th century).

But the most celebrated monument, with its great square, is the Cathedral, which incorporates the remains of a Greek temple dating back to the 6th century B.C. The excavations carried out in 1996-1998 under the square have brought advances in our knowledge of the history of Syracuse and its ancient monuments.

Constituted in 1952-1955, the archeological park of *Neapolis*, in Syracuse, includes the most spectacular (and some of the best preserved) Greek and Roman monuments bearing testimony to the past of Sicily (area of this zone: 24 ha):

- the magnificent Greek theatre;
- the Nymphaeum zone (with the cave);

- the sanctuary to Apollo;
- the imposing altar of Hieron II (the king of Syracuse in 265-215 B.C., the ally of the Romans against Carthage);
- the remarkable Roman amphitheatre;
- the great stone quarries (12 in number, also known as the "lautumiae") which extend over a distance of more than 1.5 km;
- the Grotticelle necropolis, which contains the so-called tomb of Archimedes.

History

Syracuse, in addition to its own history - one of the most ancient in the Western Mediterranean (excavations and research have revealed a substantial human presence as early as the Neolithic period, and particularly from the 13th century B.C., and have confirmed the presence of the first Greek colonists - Corinthians who arrived according to literary tradition in 734 B.C.) - has experienced most of the vicissitudes of the history of Sicily in general.

Historical summary:

- 9th century B.C.:

The Phoenicians colonise the island.

- 8th century B.C.:

The Greeks in turn set up settlement colonies on the eastern coast of Sicily (particularly at Syracuse) and establish trading posts rivalling those of the Phoenicians, and then those of Carthage, the Phoenicians' western metropolis.

- 5th-4th centuries B.C.:

Syracuse, the island's main city, exercises hegemonic control over the whole of Sicily (particularly under Dionysius the Elder: 405-367 B.C.).

- 212 B.C.:

Rome wins the 1st war against Carthage, conquers Sicily and makes it into a province, which then becomes a veritable granary. Syracuse is occupied after a very long and bitter siege (213-212).

- 5th-6th centuries A.D.:

Vandal domination is followed by the Byzantine conquest (which lasted until the 9th century).

- 9th-10th centuries:

The Arabo-Muslims, after conquering Sicily by defeating the Byzantines, turn it into an emirate. It prospers and Palermo, its capital, becomes a remarkably brilliant cultural and artistic centre.

- 1061-1091:

Norman domination of the whole island.

- 12th century:

Sicily becomes the centre of a rich and powerful monarchy, with the flowering of a brilliant and composite civilisation.

- 1197-1250:

The resplendent period of Frederick II Hohenstaufen.

- 1266:
The Duke of Anjou, Charles I, brother of St Louis, is crowned King of Sicily by the Pope.
- 1282-1442:
Sicily is in the control of Aragon.
- 1442-1458:
The kingdoms of Naples and Sicily are united, forming the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Management regime

Legal provision:

Most of the monuments and sites proposed for inscription are public property. They belong to:

- the Italian state (Ministry of the Interior),
- the region of Sicily,
- the province of Syracuse,
- or the Municipality of Syracuse.

Thus:

The monuments of *Ortygia* and the archeological park of *Neapolis* are state property.

The offices of the University of Catania, as a historic monument of Syracuse, the University's property but intended for public access.

The religious buildings (the Cathedral, a historic monument, and the catacombs) are the property of the archiepiscopal parish of Syracuse.

Some civil historic buildings belong to private individuals or companies. However they are subject to *public interest* obligations.

Management structure:

- At national level:
The Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties, in accordance with Italian Legislative Decree no. 490 of 29 October 1997 on the preservation of the artistic and historic heritage.

- At regional level:
The Superintendency for Architecture and the Environment, in accordance with the provisions of Regional Law 15/91 of 1998.

- At local level:
The municipal technical office of Syracuse.

Through a process of decentralisation, the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Properties is represented in Syracuse by a Superintendency.

Resources:

Funds, subsidies and grants are available at several levels for the historic monuments and the heritage in general:

- Italian State:
Ordinary management and maintenance funds;

Special funds for projects or emergency funds (in the event of natural disasters, for example);
Grants for heritage preservation from the Italian national lottery.

- Region of Sicily:
Ordinary funds and special funds for the maintenance and restoration of the historic, artistic and monumental heritage;
Ordinary funds for the management of the historic, artistic and monumental heritage.

- Province of Syracuse:
Grants for heritage management, including grants from private individuals;
Grants for special heritage projects.

There is another source of financing in addition to the above, which is large in amount and important in its regularity: the contribution under a programme of the European Commission, in connection with Agenda 2000 (Regional Operative Programme of Sicily, 2000-2006).

Justification by the State Party (summary)

By replacing the previous prehistoric culture which was centred in Pantalica, the Greek civilisation culture that took over and developed in Syracuse represented the most important centre of the Mediterranean for a significant period of the history of mankind. It predominated over the rivals Carthage and Athens and rose to be the heart of thought, art and culture.

