
Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale

(Italy)

No 1487

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale

Location

Municipalities of Palermo, Monreale, and Cefalú
Sicilian Region
Italy

Brief description

Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale is a series of nine religious and civic structures dating from the era of the Norman kingdom of Sicily (1130-1194). Two palaces, three churches, a cathedral, and a bridge are in Palermo, the capital of the kingdom, and two cathedrals are in the municipalities of Monreale and Cefalú. Collectively, they illustrate a socio-cultural syncretism between Western, Islamic, and Byzantine cultures that gave rise to an architectural and artistic expression based on novel concepts of space, structure, and decoration.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of 9 *monuments*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

18 October 2010

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

29 January 2014

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 22 to 25 September 2014.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent by ICOMOS to the State Party on 9 September 2014 to request further information about future plans to extend the serial nomination; the proposed boundaries for the buffer zone; the English-language texts of the justifications for the criteria under which inscription is proposed; the interrelationships of the management system, plan, and structure; the sources and level of funding available to the nominated serial property; the monitoring system and the inventory of previous reporting exercises; and community involvement in the preparation of the nomination dossier and management plan.

The State Party replied on 31 October and 12 November 2014, sending additional documentation which has been taken into account in this evaluation.

A second letter was sent to the State Party on 17 December 2014, asking it to confirm its proposed extension of the buffer zones; to make the Memorandum of Understanding, management structure, and Management Plan fully operational as soon as possible; and to revise the proposed management system for the overall serial property.

The State Party replied on 24 February 2015, sending additional documentation that has been taken into account in this evaluation.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2015

2 The property

Description

This 6.235-ha serial property in Palermo, Monreale, and Cefalú on the northern coast of Sicily illustrates the multicultural Western-Islamic-Byzantine syncretism that characterized the Norman kingdom of Sicily during the 12th century. From the 22 major Norman-era monuments that have survived on the island, nine have been nominated for their historical importance, state of conservation, authenticity, and accessibility. They are the Royal Palace and Palatine Chapel; Zisa Palace; Palermo Cathedral; Monreale Cathedral; Cefalú Cathedral; Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti; Church of Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio; Church of San Cataldo; and Admiral's Bridge. Each of the nine components of the nominated serial property is described below:

1. The Palaces

The Royal Palace and Palatine Chapel stands at the highest point of the ancient city of Palermo. The palace today reflects the substantial rebuilding that took place in the medieval period and later, but parts of the Norman Romanesque work remain, such as the Pisan Tower and

Sala di Ruggero (Roger's Room), as well as combinations of Islamic and Byzantine styles within its multilayered fabric. The well-preserved Palatine Chapel in the centre of the palace contains exceptional Byzantine mosaics, inlaid marble designs, and Islamic painted ceilings within its Arab-influenced Norman architecture.

Zisa Palace was built within the Islamic-inspired garden (the Genoard, from *Jannat al-ard*, "paradise on earth") that once surrounded the ancient city of Palermo. This summer retreat is the most important and representative monument of the Genoard, and, despite significant 20th-century interventions, constitutes the best preserved model of Arab-Norman palace architecture. The crystalline forms of its *Ifriqiyan* (Islamic North African) architecture are designed to refract light. The Fountain Room on the ground level of the building is enhanced by nonreligious mosaics and vaults with stalactite-like *muqarnas*.

2. The Cathedrals and Churches

Palermo Cathedral was created in the 12th century by reconstructing an existing mosque. The massive building has undergone major changes since its construction, and now reflects a mixture of Arab, Norman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architectural styles. The large southern portico in the Catalan Gothic style was built about 1465, and the prominent dome was added about 1785. The Latin-cross interior is divided into three aisles by columns that support the vaulting. The Norman interior finishes evidently did not include extensive pictorial or mosaic figurative decorations. The tombs of the emperors and Sicilian kings were placed here in the 18th century.

Cefalù Cathedral, a fortress-like twin-towered edifice conceived by the Norman king of Sicily as a dynastic mausoleum, was built in Cluniac Romanesque form by foreign workers. The extraordinary mosaics in the central apse of the Latin-cross building were realized by Byzantine workers from Constantinople. The Romanesque idiom is also evident in the sculptural aspects of the Cathedral, particularly its cloister, while some decorative devices are the work of local workers trained in the Arab-Norman style.

Monreale Cathedral testifies to the maturity of the Norman-Islamic-Byzantine stylistic syncretism reached in the second half of the 12th century. The interior, about 110 m long by 40 m wide, has a wide central nave between two smaller aisles defined by 18 columns. Its vast expanses of mosaic scenes on a background of gold tesserae are extraordinary examples of the Siculo-Byzantine style. Also notable are its marquetry, interlaced arches, sculptural refinement, and richness of fittings, including bronze doors made by the Bonanno workshops of Pisa. The cloister has 228 paired columns with ornately carved capitals, some featuring inlaid mosaics.

Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, once part of a monastic complex and now a museum, is comprised of a compact series of unadorned cubic volumes surmounted

by five red stuccoed domes. Restored in the 19th century, the building's stonework is exposed in the largely undecorated interior, which is characterized by diminishing multiple arches that confer a distinctive and symbolic nature to the monument. There is also a cloister enclosed by arches supported on small paired columns.

Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio is a compact, domed Greek-cross plan to which were added a bell tower and a narthex to house the tomb of George of Antioch. The portico is later, from the Baroque period. The ornate Byzantine mosaics inside are among the most remarkable from the Komnenian period of Byzantium (1081-1185). The focal point is the image of Pantocrator Christ in the summit of the dome. The well-preserved inlaid marble flooring faithfully reflects Byzantine models, while some ornamental motifs clearly show Islamic influences.

