

CYPRUS

Painted Churches in the Troodos Region

Brief description

This region is characterised by one of the largest groups of churches and monasteries of the former Byzantine Empire. The complex of 10 monuments included on the World Heritage List, all richly decorated with murals, provides an overview of Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting in Cyprus. They range from small churches whose rural architectural style is in stark contrast to their highly refined decoration, to monasteries such as that of St John Lampadistis.

1. Introduction

Years of Inscription 1985, 2001

Agency responsible for site management

- Ministry of Communications and Works (Department of Antiquities), Director of the Department of Antiquities, Museum Street 1, 1516 Nicosia, Nicosia District, Cyprus
E-mail: antiquitiesdept@da.mcwc.gov.cy

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (ii), (iii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

These Churches described above are suggested for inclusion in the World Heritage List because of their properties (Monuments) which meet the evaluation Criteria (I), (III), (IV), (VI).

The second roof over a Byzantine Church is not found elsewhere and the Churches of Cyprus are therefore unique. The wall-paintings covering the walls of these Churches are also of universal importance because they represent works of art of past civilizations not preserved elsewhere. On the other hand, these paintings continue the genuine tradition of wall-painting of the Roman World as it was exercised in the Byzantine Empire as the successor of the Roman Empire. The paintings of the 11th and 12th centuries are of outstanding quality and are considered the predecessors of the Renaissance. Moreover, the wall-paintings of Cyprus exercised a strong influence in the 12th and 13th centuries in other regions such as the Middle

East and South Italy. The later wall-paintings are the only evidence of the widespread influence of the art of the Renaissance in the Eastern Mediterranean. These Churches of Cyprus are therefore of outstanding and universal value.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(1985): ICOMOS justifies its testimony opinion for inclusion on the World Heritage List by criteria (iii) and (iv) and on a secondary basis, criterion (ii).

- Criterion (iii). The paintings of the region of Troodos bear an outstanding testimony to the Byzantine civilization at the time of the Comnenes, thanks to the Nikitari and Lagoudera ensembles. It should be noted that the former, where the name Alexis Comnenis mentioned in a dedication, was probably executed by artists from Constantinople and that the latter was painted at the very time of the fall of Isaac Comnene and the sale of Cyprus to Guy de Lusignan.

- Criterion (iv). The churches of the region of Troodos are a well conserved example of rural religious architecture during the Byzantine period. The refinement of their décor provides a contrast with their simplicity of structure. The latest post-Byzantine painters alone, with their "rustic" style, are at times in harmony with this vernacular architecture.

- Criterion (ii). Although the existence of any direct influence cannot be confirmed, during the 12th century, there existed very close relationships between painting in Cyprus and Western Christian art (stylistic relationships in the case of Nikitari paintings; iconographical relationships in the case of the paintings of Lagoudera). Thus, there exist some answers to the very complex question of ties between the two Christianities. These answers take the form of Cypriot monuments which precede the constitution of the Frankish Lusignan Kingdom which was a fundamental link in the chain of East-West artistic exchanges.

(June 2001): Bureau recommendation for deferral only available on line.

(November 2001): recommendation for referral in ICOMOS file.

Committee Decision

(1985): The Committee made no statement.

Bureau (2001): The Bureau is prepared to recommend approval of the extension of the Painted Churches in the Troodos Region to the Committee, maintaining the existing criteria (ii), (iii)

and (iv). In response to a question from the Chairperson, ICOMOS confirmed that the Church being added to this inscription possessed outstanding universal value. However, the Bureau decided to refer back the nomination to the State Party, asking whether they intend to submit other extensions of this site in the future. In that eventuality, the State Party will be encouraged to provide a comparative study.

Committee (2001): The Committee decided to approve the extension of the Painted Churches in the Troodos Region, maintaining the existing criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv).

