Champaner-Pavagadh (India)

No 1101

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: India

Name of property: Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park

Location: Gujarat state, district of Panchmahal

Date received: 29 January 2002

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 *site*.

Brief description:

A concentration of archaeological, historic and living cultural heritage properties cradled by impressive landscape. It includes prehistoric (chalcolithic) sites, a hill fortress of an early Hindu capital, remains of the 15th century deserted capital of the state of Gujarat. The last is partly buried, unexplored and untouched. The nomination includes also fortifications, palaces, religious buildings, residential precincts, water installations and others.

A temple of Kalikamata on top of the Pavagadh Hill is considered as an important shrine, attracting large numbers of pilgrims throughout the whole year.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

In the words of the nomination file: *'At Champaner the land, the people and the built heritage are individual components of a complex dynamic process.'*

One of the very important components and values of this nomination is its setting. The sites within the nomination are situated at the foot and around the Pavagadh hill, surrounded by lower hillocks, escarpments and plateaus – all result of volcanic eruptions and lava flows. At the top of the hill is the temple of Kalikameta. The site itself comprises of fortifications, water installations and different standing structures from the 8th to 14th century as well as a deserted city of Mahmud Begharha. It includes also the living village, Champaner, within the area of the historic town.

The nomination text describes two precincts.

The first is the Royal Enclosure, fortified by high defensive stone wall, with towers and gates. It used to house palaces, gardens, royal mosque and administrative buildings. It houses now the modern village and government offices.

Most of the precinct is buried and unexcavated. The exposed part can teach of what a medieval capital in this region used to be. A processional way links the royal palace, through the city gate, with the mosque, outside the precinct.

The second precinct, called Jahanpanah, is also in ruins and not excavated. It was the capital of Begharha, and abandoned in the mid-16th century when conquered by the Mughal Empire.

The urban plan has been studied by exposing the main road system – comprising of well built and paved streets, all leading from the surrounding fortifications to the centre of the city. Whenever needed, topographic obstacles were overcome by bridges and retaining walls.

The text is not clear about how much has been excavated already, but it says that the whole area is now an excavation site which includes:

-Residential areas for the wealthy and more common people, with gardens and water channels being part of the design.

-Shops and commercial areas along some streets. Some shops with underground storage space.

-Pavilions and public gardens.

-Mosques located in and near residential areas. Some of them are monumental. Next to the mosques there are graveyards and mausolea.

-Temples, located mainly on the Pavagadh hill, belong to different Hindu deities. The oldest of the temples is in ruins, but all others, except for one, are in use. The temples are richly decorated, mainly with stone carvings.

-Considered as the most important element of the place and the 'soul of Champaner' is the Patha, or pilgrims route. The city's life and development were always closely linked with the pilgrim's road. It climbs from the plateau to the top of Pavangadh hill, consisting of thousands of steps and all kinds of decorative and functional structures along it.

-Mosques are some of the most monumental and important architectural elements on site. Some of them are forerunners of the Mughal architecture, being a mix of Hindu traditions and craftsmanship with Moslem ideology. The structural systems also indicate the earlier Hindu elements (column-beam-dome) and later Moslem 'import' such as large domes.

-Tomb structures are almost all square in plan, with a dome resting on columns. They are highly decorated and often linked to a mosque.

-Military architecture which includes the fortifications by walls and bastions, barracks and camps well built, as well as prisons.

-Palaces which are mostly in state of ruins. They belonged to different royalties in different periods and in most cases included gardens and fortifications.

-Pavilions form an essential characteristic feature of the gardens within palaces and outside them. These are considered as pleasure pavilions, for which Champaner was renowned. Mahmud Begharha, for example, invited the famous Persian landscapist to design his palace gardens, probably including the pavilion.

-Gates: numerous gates lead the pilgrims to the top of Pavagadh hill. Others are openings in defensive structures such as the city wall or palaces. Some individual gates have extraordinary architectural features and importance.

-Water installations are integral and important to the culture and design of Champaner. They include water storage systems such as tanks and reservoirs and water collecting systems using dams. Different kinds of wells are known in the whole area – many of which still in use. During the 15th century the water system was used for pleasure and aesthetic purposes as well as for daily use. Some houses had running water and many of the gardens and pavilions were decorated with water channels.

History

Some material remains prove that the area was inhabited already in the chalcolithic period. It seems from existing finds that it was then abandoned until circa 400 AD.

An important non tangible component of the history of the site is the legend that the Pavagadh Hill is the place where the right toe of the goddess Kalika fell. This gives a special meaning to the site – though can not be considered as scientific part of its history.

(There is nothing in the dossier regarding the period between 5th and 13th centuries AD.)

The area was conquered in the 13th century by Khichi Chauhans who built his first settlement on top of Pavagadh hill. These rulers built fortification walls along the plateau below the hill. The earliest built remains from the period include temples. Other important remains from this period are water tanks.

The Turkish rulers of Gujarat conquered Champaner in 1484. With Mahmud Begharha's decision to make Champaner his capital, the probably most important historic phase of the area started. The new city was built at the foot of the hill and not on top of it, as the previous settlements were. Being a capital and residence of a king is eloquently expressed by its architecture. Champaner remained the capital of Gujarat until 1536.

It was then deserted with no more important construction periods. When taken over by the British in 1807, it is reported that there are only 500 inhabitants in Champaner.

Nowadays religious importance is keeping the place alive. This brings thousands of people as pilgrims, participants in fairs and festivals.