Church of San Cataldo, now a museum, is a small, austere building, cubic in form, with three very shallow arches on each façade into which small, high windows have been set. It has three spherical red domes over its nave, and cross vaulting over two side aisles defined by four columns. The absence of interior finishes allows an appreciation of the Byzantine-style architecture, particularly the articulation of the vaults and domes. The inlaid floor created by Islamic artisans is an example of a Byzantine tradition interpreted in a new and original way.

3. The Bridge

Admiral's Bridge is a testimony to Norman civil engineering in the Mediterranean area. Built of freestone, it originally spanned the Oreto river, which has since been diverted. The bridge is partially buried, and is circumscribed by a fenced area. It has two steep, symmetrical ramps and seven spans. The arches are articulated by thick pylons, each provided with a lancet-arched opening to reduce the water's pressure during floods. Its construction technique and morphology can be associated with a diffused typology of the Maghreb area.

On 31 October 2014, the State Party indicated that the possibility of a future request to extend the nominated serial property has not been excluded.

History and development

The Normans (Northmen, descendants of the Vikings) invaded the southern Italian peninsula in the 11th century. They took possession of the Sicilian city of Palermo in 1071, and by 1091 had wrested control of the entire island from its Muslim rulers. A united Norman kingdom was created there in 1130, and Sicily became the centre of Norman power in this region under the rule of Roger II (r. 1130-1154). He set about centralizing his government at Palermo and expanding the lands under Norman rule. With his Greek admiral George of Antioch, Roger II successfully conquered *Ifriqiya* (Northern Africa), progressively occupying the coast from Tunis to Tripoli. The Normans capitalized on Sicily's central location in the Mediterranean Sea to make it an important centre for trade with Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

By 1135, the Norman kingdom of Sicily included a wide range of geo-cultural areas, including Campania and northern Apulia, populated by people of Latin culture; Calabria and southern Apulia, of Byzantine culture; and Sicily and the possessions of Africa, of Islamic culture. The coexistence of Christian, Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the Sicilian realm produced a syncretic, multilingual culture. Roger II, who spoke French, Greek, and Arabic, exercised an uncommonly enlightened tolerance towards the diverse people of his realm.

The multicultural civilization over which Roger II ruled can be appreciated in the Palatine Chapel within the Royal Palace. The chapel's Norman doors, Saracenic arches, Byzantine dome, and roofline adorned with Arabic scripts illustrate the integration of Arab and Byzantine expertise with the Romanesque architecture brought by the Norman conquerors. The chapel was founded by Roger II immediately after his crowning in 1130. In 1131 he also founded Cefalù Cathedral, intended by him to be his own dynastic mausoleum. Civil projects from this era included the seven-arched Admiral's Bridge, built about 1132 and named after George of Antioch. The transformation of a former Arabic State Palace into an administrative and residential Norman Royal Palace was begun during Roger II's reign, and he founded the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti nearby. The Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio was founded by George of Antioch in 1143, and the Church of San Cataldo was founded about 1154-1160.

Roger II died in 1154. His lands in Africa were regained by Islamic forces between 1156 and 1160, during the reign of William I (r. 1154-1166), whose sovereignty was contested by his own Norman barons. The mosaics of the Palatine Chapel were extended during William I's time, and the Zisa Palace was founded in 1165, to be completed under William I's successor, William II (r. 1166-1189). Monreale Cathedral was built during William II's pro-ecclesiastical reign, and he and his parents were interred there. Palermo Cathedral was rebuilt on an earlier mosque by King William II's minister, the archbishop of Palermo, between about 1169 and 1185, the year it was dedicated. After reigning for two decades of peace and prosperity, William II died without an heir. The Norman kingdom of Sicily fell in 1194, 64 years after it had been established, replaced by the Swabian House of Hohenstaufen and its head, Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor.

A number of changes were made to the buildings and structures mentioned above in the centuries that followed their initial construction. The Palatine Chapel was restored and its structure consolidated in the 1920s and 1930s. A portico was added between the two towers of Cefalù Cathedral's façade, small spires were added to the two Norman towers in the 15th century, and three large ocular windows in the central apse were closed to give space for the mosaics. Decoration of the presbyterium was completed in the 17th century. Seventy-two new abstract stained glass windows have since been installed, starting in 1985.

Admiral's Bridge was restored at the end of the 19th century. Much of the Royal Palace was rebuilt and added to in the 14th century. In the 16th century, Sicily's Spanish governors undertook important reconstructions, including a system of bastions. The Bourbons in turn built additional reception rooms and reconstructed the Sala d'Ercole in the 18th century. The Palace has been the seat of Sicily's Regional Assembly since 1947. Extensive restoration work was carried out in the 1960s.

The Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti was modified significantly over the centuries. A late 19th-century intervention was undertaken to restore its medieval appearance. The Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio was also modified extensively, by the Benedictine nuns of Martorana, who between the 16th and 18th centuries made major changes to the structure and interior decoration. Significant later additions to the church include the current Baroque façade facing the piazza. Restorations in the late 19th century attempted to recover the original appearance of the church. The Church of San Cataldo, which was being used as a post office by the 18th century, was restored in the 19th century to more closely reflect its original appearance.

In the 14th century a crenellated parapet was added to the Zisa Palace (partly destroying an Arabic inscription). More substantial modifications were made in the 17th century, when the former summer retreat was in very poor condition. Several rooms were modified, a great stair was built, and new external windows were added. After part of the building collapsed in 1971, its structure was "caged" with a system of pre-stretched cables running vertically and horizontally inside the walls, and its lost original interior volumes were reconstructed.

In Monreale Cathedral, a Renaissance portico and a mosaic pavement in the nave were completed in the 16th century, two baroque chapels were added in the 17th and 18th centuries, and damage from a fire in the choir in 1811 was repaired in the years that followed. Palermo Cathedral has had a long history of additions, alterations, and restorations. While the main (western) façade is from the 14th and 15th centuries, the present neoclassical appearance of the Cathedral, including its large central dome, date from an extensive and radical programme of work carried out between 1781 and 1801.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The State Party presents a comparative analysis that is based on the attributes and characteristics that sustain the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. The reasons that make the nominated property stand out are summarized for most comparisons, and the authenticity and the integrity of each of the comparable properties are addressed.