This serial inscription will henceforth include 10 structures:

DATE INSCRIBED	NAME/ LOCATION
1985	Church of Ayios Nikolaos (St. Nicholas) tis Steyis, Kakopetria
1985	Ayios Ionannis (St. John) Lambadhistis Monastery, Kalopanayiotis
1985	Church of Panayia (The Virgin) Phorviotissa (Asinou), Nikitari
1985	Church of Panayia (The Virgin) tou Arakou, Lagoudhera
1985	Church of Panayia (The Virgin), Moutoullas
1985	Church of Archangelos Michael (Archangel Michael), Pedhoulas
1985	Church of Timios Stavros (Holy Cross), Pelendria
1985	Church of Panayia (The Virgin) Podhithou, Galata
1985	Church of Stavros (Holy Cross) Ayiasmati, Platanistasa
2001	Church of Ayia Sotira (Trans-figuration of the Savior), Palaichori

- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone needed. The Antiquities Law provides, under section II article 11, for the establishment of the so-called "Controlled areas" around the site

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- No special legislation or administrative arrangements
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective
- Improvements needed
- Actions taken at national level: declaration of controlled areas around every monument
- Timeframe: in the near future

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Religious use

Management /Administrative Body

- No steering group. The management is under the direct supervision of the Curator of Ancient Monuments and the Director of the Department of Antiquities
- Coordinator responsibilities have been added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No specific management plan

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget Annual
- Sufficient
- Other assistance includes Local Church Committees, local authorities and private foundations

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 1

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

- Very good: Conservation, management, interpretation
- Good: promotion, education
- Bad: visitor management
- Access to other adequate professional staff: engineers for protection measures

- More staff is needed especially for promotion, education, visitor management and safeguarding
- Regular volunteers involved

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

- Scientific staff of the Department of Antiquities
- Specialised conservation workshops of the Church
- Specialised scientific teams from Universities and Institutes from abroad
- The staff is sufficiently trained but needs constant training and information on new techniques

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor facilities include signs and explanatory panels, parking, sanitary facilities, local museums, leaflets and guidebooks
- Facilities are adequate

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessments, studies related to the value of the site, condition surveys undertaken
- Study for the installation of theft and fire alarm systems in the ten churches; extensive restoration of the architecture and the wall-paintings of the ten churches have been undertaken by the Department of Antiquities. From 1965 to 1966 a Dumbarton Oaks expedition undertook the cleaning and preservation of wall-paintings and frescoes. In 2003-2004 researchers of the Frederick Institute (Higher Education Private Institution), in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities, undertook a project on air quality

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- There are many signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Training of local church authorities and local communities by organising lectures, seminars, exhibitions, etc. - Measures for increasing the

number of local visitors in collaboration with the Cyprus Tourism Organisation

- The Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus produced a series of videos aiming for secondary schools
- Special events and exhibitions include the exhibition in Athens 2002 organised by the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, Cypriot WH sites were promoted by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation at the Exhibition of Cultural Tourism held in Berlin, 7-11 March 2003, official celebrations related to UNESCO, local events as the ceremony celebrated in Palaichori on the occasion of the inscription of the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour in the WHL of UNESCO in 2002).
- Local participation: the continuous use of all the churches for religious ceremonies is a decisive factor for social and other benefits

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Building restoration work; improvement work in the surrounding areas; conservation of wall-paintings, restoration of wooden furniture
- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, environmental pressures, natural disasters and visitor/ tourism pressures
- The pressure of increasing number of visitors affects the demands of the local church authorities for new facilities that are not compatible with the character and value of the monuments
- Other major problems include arbitrary activities by the owners of the monuments and increasing of criminal activities (robberies)
- Measures taken by the Dept of Antiquities include increased monitoring of the problems threatening the site and further expropriation of lands around the monuments for theft and fire systems in the churches

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme includes supervision of the air quality in relation to the condition of the frescoes in some of the

churches, the quality of conservation and restoration work, the impact of development in the vicinity of the monuments

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status are conservation, social, economic, management and educational
- Achievements since the inscription are the control of the building activities and the development of surrounding areas, the increased number of visitors, the allocation of funds for regular conservation and the increase of public awareness.
- Weaknesses: lack of personnel fully engaged in the management of the site. The existing staff of the Department of Antiquities is also involved in the management of all the ancient monuments all over the country

Future actions:

- Increasing of government staff responsible for the management of the site