The main community is Hindu with a few Muslim, Jair and Christian families. There are some nomadic, grazer groups in the area. The 1982 census states that there is a population of 1856 inhabitants in the area, in 387 houses.

Management regime

It seems from the nomination dossier that there is very little management, no management structure nor clear responsibilities. The dossier is talking of future actions to be taken in this regard, including the nomination of the whole area as an 'archaeological park' with administrative structure, staff and a comprehensive plan. At the moment, in spite of considerable efforts and different plans prepared

– there is nothing in place and plans were not implemented. The expert's evaluation speaks of a 'management system' which looks 'promising' – but from its description it seems more like a decision making process. It is clearly stated in the evaluation report that there is lack of strategy, therefore decisions are rather at ad hoc level.

The temples are managed traditionally and archaeological remains are protected legally – but the nominated area includes much more. It seems also that efforts are made for surveying and inventorying, but at the moment there is not even a proper inventory of the properties on site.

Legal provision:

The constitution of India recognises the value of cultural heritage. India has effective legislation to protect archaeological sites but it is not mentioned in the nomination file whether Champaner, in total or parts of it, are declared as protected archaeological sites. ASI does protect 39 standing monuments at the site.

Much of the area comes under a 'Reserved Forest Act', but according to the nomination dossier it has no provisions to protect cultural heritage.

Management structure:

There is no management plan, no management structure nor regime. There is a system based on meetings of the main stakeholders, to take decisions on different actions. The system is not a legal structure but based on legal role of some of the participants and much good will. There are interested groups, a lot of good will but it seems that there is no clear commitment by any responsible authority, for the whole area, which could for some time replace management plans and implementation structure.

The dossier indicates plans for the future and a landscaping plan without any time frame nor indication of its legal status.

Resources:

There are no permanent financial resources. All financial resources mentioned in the dossier were grants and donations (all ad-hoc) with no indication for future commitments.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The justification by state party is very vague. Though the descriptions of the different components as well as the pictures, show a very impressive and complex site – the justification for nomination is not always obvious.

It is based on stating that the site has:

-Significant setting.

-Significant geology.

-Significant Pre-History. Not even trying to explain its significance.

-Significant regional town planning. Being the place of regional capitals during Hindu and Mughal periods, the area can be significant for the understanding of the planning of such towns, during these periods.

-Significant archaeological site. Probably the most significant of all points, since the 15th century town is buried intact.

-Significant architectural components. Possibly true but the dossier fails to show it and explain in what way they are significant.

-Significant water systems. There is no doubt that the different solutions for catching water and using it for architecture and for daily functions is significant and impressive.

-Religious significance, which according to the dossier has regional importance.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An expert mission to the site took place in September 2003.

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

Conservation

Conservation history:

Several (39) individual monuments are being protected and conserved by ASI (Archaeological Survey of India).

State of conservation:

Majority of site has no conservation plans nor policy. Its only protection is the legal one and intentions for the future.

Management:

Described in length under the relevant paragraph.

In short: There is no management plan nor a commitment for preparing one.

No one authority that can be seen as responsible for the site.

There is an ad hoc system in place. Seemed to the site evaluator as providing temporary answers to management needs.

Risk analysis:

The dossier and the field evaluation point at different risks – lack of comprehensive planning, quarrying (though much of it stopped), agricultural and industrial development, housing encroachment and certain planning activities by ASI (landscaping around individual sites).

Authenticity and integrity

Since much of the archaeological site is unexcavated it is as authentic as possible. Seems that most of the surroundings has kept its authenticity.

Comparative evaluation

Compared to other cities of the period and of the region Champaner is the most complete with no changes. It is the only existing complete Islamic pre-Mughal city.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

It is unfortunate that what seems to be a possibly valid nomination fails to prove its values and validity due to problematic nomination dossier. It is only through the descriptions and pictures that one can assume that the site might meet the Outstanding Universal Value requirement.

Evaluation of criteria:

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria:

Criterion i: Being a masterpiece of the genius of Mahmud Begharha, who founded several cities in the 15th century AD.

Criterion ii: Interchange of human values over span of time, developments in Architecture or technology, town planning or landscape design.

Criterion iii: Unique testimony to cultural tradition or civilization living or disappeared.

Criterion iv: Outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble or landscape, significant stage in human history.

Criterion v: Outstanding example of traditional human settlement, land representative of culture, high degree of survival.

All the above is in the words of the nomination file with no comparisons nor any further explanations to prove the justifications.

Statement of significance:

The dossier bases its statement of significance on the fact that the importance of the site has been recognised by different organisations and by the state. It does not bring a real statement of significance.

Few words are being dedicated to the significance of past builders to utilise difficult topography and that there are some best examples of military architecture.

From the content of the file it seems that there is much more – but the file fails to show it.

It can be concluded from the dossier that the most significant issue is that the 15th century city is an early Islamic, pre-Mughal city and a transition between the Hindu and Muslim traditions.

The expert's evaluation states also the very important religious significance.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That the nomination be *deferred* to allow the State Party to provide:

- A proper management plan which will include a management regime and comprehensive planning. At the moment there are just intentions for such regime expressed in the dossier and there is no management plan in place. 39 individual sites are managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, but these are just components of the nomination.

- An explanation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, through the World Heritage criteria. Such explanation is missing in the dossier.

- A comparative analysis which will show the special qualification and importance of this property over similar ones.

- Detailed plans of the individual sites included in the nomination.

ICOMOS believes that according to nomination dossier, describing the importance of the site for pilgrimage, it would eventually meets also criterion vi.

ICOMOS, March 2004