Seven properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List are compared in the analysis. One, Longobards in Italy. Places of the Power (568-774 A.D.) (Italy, 2011, (ii), (iii), (vi)), illustrates some cultural and artistic appropriations that are equivalent to the Normans in Sicily. Six other properties are compared as examples of the reinterpretation or synthesis of Western, Islamic, and/or Byzantine styles: Mudejar Architecture of Aragon (Spain, 1986, 2001, (iv)); Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (Palestine, 2012, (iv), (vi)); Venice and its Lagoon (Italy, 1987, (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi)); Early Christian Monuments of Ravenna (Italy, 1996, (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)); Monasteries of Daphni, Hosios Loukas and Nea Moni of Chios (Greece, 1990, (i), (iv)); and Alhambra, Generalife and Albayzín, Granada (Spain, 1984, 1994, (i), (iii), (iv)).

Similar properties on the Tentative Lists such as Mdina or the Romanesque Cathedrals in Puglia are not explored, and with a few exceptions (Salerno Cathedral, Campania; Northern African mosques), other properties within a defined geo-cultural region are not compared.

ICOMOS considers that the comparisons are largely relevant in the similarity of their architecture or by the presence of specific decorative aspects, and sufficiently demonstrate the importance and uniqueness of the nominated property. ICOMOS further considers that the comparative analysis could have usefully been extended to consider other properties in the various lands under the dominion or influence of the Normans in the 11th and 12th centuries – England, Malta, and parts of France, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Africa, and the southern portion of the Italian peninsula. These lands also illustrate a socio-cultural syncretism between Norman subjugators and the subjugated. Such comparisons could have demonstrated even more conclusively that the nominated property stand apart.

The question of whether there is scope in the World Heritage List for the inclusion of the nominated property has not explicitly been answered, a geo-cultural region has not explicitly been defined, and specific criteria for the comparisons, based on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property, have not been elaborated. ICOMOS considers that a more systematic approach to the comparative analysis would have been useful, particularly concerning the application of criteria that relate directly to the claimed values.

ICOMOS nevertheless considers that Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalú and Monreale illustrates an exceptional socio-cultural syncretism between cultures, and that the comparative analysis justifies the selection of the components that form the nominated series.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- It bears witness to a particular political and cultural condition, characterized by the fruitful coexistence of people of different origins (Muslim, Byzantine, Latin, Jewish, Lombard, and French), that encouraged the interchange of human values and the formation of a lively cultural syncretism.
- This interchange generated a conscious and unique combination of elements derived from the architectural and artistic techniques of Byzantine, Islamic, and Western traditions and suggested new models of synergy between environment and monument. This new style contributed to the developments in the architecture of the Tyrrhenian side of southern Italy and spread widely throughout the medieval Mediterranean region.
- The nominated monuments are an outstanding example of a stylistic synthesis that created new spatial, constructive, and decorative concepts through the innovative and coherent re-elaboration of elements from different cultures.
- The strong impact this phenomenon had in the Middle Ages contributed significantly to the formation of the Mediterranean *koine* and was a prototype for modern European civilization in the Mediterranean from the empire of Frederick II to the establishment of nation states.

ICOMOS considers that this justification for the serial approach is appropriate. The nine selected components of the nominated serial property collectively and evocatively illustrate the profound influence the Normans had on this region of Europe, and that the Arab-Norman syncretism had during and after the creation of these monuments. The attributes of the nominated serial property, particularly those associated with the introduction of Norman concepts in architecture and design, are testimonies to the transformation of Sicily's Islamic and Byzantine cultures to a European culture that took place during this period.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The State Party has outlined the principal reasons why each component of the nominated serial property was selected and how it contributes to the proposed overall Outstanding Universal Value of the property. In general, the components were selected for their ability to demonstrate the syncretism that drew together Norman, Islamic, and Byzantine architectural and artistic sources, as revealed in novel concepts of space, structure, and decoration. They were further selected from among 22 major surviving Norman-era Sicilian monuments for their historical-cultural importance, integrity, and relative state of conservation, authenticity, accessibility, and usability.

The political and cultural power and wealth of the Norman kingdom of Sicily is demonstrated in the Royal Palace; in Palermo Cathedral, which stands as a political manifesto of the power of the Norman archbishop of Palermo, who built it to counter the impact made by the new cathedral in Monreale; and Cefalù Cathedral, the bastion of the ecclesiastical politics of King Roger II. The spatial qualities of Islamic mosques are recalled in the compact churches of San Giovanni degli Eremiti and San Cataldo, two multi-domed Arab-Norman edifices whose interiors are largely undecorated, allowing the building elements and construction technologies to be clearly understood.

The synthesis of Mediterranean arts is demonstrated by the Byzantine mosaics in the Palatine Chapel, Church of Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio, Monreale Cathedral, and Cefalù Cathedral apse. The Zisa Palace, a model of Arab-Norman palace architecture, is the best preserved built monument of the Genoard ("paradise on earth") garden. Arab-Norman civil engineering is represented by the Admiral's Bridge, the most intact and authentic bridge of this type still standing in Sicily.

ICOMOS considers that the nomination dossier has provided a logical, scientific basis for the selection of the components that make up this serial nomination, and for the selection of the nominated areas. The nominated serial property includes all the elements necessary to express its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and is therefore of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey the nominated property's significance. The State Party indicates that the nominated property does not suffer unduly from adverse effects of development or neglect.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the whole series has been justified; and that the integrity of the individual components that comprise the series has been demonstrated.