History has also left extraordinary signs of its passage in the town-planning and architectural superimpositions of the subsequent ages which were developed on the palimpsest of the Greek city and preserved extraordinary traces of the persistence and integration of the various cultures of the most significant eras of the western world.

This cultural stratification makes Syracuse a unique property.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission went to visit Syracuse and Pantalica in September 2004.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages (CIVVIH).

ICOMOS suggested to the State Party that the buffer zone next to Syracuse-Ortygia and to the north of the set of building in should be extended to include the coast, with a view to strengthening the protection of the zone proposed for inscription. The State Party has agreed to this extension.

Conservation

Conservation history:

Despite the diversity of the properties (monuments in a modern town, archeological zones, excavation areas) and their scattered location over the area (at one end the Municipality of Syracuse, and at the other, 40 km away, the necropolis of Pantalica, the responsibility of the Municipality of Sortino), a good level of conservation has been achieved.

The inscription proposal dossier sets out the state of conservation in detail.

State of conservation:

As the ICOMOS mission was able to observe, the state of conservation of the properties proposed for inscription is satisfactory. As indicated in the proposal dossier, there are numerous indicators for the *periodical* measurement of the state of conservation:

- by *photograms*: from 1977 to 1999, the area considered has been covered by a campaign of periodical aerial photography surveys.

Checks and monitoring – which will continue to be carried out – have enabled a good evaluation of the state of conservation.

- By the establishment of a *risk survey* for the archeological heritage of the area concerned.
- By *constant surveillance* of the maintenance, repair and restoration works, particularly of works undertaken on privately owned properties, and the possibilities of illegal architectural treatment.

Management:

The management plan described in the inscription proposal is of very high quality. In fact a *special document on management* is attached to the proposal. It is a model of the genre. It includes:

- In addition to a definition of the basic requirements of ICOMOS in this matter,
- a long-term plan for the years up to 2035,
 - a schedule of works planned for the period 2004-2008.

It reviews and analyses all the existing plans relating to the zone, and the projects drawn up (general development plan, detail plans, town plan, landscape planning). The plan is remarkable for the following reasons:

- its *social dimension*: raising the population's awareness of conservation problems,
- and its *educational component*: training in conservation techniques at the University.

Risk analysis:

a) Pantalica

The Pantalica necropolis is located in a zone which is distant from all urban areas and industrial facilities. This

remarkable location safeguards it against a wide range of risks.

b) Syracuse

Syracuse on the other hand is located near a zone of large-scale industries and in a modern urban fabric. This means it is subject to various kinds of pressure.

As a result, the Regional Agency for Environmental Protection (instituted by the Regional Law no. 6 of 3 May 2001) has made special efforts to keep pollution phenomena under surveillance. The analysis results are summed up below

- air pollution

Syracuse is affected by emissions from factories. The rate of compliance with legal emission requirements is 75%.

As a result, the risks for the heritage are minimal.

- land pollution

The Syracuse zone is not affected by this type of risk.

- electromagnetic pollution

The whole region is affected by this type of risk. But the studies and analyses show that it has no impact on heritage conservation.

- noise pollution

The modern part of the town of Syracuse is affected by noise pollution from road traffic. In the archeological and historic zone however traffic is limited, and does not represent a serious risk for the heritage.

- radioactive pollution

No risk has been detected.

- water pollution

It has emerged that some drinking water has been affected by pollution. But this contamination has no impact on the heritage.

- Illegal constructions and eyesores

Periodical surveillance and surveillance have greatly reduced these risks over the last few years.

Effective periodical monitoring is carried out for all these risks by the following organisations:

- the provincial authorities,
- the departmental authority,
- the "carabinieri" police force,
- the Italian Health and Prevention Laboratory,
- the Syracuse health authority.

c) for the whole zone

The main source of concern in this zone is the earthquake risk, which is high throughout eastern Sicily.

A recent league table (Prime Ministerial Order of 21 October 2003) puts the Syracuse area at risk level 2 (the scale goes from 1, the highest risk in Italy, to 4, the lowest risk). The area is under constant seismic and volcanic surveillance, using the Poseidon surveillance and monitoring system.

d) *tourism pressure*

Despite a gradual increase in the number of tourists, the Observatory specially set up for this purpose considers that the increased presence of tourists does not give rise to any risk of damage to the monuments and sites.

Authenticity and integrity

For the *necropolis of Pantalica*, whose integrity has been preserved, material and functional authenticity obviously applies.

For *Syracuse*, historical continuity, despite the diversity of successive cultures, together with the function and the spirit of the place also ensure compliance with the authenticity criterion.

The only question that can legitimately be raised is the authenticity of the Ortygia zone in the heart of the modern city. After full consideration, it can be stated that the superposition of cultures and the strata of architecture have not changed either the materials or the use of the monuments (the temple becomes a church, for example). Therefore, these monuments meet the authenticity requirement.

Comparative evaluation

The inscription proposal dossier remarkably highlights the historic and cultural features, on the one hand, and the town-planning and architectural characteristics on the other, which mean that Syracuse has no equivalent in the Western Mediterranean.

