

ITALY

Early Christian Monuments of Ravenna

Brief description

Ravenna was the seat of the Roman Empire in the 5th century and then of Byzantine Italy until the 8th century. It has a unique collection of early Christian mosaics and monuments. All eight buildings – the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, the Neonian Baptistery, the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, the Arian Baptistery, the Archiepiscopal Chapel, the Mausoleum of Theodoric, the Church of San Vitale and the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe – were constructed in the 5th and 6th centuries. They show great artistic skill, including a wonderful blend of Graeco-Roman tradition, Christian iconography and oriental and Western styles.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription **1996**

Agency responsible for site management

- Tourism Service and Cultural Activities- Municipality of Ravenna
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2. Statement of Significance

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

Justification provided by the State Party

No single statement provided for the 8 structures.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Qualities: The Early Christian buildings of Ravenna are without parallel in the information that they provide about artistic contacts and developments in this highly significant period in the cultural development of Europe. They constitute an epitome of religious and funerary art and architecture during the 6th century. The mosaics are among the highest expressions of this form of art surviving anywhere in Europe, and have added importance because of the blending of western and eastern motifs and techniques.

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

The complex of Early Christian religious monuments in Ravenna are of outstanding Significance by virtue of the supreme artistry of the mosaic art that they contain, and also because of the crucial evidence that they provide of artistic and religious relationships and contacts at an important period of European cultural history.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1996): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value being of remarkable significance by virtue of the supreme artistry of the mosaic art that the monuments contain, and also because of the crucial evidence that they provide of artistic and religious relationships and contacts at an important period of European cultural history. The Bureau decided to rename the property to "The Early Christian Monuments and Mosaics of Ravenna".

Session (1996): The Committee decided to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value being of remarkable significance by virtue of the supreme artistry of the mosaic art that the monuments contain, and also because of the crucial evidence that they provide of artistic and religious relationships and contacts at an important period of European cultural history. The original name of the nominated property has been changed to "The Early Christian Monuments of Ravenna".

- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- Change proposed by State Party for the name of the site: The Early Christian and Byzantine historical buildings of Ravenna

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate
- The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Neonian Baptistery, Basilica of San Apollinare Nuovo, Archiepiscopal Chapel and Church of San Vitale are historical buildings protected *de iure* by the Legislative Decree n. 42 of January 2004 "Code of cultural heritage and landscape". The Arian Baptistery, Theodoric's Mausoleum and Basilica of S. Apollinare in Classe are

historical buildings protected by decree of 14 July 1979 *ex lege* 1089/39 and article 822 of the Civil Code

- The buffer zone is defined by the constraints of law that delimit respect. Furthermore on 23 June 2005 approval was given to the City Strategic Plan which includes the historical buildings of the World Heritage site as cultural emergencies

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Presumably no substantial modification can influence the authenticity and integrity of the site

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The General Urban Planning Scheme 2003 requires the intentional sustainable valorisation of 'local qualities' to ensure Ravenna a position in global networks. The preliminary document of the Strategic City Plan was approved in 2003. The Territorial Plan for Provincial Coordination is the overall planning instrument
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction; Religious use

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group; Formally constituted; The mandate of the committee is the coordination of competent bodies in regard to the assets, in order to produce an integrated model of management
- Management by the State Party; The Management organisation of the site has a complex structure, at the first level consisting of the owners, the Church and the State, in the persons of their relative management bodies, 'Opera di Religione' and Superintendence, and a system level
- Site manager with responsibilities added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; regional; local
- The current management system is highly effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 05/2005
- Very effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Municipality of Ravenna- Tourism and Cultural Activities Service. A UNESCO office has been set up in the ambit of the Service by legislative act LW number 262/05 of 23/08/2005

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget
- MIBAC/Superintendence funds, Archdiocese of Ravenna-Cervia for property belonging to the Church
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 46

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

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion; interpretation; education; visitor management
- The Archdiocese of Ravenna and Cervia has a religion and art education service for the historic buildings of Ravenna that provides guided tours with a representative of the 'Opera di Religione' organisation inside the building itself
- Support of regular volunteers for the site: 'Opera di Religione' collaboration of voluntary workers as attendants