Authenticity

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the nominated serial property and of its individual components has been demonstrated. In spite of significant interventions to most of the components during the centuries since their construction, the cultural values of the nominated property and of its individual components (as recognized in the nomination criteria proposed) have been demonstrated to be truthfully and credibly expressed through attributes such as their locations and settings, forms and designs, materials and substances, and uses and functions. The overall authenticity of the mosaics in particular has been confirmed by experts in the field of Byzantine mosaics.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the whole series has been justified; and that the authenticity of the individual components that comprise the series has been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been justified; and for individual sites, the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii) and (iv).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property "Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale" bears witness to a particular political and cultural condition characterized by the fruitful coexistence of people of different origins (Muslim, Byzantine, Latin, Jewish, Lombard and French). This phenomenon encouraged the interchange of human values and the formation of a lively cultural syncretism; as for the monuments, it generated a conscious and unique combination of elements derived from the architectural and artistic techniques of Byzantine, Islamic and Western traditions and suggested new models of synergy between environment and monument. This new style contributed to the developments in the architecture of the Tyrrhenian side of southern Italy and spread widely throughout the medieval Mediterranean.

ICOMOS considers that a multi-directional interchange of ideas between the Norman, Islamic, and Byzantine peoples in 11th- and 12th-century Sicily resulted in a cultural syncretism that is clearly manifested in the nominated serial property. This interchange, which can be said to be substantial in terms of the influence it had at the time, can be perceived through attributes associated with the spaces, structure, and decoration of the nine monuments that comprise the nominated serial property.

ICOMOS considers, however, that the suggestion of new models of synergy between environment and monument – presumably referring to manifestations such as gardens with water and fountains – is not supported by the attributes of the landscapes that are included within the nominated property. These manifestations, which are associated with the Zisa Palace and Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, according to the State Party, are insufficient to sustain such a claim.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified for the whole series.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the monuments of the property “Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale” are an outstanding example of stylistic synthesis that created new spatial, constructive and decorative concepts through the innovative and coherent re-elaboration of elements from different cultures. The strong impact of this phenomenon in the Middle Ages contributed significantly to the formation of the Mediterranean *koine*, which was a prototype for the modern European civilization in the Mediterranean, from the Empire of Frederick II to the establishment of the nation states.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated serial property reflects a significant stage in human history: the Norman conquest of various regions of the European continent during the 10th to 12th centuries, including the southern Italian peninsula and Sicily. The attributes of the nominated serial property, particularly those associated with the introduction and integration of Norman concepts in architecture and design, are testimonies to the transformation of Sicily’s Islamic and Byzantine cultures into a blended European culture that took place during this period.

ICOMOS considers, however, that the nomination dossier has not demonstrated that the manifestations of the Norman conquest formed a prototype for the birth of modern European civilization in the Mediterranean, from the Empire of Frederick II of Swabia to the establishment of nation states. Norman law and culture, including art and architecture, had a profound influence on southern Italy, but other cultures also had significant influences in the creation of the modern Mediterranean civilization.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified for the whole series.

ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is justified and ICOMOS considers that the selection of sites is appropriate.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (ii) and (iv) and the conditions of authenticity and integrity.

Description of the attributes

The Outstanding Universal Value of Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale is expressed in the numerous architectural and artistic attributes that give evidence of Western, Islamic, and Byzantine cultural influences, and of the syncretic blending of these influences during the Norman era to create novel concepts of space, structure, and decoration. These attributes include the volumes, forms, plans, structures, designs, and materials of the components that comprise the nominated serial property, and their artistic, decorative, and iconographic treatments, most notably their tesserae mosaics, pavements in *opus sectile*, marquetry, sculptural elements, paintings, and fittings.

4 Factors affecting the property

Potential development pressures identified by the State Party that could affect the nominated property include traffic (limited use of public transportation, tour bus management, and congestion); social and economic pressures related to high levels of unemployment, lack of new investment, and the reduced presence of entrepreneurship, all resulting in a dependence on external finances; and inappropriate modifications to the contextual environment, thefts, and vandalism. There are also seismic and hydrogeological risks in Sicily. Tourism pressures, including from cruise ships, are considerable and are increasing.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are traffic, social and economic pressures, the impacts of tourism, and hydrogeological and seismic instability.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The nine components of the nominated serial property have a total area of 6.235 ha. The State Party contends that the nominated property includes all the necessary elements to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and that the nine components include the most representative examples of Arab-Norman syncretism, the serial property completely preserves the structures that constitute it, and the uses related to each of the series’ components are more often than not unchanged and continuous.

ICOMOS notes that the State Party has not provided an explicit rationale or explanation in the nomination dossier for the chosen boundaries of the nominated property. The boundaries are generally limited to the footprints and/or the immediate sites of the nine components that comprise the nominated serial property.

The State Party has proposed a two-level system of buffer zones for the nominated serial property. As revised in October 2014, they total 483.008 ha (162.118 ha for the Level I buffer zones and 320.89 ha for the Level II buffer zones). The State Party advises that the Level I buffer zones are delimited to preserve the visual, structural, and functional integrity of the components of the property and of their immediate context. Each of the nine components of the nominated serial property has a Level I buffer zone. The Level II buffer zones take in a wider area, based on the nominated property’s town-planning, historical-cultural, and landscape relationships, as well as the boundaries of existing protection at the territorial level. Zisa Palace and Admiral’s Bridge do not have Level II buffer zones.

The proposed Level II buffer zone boundary for five of the Palermo components (excluding Zisa Palace and Admiral’s Bridge) generally follows the city’s historic centre

boundary as defined by the Detailed Executive Plan for the Historical Centre of Palermo within the General Regulatory Plan. The Cefalù Cathedral component is within that municipality's historic centre, defined by a General Regulatory Plan and subject to a Detailed Executive Plan. Its Level II buffer zone follows the Areas of Archaeological Interest designated under the Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage.