In terms of ancient remains, the only possible comparison would be with Carthage and Athens. Carthage of course was destroyed, and there are few archeological traces of its Phénico-Punic past. The monumental splendours of Athens are well known. But it has not retained to the same extent as Syracuse the hallmark of the interpenetration, down the centuries, of the different cultures of the Western world.

Lastly, there is no town except Syracuse which contains monuments of exceptional value ranging from the Ancient Greek period to the Baroque, and including the Roman and Paleo-Christian eras.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The nominated property fully meets the criteria of Paragraph 24 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

In fact, the human, cultural, architectural and artistic stratification which characterises the Syracuse area mean that it has no equivalent in the history of the Mediterranean, an area marked by cultural diversity. From the ancient Greek period to the Baroque, the town is an excellent example of a property of outstanding universal value.

Evaluation of criteria:

The criteria ii, iii and iv to which the inscription proposal refers are fulfilled by the rich, real and observed value of the properties described in the dossier. A question may be asked about the reference to criterion vi, a criterion which often raises problems. But it is important to recognise that this is an exceptional case: Syracuse was directly linked to events, ideas and literary works with an exceptional universal significance. The following names are forever linked with Syracuse:

- two seminal Greek literary figures: the lyrical poet Pindar (518-438 B.C.) and the tragic poet Aeschylus, the creator of ancient tragedy (525-456 B.C.);
- one of the greatest universal thinkers, the Greek philosopher Plato (427-348 B.C.);
- the vastly influential Syracuse-born Greek mathematician and inventor Archimedes (287-212 B.C.); he founded the science of fluid statics and invented various ingenious mechanisms (including levers and war machines).

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the future

If the property is inscribed on the World Heritage List, the authorities responsible for its management will have to increase their vigilance to avoid problems relating to the insertion of the conservation process into a living and evolving urban setting.

Special attention should be paid to houses that are currently unoccupied in Ortygia, and the authorities concerned should be encouraged to find them a function in urban activity.

More generally, the State Party could be requested, if the property is inscribed, to draw up a detailed report on the conservation of the property, and changes in its condition, every 5 years.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Inscribes the property on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, iv and vi*:

Criterion ii: The sites and monuments which form the Syracuse/Pantalica ensemble constitute a unique accumulation, down the ages and in the same space, of remarkable testimonies to Mediterranean cultures.

Criterion iii: The Syracuse/Pantalica ensemble offers, through its remarkable cultural diversity, an exceptional testimony to the development of civilisation over some three millennia.

Criterion iv: The group of monuments and archeological sites situated in Syracuse (between the nucleus of Ortygia and the vestiges located throughout the urban area) is the finest example of outstanding architectural creation spanning several cultural aspects (Greek, Roman and Baroque).

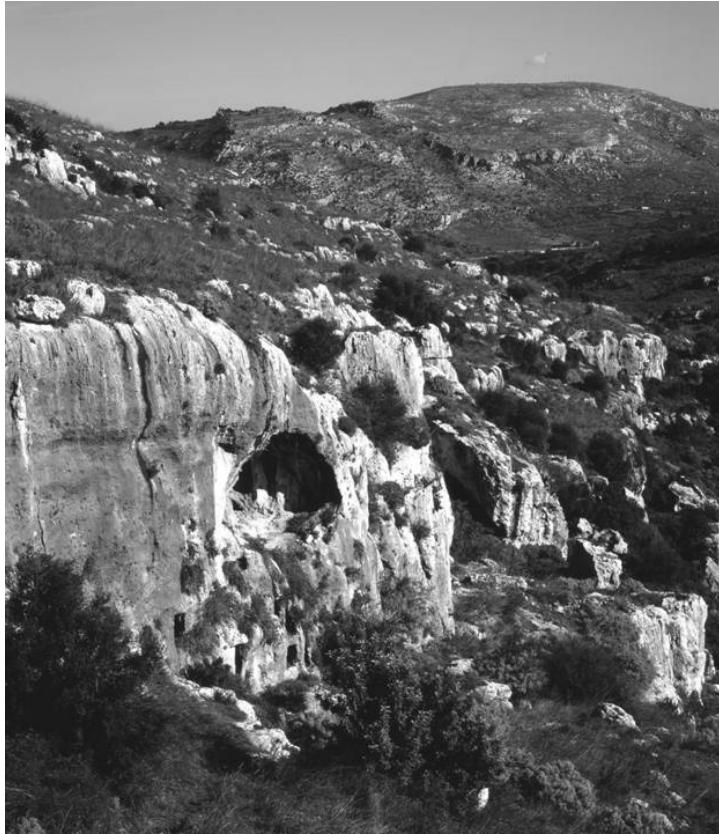
Criterion vi: Ancient Syracuse was directly linked to events, ideas and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

3. Invites the authorities responsible for the management of the property to increase their vigilance to avoid problems relating to the insertion of the conservation process into a living and evolving urban setting.
4. Encourages the State Party to pay special attention to houses that are currently unoccupied in Ortygia, and to find them a function in urban activity.
5. Requests the State Party to draw up a detailed report on the conservation of the property, and changes in its condition, every 5 years.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Revised Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of Pantalica from the south



Aerial view of Syracuse