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

- The presence of the university and other institutes specialised in conservation and restoration, as well as the recent setting up of a documentation centre devoted to mosaics, is the guaranteed, in a continuous form, of the specialist and teaching staff at various levels
- Training available to stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 820.859 (tickets and attendants), 2004
- Visitor facilities: Basilica of San Vitale and Mausoleum of Galla Placidia: Bookshop, audio-guides on payment, access for the disabled, hygiene services; Arian Baptistery: access for the disabled. Neonian Baptistery: access for the disabled, audio-guides. Basilica of S. Apollinare Nuovo: bookshop, hygiene services, self-service, audio-guides, visit introduction room. Theodoric's Mausoleum: bookshop, tourist information office, hygiene services, tourist coach parking, camper area, Public Park, visit introduction room. Basilica of S. Apollinare in Classe: bookshop, tourist information office, hygiene services, tourist coach parking, self-service, camper area. There are tourist street signs for the old city centre, providing information on which buildings are included in the UNESCO list and the routes connecting the sites; new map of the old city centre of Ravenna etc.

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the monument, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies
- Risk evaluation and determination of the state of conservation, with special regard to subjects such as land subsidence, chipped mortar, condensation damp, and pollution. Archaeological dig of 4,000 square meters in the archaeological area of Classe with participation of 150 young graduates and students from the faculty of Conservation of Cultural Heritage of Ravenna for the creation of the first part of the Archaeological Park of Classe. The International Mosaic Documentation Centre is the promoter of various scientific research activities on mosaics, with two main projects: mosaic databank dedicated to contemporary mosaics and databank dedicated to contemporary mosaicists
- Results: Risk evaluation. A risk map for the cultural heritage has been produced. Archaeological surveys: The new archaeological digs have multiple objectives, of which it is interesting to emphasise the improvement of scientific research, the involvement of young people and the valorisation also for tourism purposes of the archaeological area. Assignment of study

grants for carrying through the "Map of archaeological potential of the ancient city of Classe" project which concerns the activities of documentary collection and research. International Mosaic Documentation Centre: The purpose of the mosaic databank is to encourage the research and study of ancient and modern international mosaics, in connection with history, hermeneutics, stylistic influences, restoration and conservation and secondly, to develop strategies that permit all users to have easier access to national and international cultural resources and heritage of public value, guaranteeing free circulation of knowledge

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- In the sphere of the general training plan two different kinds of training levels. Specialist training is connected with the university and specialisation schools: System of guided tours and workshops. As regards specialist training: Faculty of Conservation of Cultural Heritage etc.
- Mosaic Restoration School branch of the "Scuola di Restauro dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure" of Florence, at the Superintendence for Architectural Heritage and Landscape of Ravenna. The institute is also a technical reference point for all operators and offers training by means of activities, conferences and specific operations, providing concrete and methodologically correct proposals for the institutes and bodies that request consultation services for projects and works on ancient and contemporary mosaics
- Heritage days; System of guided tours in which the "Mosaico di Notte" scheme should be mentioned. This scheme concerns the evening opening of the historic buildings of Ravenna, which was the promoter of a new form of valorising cultural tourism, an innovative process for utilisation of historic buildings. The special opening of historic buildings was also supported with cultural entertainment (concerts, meetings, conferences) in the sites and their immediate vicinity. Another special event is the Exhibition of copies of ancient mosaics, an

exceptional promotional vehicle for the city and for the tradition of the mosaic schools of Ravenna which over the years have continued to distinguish themselves for faithfulness to past traditions and for new artistic experiments. The various editions of the exhibition, which from the fifties until now has travelled the entire world, have always been a great success with the public. In the year 2000 the mosaics have been on show in London, Cyprus, Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, Rome, Athens, Salzburg, Munich, Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Bremen and Krakow.