In supplementary information provided on 31 October 2014, the State Party advises that the proposed Level I buffer zones have been extended for the Royal Palace and Palatine Chapel, Palermo Cathedral, and Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti; and significantly extended for Zisa Palace and Admiral's Bridge, since these two are outside the general protection provided by Palermo's historic city centre planning restrictions. The Level I buffer zones for Monreale and Cefalù cathedrals have also been extended to better ensure their visual integrity.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated serial property are adequate and that the boundaries of its buffer zones, as revised in October 2014, are also adequate.

Ownership

The Royal Palace is owned by the Italian State, and its Palatine Chapel is owned by the Ministry of Interior's Religious Buildings Foundation (Fondo Edifici di Culto); the Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio and Church of San Cataldo are likewise owned by the Religious Buildings Foundation; the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, Zisa Palace, and Admiral's Bridge are State Property of the Sicilian Region; Palermo Cathedral is owned by the Diocese of Palermo; Cefalù Cathedral is owned by the Diocese of Cefalù, and its cloister is owned by the Capitolo dei Canonici (Chapter of Canons); Monreale Cathedral is owned by the Diocese of Monreale, and its cloister is State Property of the Sicilian Region.

Protection

All the components of the nominated serial property have been given the highest level of protection established by national legislation under the Italian Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage (Legislative Decree No. 42 of 22/01/2004, Second Part – Cultural Heritage). The Code obliges the holders of cultural properties to conserve them, and, as a measure of safeguarding, obliges every activity on the building to be authorized by the competent superintendent (Regional Department of Cultural Assets and Sicilian Identity). In addition, three components have been designated as individual National Monuments, with the same obligations as above: Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti (Royal Decree of 15/08/1869); Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio [Church of the Martorana] (Royal Decree of 15/08/1869); and Cathedral of Monreale (Royal Decree no. 1282 of 20/10/1942). ICOMOS considers that the protection afforded is sufficient to address the major threats to the nominated property.

The proposed buffer zones (including the Level I extensions described in additional information provided by

the State Party on 31 October 2014) have a system of protection by virtue of the regulations and planning directions in the territory's current planning tools. The buffer zones also include a number of monuments designated as National Monuments, as well as areas protected under the Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage (Third Part – Landscape Heritage). Proposed interventions require the approval of competent authorities. The Sicilian Region's Special Plan for Hydrogeological Setting (2000) also restricts interventions in some areas of the buffer zones.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place for the nominated serial property is adequate and the legal protection for the buffer zones as revised in October 2014 is also adequate.

Conservation

The State Party has analyzed the state of conservation of nominated serial property as a whole, and of each of its nine components under six categories: structure and building components; sculptural elements; paintings; mosaics; marquetry; and physical context. This analysis indicates that the nominate property as a whole is in a very good state of conservation. According to the State Party, the areas around Zisa Palace and Admiral's Bridge (both of which are in a good state of conservation) could benefit from improvements.

The state of conservation of the nine components is reported to range from fairly good or good to outstanding. Some urgent structural consolidation and restoration is required for the Royal Palace (south façade, Pisan and Greek towers, and Maqueda and Fountain courtyards). The Palatine Chapel mosaics were restored in 2009; restoration of Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio was completed in 2012; and Palermo Cathedral underwent large-scale restoration and structural consolidation in the late 1980s.

Zisa Palace was the subject of a comprehensive reconstruction and restoration in the 1970s and 1980s, after its partial collapse. Actions to correct the presence of damp in the Fountain Room walls were taken in 2007. The building is now considered by the State Party to be in a good state of conservation. Cefalù Cathedral was fully restored in the 1980s, and its cloister in 2007. The mosaics at Monreale Cathedral were restored 1965-1982, and in 1979 the wooden ceilings were consolidated.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated serial property as a whole, and of its nine individual components, is adequate.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

Management of the serial components is currently undertaken individually by each owner. A proposed management structure and plan for the nominated serial

property as a whole has been laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding, which as of 20 February 2015 has been signed by representatives of the all institutional subjects that compose the management system.

The Memorandum establishes a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the owners, managers, and institutions that are responsible for the nine components. This Committee will specify the activities to be carried out annually. The Sicilian UNESCO Heritage Foundation will implement the decisions of the Steering Committee, follow the guidelines and objectives included in the Management Plan, and monitor the property. The overall goal is to coordinate the managers' activities and to improve cooperation for the protection, improvement, and socio-economic development of the territories concerned through the promotion of their historical artistic, architectural, and landscape heritage, as well as their intangible cultural heritage.

The State Party advises that the Superintendent for the Cultural and Environmental Heritage of Palermo has a staff of 15 overseeing the components under its jurisdiction, and that the various owners (dioceses of Palermo, Cefalù, Monreale, etc.) as well as the individual components also have dedicated staff. The proposed operational structure to manage the nominated property includes a technical-scientific manager, an architect experienced in regional and town planning, and an expert in communication and promotion.

Management related to conservation and protection of the components is currently financed by funds from the national and regional administrations. According to the Memorandum of Understanding, management of the nominated serial property, if inscribed, will be funded by annual contributions from the municipalities of Palermo, Cefalù, and Monreale and the foundations and institutions that manage the nominated property; from possible public and private contributions and donations; and from sponsorships of events and other activities.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The nominated serial property has a general management system whose objectives are to protect and conserve the values of the nominated property and to promote the socio-economic growth of the territory. This management system includes a coordinated Management Plan that encompasses all nine components. The Plan, which represents a declaration of principles and actions that authorities and communities undertake to follow, is a coordinating instrument to protect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property for current and future generations, and is aimed at rationalizing and integrating the resources and actions related to the processes of protection and development. The Plan has been elaborated with particular attention to extending its field of interest to the buffer zones and to the "relative territories of reference."

The Plan includes a description of the serial property and its components; the system of protection, planning, and control for the nominated property, buffer zones, and setting; existing planning at the civic and regional levels; the management system; the territorial context; and action plans. ICOMOS notes that the effectiveness of the recently implemented Management Plan cannot be judged at this time.

In February 2015, the State Party advised that revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding were made to reinforce the centrality of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value – and of the attributes and features that are associated with it – in the Management Plan, which had been inadequately emphasized in its earlier iteration. In addition, mechanisms to undertake impact assessments for proposed changes, developments or interventions are now more fully addressed. Furthermore, revisions were made to the Memorandum and the Plan to support tourist enhancement strategies that guarantee the protection, conservation and sustainable enhancement of the Outstanding Universal Value of the serial property.

Involvement of the local communities

The State Party notes that the development of the Management Plan involved the participation of experts charged with drawing up the document as well as interested institutional subjects representative of the widest range of actors with "legitimate interests." The Plan includes objectives and activities to increase the local community's awareness of the cultural value of the nominated serial property.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the management system for the overall serial property, as revised in October 2014 and February 2015, is adequate.

6 Monitoring

A suite of key indicators has been developed as the measures of the nominated serial property's state of conservation. These include indicators covering the Level II buffer zones and the entire urban areas. These indicators are related to the overall state of all the components; the pressures of human activities; the effectiveness of actions taken; and the quality, services, and accessibility of the urban areas. Their periodicity ranges from monthly to every ten years. The suite of indicators also includes some that are specific to the fabric of the nominated serial property, such as structural damage, damp, and deterioration, to be measured every year or two years. This monitoring system will be made operational in the event the nominated serial property is inscribed and its coordinated management begins. Reports from the monitoring already being carried out by different institutions are kept in their respective offices.

ICOMOS considers that many of the chosen key indicators relate to the proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, and to the attributes of the identified

threats, though none yet expresses a benchmark that indicates a desired state of conservation.

In November 2014, the State Party provided a summary inventory in tabular form of recent cataloguing related to the components of the nominated property (except Cefalù Cathedral) and their states of conservation. Regrettably, this inventory does not include brief summaries or extracts from the reports, or references to published sources.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed monitoring system is satisfactory, and strongly urges that it be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

7 Conclusions

The nominated serial property Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale is an exceptional testimony to the Norman conquest of various regions of the European continent during the 10th to 12th centuries, and to the multi-directional interchange of ideas in its kingdom of Sicily that resulted in a socio-cultural syncretism between the island's Western, Islamic, and Byzantine cultures. The attributes of the nominated serial property, particularly those that gave rise to an architectural and artistic expression based on novel concepts of space, structure, and decoration, testify to the transformation of Sicily's Islamic and Byzantine cultures into a blended European culture that took place during this period. Its series of nine religious and civic structures authentically illustrates the profound influence the Normans had on this region of Europe, and that the Arab-Norman syncretism had during and after the creation of these monuments. The relevant attributes conveying the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are included within its boundaries. It is in a good state of conservation and has the highest level of protection at the national level. The management system and Management Plan for the overall serial property, as revised in October 2014 and February 2015, are adequate.

ICOMOS notes that, in spite of the commendable effort made by the State Party in the elaboration of the nomination dossier, the translation of the dossier into one of the working languages of the World Heritage Committee is noticeably deficient, something that makes the proper understanding of the information difficult. ICOMOS considers that this does not constitute a minor aspect, since nomination dossiers become references for new nominations, for comparative analyses, and for other types of research or dissemination activities. A proper understanding of the contents of nomination dossiers is also a requirement to be fulfilled by the States Parties. The State Party is thus invited to consider the possibility of proceeding to a proper translation of the original text.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale, Italy, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

Located on the northern coast of the Italian island of Sicily, Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale is a series of nine religious and civic structures dating from the era of the Norman kingdom of Sicily (1130-1194). Two palaces, three churches, a cathedral, and a bridge are in Palermo, the capital of the kingdom, and two cathedrals are in the municipalities of Monreale and Cefalù. Collectively, they are an outstanding example of a socio-cultural syncretism between Western, Islamic, and Byzantine cultures. This interchange gave rise to an architectural and artistic expression based on novel concepts of space, structure, and decoration that spread widely throughout the Mediterranean region.

The monuments that comprise this 6.235-ha serial property include the Royal Palace and Palatine Chapel; Zisa Palace; Palermo Cathedral; Monreale Cathedral; Cefalù Cathedral; Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti; Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio; Church of San Cataldo; and Admiral's Bridge. Each illustrates important aspects of the multicultural Western-Islamic-Byzantine syncretism that characterized the Norman kingdom of Sicily during the 12th century. The innovative re-elaboration of architectural forms, structures, and materials and their artistic, decorative, and iconographic treatments – most conspicuously the rich and extensive tesserae mosaics, pavements in *opus sectile*, marquetry, sculptural elements, paintings, and fittings – celebrate the fruitful coexistence of people of different origins.

Criterion (ii): Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale bears witness to a particular political and cultural condition characterized by the fruitful coexistence of people of different origins (Muslim, Byzantine, Latin, Jewish, Lombard, and French). This interchange generated a conscious and unique combination of elements derived from the architectural and artistic techniques of Byzantine, Islamic, and Western traditions. This new style contributed to the developments in the architecture of the Tyrrhenian side of southern Italy and spread widely throughout the medieval Mediterranean region.

Criterion (iv): Arab-Norman Palermo and the Cathedral Churches of Cefalù and Monreale is an outstanding example of stylistic synthesis that created new spatial, constructive, and decorative concepts through the

innovative and coherent re-elaboration of elements from different cultures.

Integrity

The serial property includes all the elements necessary to express its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, including religious, civic, and engineering works, and is therefore of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey the property's significance. The property does not suffer unduly from adverse effects of development or neglect.

Authenticity

The cultural value of the property and of its individual components is truthfully and credibly expressed through attributes such as their locations and settings, forms and designs, materials and substances, and uses and functions. The authenticity of the mosaics in particular has been confirmed by experts in the field of Byzantine mosaics.