- Web site available

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Mausoleum of Galla Placidia: microclimatic surveys and analyses of the deposits on the mosaic surfaces were carried out. It was decided to limit the number of persons present during the visit to the mausoleum to 15. Cleaning and restoration operation and documentation of all the external parameters of the mausoleum had been completed and the area in front of the building was given paving more suitable for a high flow of tourists. Neonian Baptistery: a prototype documentation of mosaics was produced containing not only the complete set of historical data but also all the information from the analyses carried out previously. A restoration project was started on the mosaics of the cupola. S. Apollinare Nuovo: The baroque apse has been restored with the restoration of the frescoes, stucco, marble funereal monuments located in the presbytery, the cleaning of the eighteenth century altar and finally reconstruction of the floor. Arian Baptistery: stair lift was installed to help the disabled. Archiepiscopal Chapel: restoration works were started on the Archiepiscopal Museum. Theodoric's Mausoleum: the stone external facing was restored, also using laser technology, and the interior of the two cells. A drainage system was built around the building to take away the water rising from underground and also a new organisation of the surrounding area. Basilica of S.Vitale: important series restoration works was resumed, an illumination system was installed, and the central octagon of the sixteenth century floor was completely restored. One of the two *pastophoria*, the

Sancta Sanctorum Chapel was completed. S. Apollinare in Classe: regular maintenance work has been done in a number of operations concerning mainly the roof and the bell tower, the internal illumination system was installed, the green area in front of the basilica was enlarged and provided with a large parking area located at a respectable distance and hidden behind green screens and visitor facilities

- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Specific issues: The historical buildings of Ravenna are subject to the following risk factors: subsistence, condensation damp, and pollution. The ground of Ravenna is subject to subsidence phenomena (lowering of the ground level) producing different levels of drop that affect the higher building parts. Subsidence is accompanied by a rise in the water table. In some monuments the surface level of the water table is higher than that of the original floors and therefore drainage and water removal systems have been installed. The condensation damp (due to early formation of the dew point) is caused mainly by the tourist flow and the thermal-hydrologic characteristics of the environment. The industrialisation of the city of Ravenna and the high level of traffic in the vicinity or some historic buildings have caused an increase in the quantity of dust and aggressive substances

Emergency measures taken

- Neonian Baptistery. In the near future, after completion of the restoration of the cupola decorated with mosaics, an intelligent microclimate control system will be installed which will be capable of optimising the internal parameters of temperature and relative humidity without the need to limit the number of visitors to twenty persons
- Basilica of S. Apollinare in Classe; During the summer of 2005, while maintenance was being done on the electrical plant, structural deformations were discovered in the wooden trusses of the central aisle due to wood-eating insects and contractions due to the wood seasoning. Very urgent works have been arranged - the works are currently in progress

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- In the territory of the municipality of Ravenna a number of instruments and environmental

monitoring activities are in operation. The report on the state of the environment, in collaboration with the Regional Agency for Environmental Protection, requires constant forms of monitoring of the state of the water, green areas and traffic. The participation of the Municipality of Ravenna in the first European environmental accounting project applied to local bodies, named CLEAR, standing for City and Local Environmental Accounting and Reporting, has produced, among other things, the drafting of the environmental balance for the year 2003 and the very recent approval of the environmental forecast balance for 2005. In regard to the monitoring activities on the state of the historic buildings, the responsibility lies with the local Superintendence, a responsibility which, in the context of the agreements deriving from the application of the Management Plan, can be exploited for other monitoring activities (for example on visitors).

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- What has changed considerably in recent years, and which is probably based on the recognition of the universal value that UNESCO has given to the city, is the progress made in the idea of system, network and cultural identity. The city has recognised *in primis* its own identity as a city of culture, and therefore as a destination for cultural tourism, a city that produces cultural events and that innovates and experiments also in the organisation of culture with new cultural bodies, from the University to the foundations and institutions
- Strength/Weaknesses of management: the great age of the buildings and successive stratification of history have made these sites isolated events in the territory, probably less integrated in the territory as happens instead for buildings of more recent historical periods. It is necessary an intensive policy of integration of the environment of historic buildings into the urban and suburban fabric as indicated in the Management Plan