Management and protection requirements

The nine components of the serial property are under the ownership of various governmental and religious bodies. They have been given the highest level of protection established by national legislation under the 2004 Italian Code of the Cultural and Landscape Heritage. In addition, the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio (Church of the Martorana), and Monreale Cathedral have been designated individually as National Monuments. The Level I and Level II buffer zones are protected by virtue of the regulations and planning directions in the territory's current planning tools.

A management system and Management Plan for the serial property as a whole have been laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum establishes a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the owners, managers, and institutions that are responsible for the nine components. This Committee will specify the activities to be carried out annually, and the Sicilian UNESCO Heritage Foundation will implement the Committee's decisions. The Management Plan includes a description of the serial property and its components; the system of protection, planning, and control for the nominated property, buffer zones, and setting; existing planning at the civic and regional levels; the management system; the territorial context; and action plans.

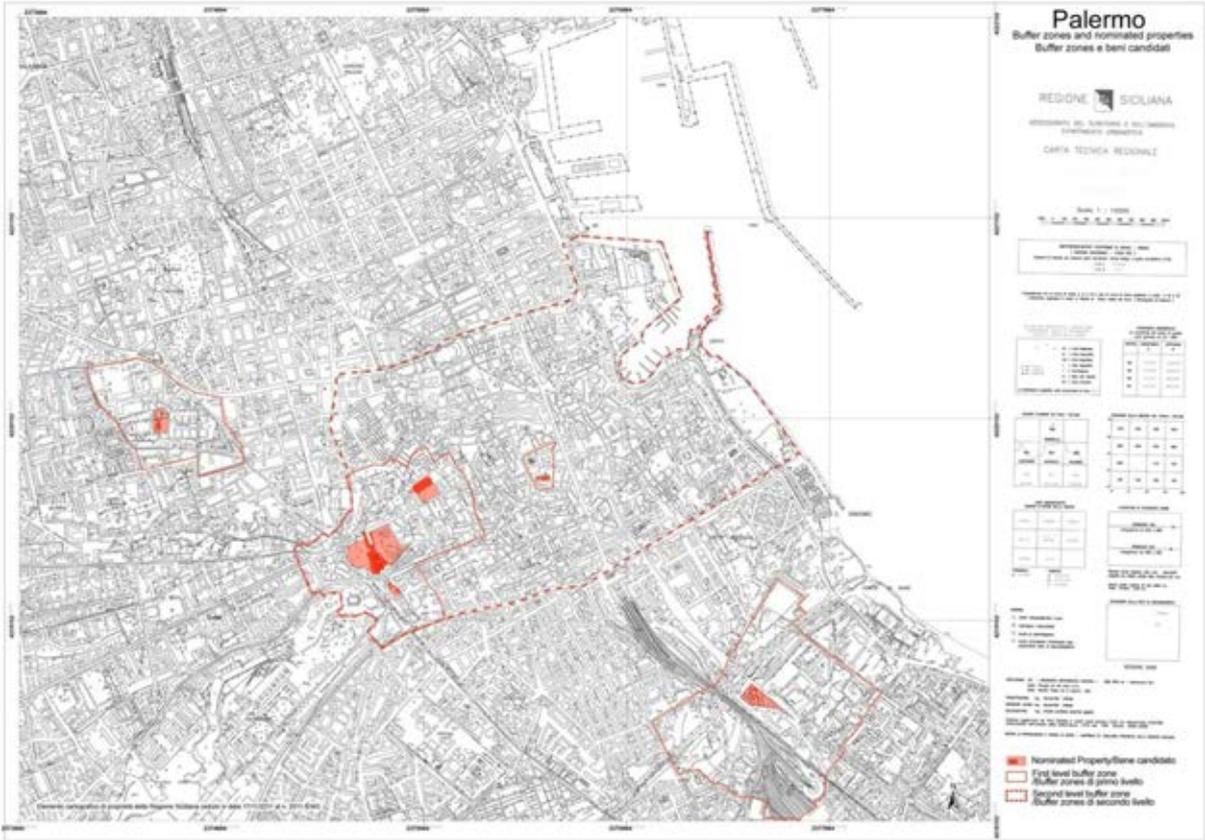
Long-term challenges for the protection and management of the property include eliminating or mitigating the consequences of human actions (vandalism, theft, fire); degenerative phenomena provoked by the pressures of mass tourism, including cruise ships; environmental disasters (earthquakes, landslides, floods, pollution), particularly for monuments subject to seismic risk; and socio-economic decay of the

historic urban centres. These potential vulnerabilities and threats to the property's Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity must be fully addressed by the Management Plan and management structure.

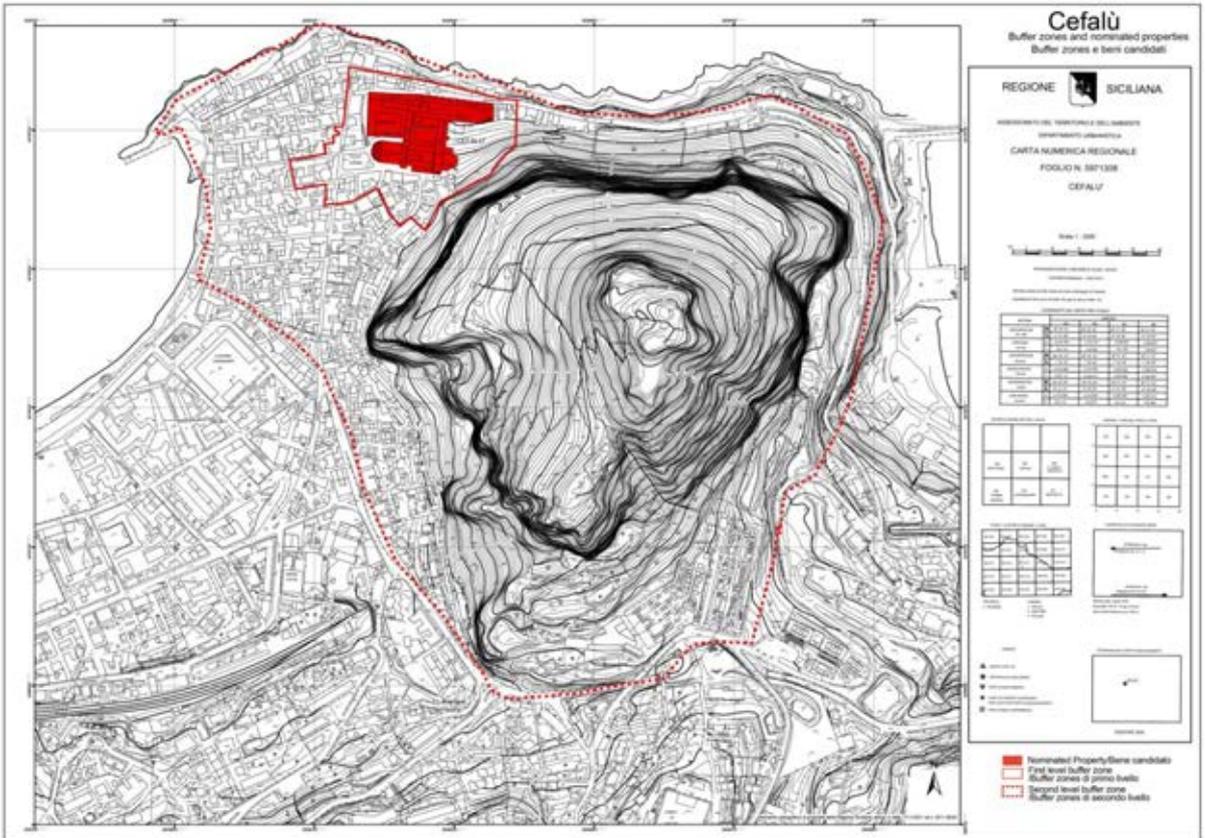
Additional recommendations

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

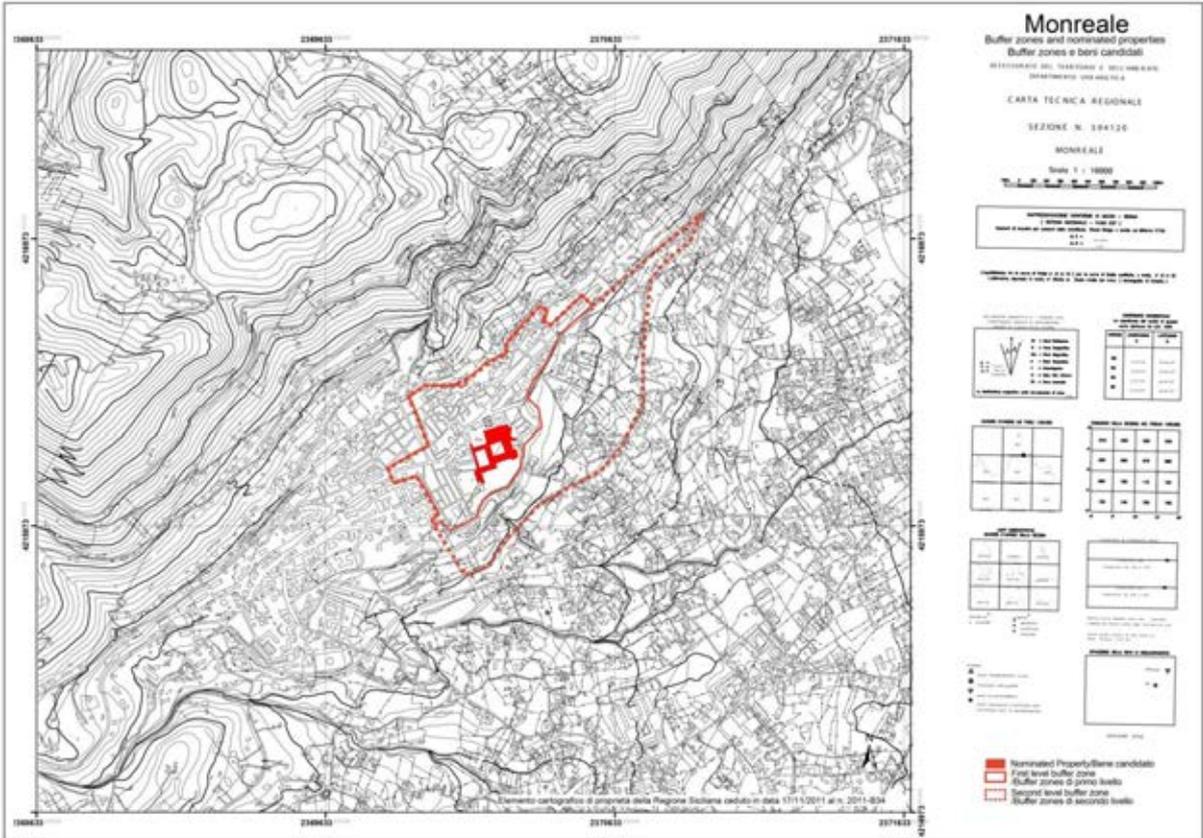
- Implementing the proposed monitoring system at the earliest opportunity;
- Proceeding to a new translation of the nomination dossier to be kept in the archives as a reference for new nominations or comparative studies.



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property of Palermo



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property of Cefalù



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property of Monreale



Palermo: Royal Palace, the Palatine Chapel



Cefalú Cathedral



Monreale Cathedral, cloister



Palermo: Church of San Cataldo



Palermo: Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti