
At-Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah (Saudi Arabia) No 1329

Official name as proposed by the State Party:

At-Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah

Location:

Ad-Dir'iyah Governorate
Riyadh Region
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Brief description:

Ad-Dir'iyah, or Diriyah, was the first capital of the Saudi Dynasty, in the heart of the Arabian peninsula, north-west of Riyadh. Founded in the 15th century, it developed by using adobe as its building material. It bears witness to the Najdi architectural style, which is specific to the centre of the Arabian peninsula. In the 18th and the early 19th century its political and religious role increased, and the citadel of at-Turaif became the centre of the temporal power of the House of Saud and of the spread of the Wahhabi reform inside the Muslim religion. The property includes the remains of many palaces and an urban ensemble built on the edge of the ad-Dir'iyah oasis.

Category of property:

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

In the terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (January 2008), Annex 3, it is also an historic town in the category of *towns which are no longer inhabited*.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 28 January 2009

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination: None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre: 26 January 2009

Background: This is a new nomination.

Consultations: ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committees on Earthen Architectural Heritage and on Archaeological Heritage Management, as well as independent experts.

Literature consulted (selection):

Albini, M., Mud brick buildings: the Masmak fortress in Riyadh-Arabia: general criteria of restoration, *Third International Symposium on Mud Brick Preservation*, Ankara, 1980, ICOM & ICOMOS, pp. 119-38.

Facey, W., *Back to Earth. Adobe Building in Saudi Arabia*. Riyadh, Al-Turath and London Centre of Arab Studies, 1997.

Mutal, S., *Adobe Architecture, past and present*, Madrid & San Marcos, UNESCO, 2003.

[CRATerre], *Manuel de conservation du patrimoine architectural en terre des vallées présahariennes du Maroc*, CERKAS, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, CRATerre-EAG, 2005.

Pini, D., *The inventory of the historic city of Sana'a: A tool for urban conservation*, Paris, UNESCO, 2008.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 27 September - 1 October 2009

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: None

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 17 March 2010

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The ancient city of the House of Saud of ad-Dir'iyah, or Diriyah, is located in the Najd region, the highland plateau that forms the heart of the Arabian peninsula. This is a particularly arid desert region (average annual precipitation of 84mm) with extremely large temperature differences. Earlier wetter geological periods carved out a network of valleys which today are dry wadis. Their water-tables survive permanently in the floors of some of the valleys and can be reached by wells. The fertile alluvial areas thus offer the possibility of palm groves and irrigated oasis agriculture.

The oasis of ad-Dir'iyah is one of the main settlements in this region, established along and on the edge of Wadi Hanifah, over a distance of some 8km. The property is located 5km north-west of the centre of Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia; it forms the extremity and limit of the conurbation in this direction.

The oasis of ad-Dir'iyah contains several villages of farmers. The tip of the plateau forms a limestone promontory known as at-Turaif. It is surrounded by the oasis to the north, west, and south-west, consisting of Wadi Hanifah and a tributary. The east of at-Turaif opens out towards the desert plateau.

The site of at-Turaif was occupied from the 16th century by the local Saudi dynasty, becoming the cradle of the dynasty's development (see History). The Saudis made it the centre of their power base, building a settlement, fortifications, and palaces.

At the end of the 18th century a complete system of fortifications, of which at-Turaif formed the citadel, defended both banks of the oasis. The citadel was set up around the Saudis' Salwa Palace, and a group of administrative buildings and Qur'anic schools. The palace and the open space in front of it constituted the centre of social life, dominated by the administration of power and the religious teaching of the Wahhabi Reform of the *sunnah*. The promontory is furthermore not very high, and the historic town remains closely linked with the oasis next to it and the districts inhabited by peasant farmers and craftsmen.

At-Turaif was the central district of a diversified settlement which was adapted to a particular geographical situation and to a specific social, political, and religious context. Today it comprises a fairly wide range of properties which provide tangible testimony to the past; many of these have been conserved as ruins and some of them (such as the Salwa Palace) have been restored, generally using the original building techniques. Closed off by a surrounding wall, at-Turaif was a citadel in the 18th century

The street network was formed in response to the defensive requirements of the site, and was then added to as urban development took place. It has been conserved without major modifications and is clearly visible today. The built structures made use of easily available local materials - limestone for the foundations and lower structures, mud brick (adobe), and palm wood. The buildings reflect an original style that is typical of the Najd region. Amongst the architectural and decorative features of the Najdi style, dominated by the use of adobe, are the use of clay mud rendering, stone columns, triangular openings in the upper parts, and the use of wooden lintels painted with geometric motifs.

The nominated property comprises thirty monuments or monumental ensembles listed by the High Commission for the site. The most remarkable items are as follows.

The ensemble of Salwa Palace was the main residence of the Saud family in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and the centre of their political, military, and religious power base. Its total surface area is roughly 10,000m². It comprises seven separate units, made up of palaces or buildings with rectangular or trapezoid ground plans, with complementary functions and the construction of which took place in stages, depending on the development of the family and its powers. The different units of the palace are separated by a network of alleys and small squares, containing the remains of columns.

- Unit 1 is the oldest building in the ensemble. It formed the initial palace, consisting of two sections close to the oasis, and probably dates from the early 18th century. It is rectangular in ground plan, each part having a single level, with terraces accessible by means of stairs.

- Unit 2 was built in the second half of the 18th century. It is two-storeyed: the ground floor consists of two long rectangular rooms that open out on to a central courtyard. The south-western roof has some vestiges of an original roof system of stone slabs.
- Unit 3 dates from the same period and is built in a similar way but with three storeys. It is connected to the fortified wall, some vestiges of which survive.
- Unit 4 is a compact structure which originally had three storeys, located in the centre of the palatial ensemble. Its dimensions and overall form are similar to the buildings in the units described above.
- Unit 5 was rebuilt in 1982 on the ruins of an earlier building of which little is known. This is the present-day Visitor Centre.
- Unit 6 occupies a large area in the eastern corner of the palatial ensemble. Formerly in ruins, it was rehabilitated in the 20th century as three separate houses.
- Unit 7 covers a large area in the southern part of the Palace. It was abandoned after the sacking of the town, before being restored and reoccupied. Archaeological excavations took place there from 1982 onwards.

Ibrahim Bin Saud Palace is located south-west of the Salwa Palace. It has two storeys and many old walls, as well as the remains of a defensive feature. It underwent a substantial rehabilitation in the 20th century.

The *Fahad Palace* is a small palace adjacent to the Ibrahim Bin Saud Palace.

The *Sabala Moudhi* was a residence for religious dignitaries, later converted into a *sabala* for travellers. It is in very poor condition but contains the only remaining example of galleries in two storeys that surrounded a small courtyard. It is immediately adjacent to the Moudhi Mosque, which was rehabilitated as a mosque by the 20th century inhabitants.

The *Abdullah Palace* is the second largest palace complex after the Salwa Palace. Built in the early 19th century, it was the last seat of the power of the House of Saud in at-Turaif. It consists of three separate units, one of which was extensively altered in the 20th century.

The *Turki Palace* is one of the most recently constructed palaces (early 19th century). The ground plan is asymmetric, and the oral tradition is that the large opening in the south wall was the result of a cannonball fired during the 1818 siege. Its state of conservation is poor and it is currently abandoned.

The *Thunayyan Palace* is located on the edge of the small wadi on the south side of the site. Its ground plan is triangular and stands on deep foundations because of

its situation. It has the only remaining original capital with its plaster decoration intact, and historic beams.

The *Omar Bin Saud Palace* is an imposing structure built on the edge of the Wadi Hanifah. A large part of its high wall has been preserved. The ground plan is trapezoidal with a central courtyard. A still-usable original staircase provides access to the second floor.

The *Mishari Bin Saud Palace* is a 19th century structure in the southern part of the site, south-west of the Abdullah Palace. It has two storeys with a large open courtyard surrounded by rooms. Some of the components of the structure were incorporated in houses built in the 20th century. It retains some of the characteristic features of decorative wall ventilators and windows. Archaeological research is being carried out here.

The *Farhan Palace* is located on the east of the site. The type of construction attests to this being one of the oldest structures in at-Turaifa, contemporary with the first unit of Salwa Palace. It has an open courtyard surrounded by rooms. Although largely in ruins, it still has two towers.

Bayt Al-Mal is the Treasury building. It was designed as an annex to the Salwa Palace at the start of the 19th century, and is now in ruins.

At-Turaif was originally enclosed by a shuttered mud wall, which was largely destroyed during the 1818 siege. It was reconstructed in stone masonry in the 1990s. Other structures have undergone major restorations since the early 1980s (see Authenticity).

History and development

The presence of humans in the Wadi Hanifah area dates back some 80,000 years, as evidenced by Acheulean and Mousterian remains. Conditions were less favourable than in the Fertile Crescent; they initially attracted hunters and later nomads. Stone artefacts and rock carvings have been discovered in western Najd.

The remains of a village site with drystone walls thought to date from the 5th millennium BCE have been discovered just north of Riyadh. Agricultural settlement seems to have developed in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE; the domestication of the camel dates from the same period.

In antiquity Arabia played a role as an active caravan trade-route between the Indian Ocean, the Fertile Crescent, and the Mediterranean; the Incense Route passed through Arabia. Settlements developed during the 1st millennium BCE. It seems that there was cultivation at the Wadi Hanifah, but direct archaeological evidence is still limited.

The end of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity caused a decline in the centres of trade and settlement in central Arabia. The areas of wells and former oases became places of refuge for the nomads and their flocks and herds. Central Arabia at this time was dominated by the Yemenite Himyarite tribes. In the 5th century CE the Christian Banu Hanifah tribe resumed the agricultural colonization of the heart of the peninsula, in the Tasm region. They submitted to Islam after their defeat in 634 at the hands of the army of the Caliph Ibn al-Walid.

In the 6th and 7th centuries, however, the Banu Hanifah tribe appears to have rebelled against the Umayyad Caliphate. They did not submit to the Abbasid central power there until the mid-9th century. From the 9th to the 10th century there was a slow process of agricultural development of the oases in the central region of Arabia. The Arab traveller Ibn Battuta recorded the presence of the Banu Hanifah tribe in the valley that bore their name in the 14th century. Population levels, however, stagnated or decreased in this period.

The 15th century brought more favourable climatic conditions, lending a new impetus to the oases and settlements with the arrival of newcomers from the coastal regions. Ad-Dir'iyah seems to have been created in this period and its development reached an initial apogee in the 16th century. It was a centre of trade and its power extended throughout the region. However, in the 17th century and at the start of the 18th century the pre-eminent town of the Najd was 'Uyanynah.

At the start of the 16th century the Sharif of Makkah (Mecca) recognized the Ottoman Caliphate, which was seeking to take control of the Arabian peninsula. This was a time of sharp confrontation with the West, as the Portuguese occupied sites in the Indian Ocean. The Sharif attacked the oases and nomads of the Najd for the first time in 1578.

The power of the Banu Hanifah families was gradually challenged by the secular development of the settlement of the oases of Inner Arabia. By the start of the 17th century there were only three oases left under their control, including ad-Dir'iyah. Two rival tribal groups then emerged and a power struggle developed between the Al Muqrin and the Al Watban. The organization of the oases reflected this antagonism, with separation within districts and villages. The Al Watban held control at ad-Dir'iyah initially, but in 1720 Saud Bin Mohammed from the rival Al Muqrin community assumed the chieftainship and drove his rivals out of the town, and in this way became the founder of the House of Saud.

In the 18th century successive imams (heads of the House of Saud) fortified the oasis along the high ground on either side of the Wadi Hanifah. This was a period marked by urban development and the construction of the citadel of at-Turaif.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdul Wahhab, who hailed from the Najd where a form of paganism was maintained in social life, advocated a Reform based on the *Sunnah*, the orthodox Muslim tradition. The oneness of God, the impossibility of comparing God with anything else, and the heresy of any mediation were reasserted. This religious movement was fully recognized by the second imam, Mohammed Bin Saud, who established it in 1745 as the moral and legal basis of his state. Ad-Dir'iyah then became the centre for propagating the Reform. The town was an important educational centre, with many Qur'anic schools drawing students from the whole of the peninsula.

The Saudi dynasty at the same time undertook the conquest of the other towns and oases of the Najd, which it completely controlled by 1785. In the 1790s it dominated the east of the Arabian peninsula, and its influence extended to the west as far as the foothills of the Hijaz mountains.

In the second half of the 18th century and at the start of the 19th century, ad-Dir'iyah was the headquarters of a powerful Islamic administration, which boasted renowned judges and imams. Delegations and interest groups came to petition the Imam. It had some thirty Qur'anic schools, and it was also the political and military centre of the power of the House of Saud. At its apogee the army could assemble up to 100,000 men. The urban ensemble linked with the oasis was developed, particularly the Salwa palaces in the citadel of at-Turaif, the heart of the power base. However, according to Western travellers the population of ad-Dir'iyah did not exceed 13,000 at the start of the 19th century.

The success of the Sunnah Reform and the expanding military power of the House of Saud was inevitably a cause of concern for the Ottoman Caliphate. Tensions and confrontations were frequent over a period of some thirty years. The House of Saud initially emerged triumphant, imposing its influence on Central Hijaz and Mecca (1803) and thus controlling the pilgrimage. This was the apogee of the first dynasty of the House of Saud.

The Ottoman counter-offensive was organized from Egypt. The Ottomans reconquered the Hijaz (1813) and then began a campaign in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. Ibrahim Pasha invaded the Najd at the head of a powerful and cosmopolitan army (1816-18). The campaign culminated in the siege and conquest of ad-Dir'iyah. The town was then sacked on two occasions, in 1818-19 and in 1821. The House of Saud and the Wahhabis were subjected to repression.

The Imam Turki re-established the power of the House of Saud in 1824, forcing the departure of the Ottomans. He founded a second dynasty and chose Riyadh as the new capital. The previous seat of power in the at-Turaif district, largely in ruins following the war, was abandoned. The few western visitors in the mid-19th

century testified to a town in ruins. The local population returned to live in the oasis, where farming activities continued.

At-Turaif remained abandoned until the mid-20th century, when some two hundred families moved back into the eastern quarter near the oasis, building houses of mud brick (adobe) on the remains of the old town.

The Department of Antiquities bought the whole site in 1982 and expropriated its inhabitants. The city of Riyadh has grown considerably and now reaches the gates of the ad-Dir'iyah oasis. The region has also seen the development of road infrastructures. Today there are three main urban sectors in Ad-Dir'iyah. Urban development is taking place almost entirely outside the buffer zone.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Comparative analysis

In Saudi Arabia, as in many other regions of the world, the tradition of building with mud makes use of a natural local resource which is relatively easy to access and apply. It represents a fruitful cultural link between the sedentary lifestyle of the oasis farmers, the nomadism of the camel-raising Bedouins, and the urban necessities of a capital city.

The State Party offers two types of comparison: one with other earthen ensembles in Arabia; and the other with complexes built using this technique in other parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East and Africa.

In the Najd region of Arabia, where the nominated property is located, earthen architecture has various characteristics. In addition to the nominated property, the main examples of this Najdi architecture are the villages of Durma and Sadus and the historic fortress and royal palaces of Riyadh, built after the abandonment of at-Turaif.

The region of Asir and Najran on the southern border of Arabia has earthen architecture that is different to that of Najd but similar to that of neighbouring Yemen.

There are several mud-brick towns in the Arab world, such as the Old Town of Ghadamès in Libya (inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986), the Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou in Morocco (1987), the Old Walled City of Shibam (1982), the Old City of Sana'a (1986), and the historic town of Zabid (1993) in Yemen, the Ancient *Ksour* of Ouadane, Chinguetti, Tichitt, and Oualata in Mauritania (1996), the old town of Ghardaia in the M'Zab Valley in Algeria (1982), Bahla Fort in Oman (1987), the Town of Bam in Iran (2004), and the Old Towns of Timbuktu (1988) and Djenné (1988) in Mali. All are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Some of them are no longer inhabited, and others have been abandoned.

A dense urban fabric, narrow streets, rooms opening on to an inner courtyard, massive walls with natural thermal regulation, and regular maintenance of the earthen structures are characteristics shared by all these towns. They represent the basic principles of the use of mud brick (adobe) or shuttered mud, which have been perpetuated for millennia.

The comparisons made demonstrate the similarity of the construction techniques as well as the important earthen architecture conservation issues, which are now satisfactorily understood. At-Turaif constitutes an original and unique stylistic example, in a specific political and social context.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative study has been carried out within the State Party, and then inside the Arabo-Muslim world to which it limits itself. It leads to sober and clearly stated conclusions. However, it does not fully establish a comparison between the examples studied and the nominated property, limiting itself to parallel descriptions. Furthermore, it would be necessary to complete the comparative study with examples of earthen constructions in other cultural zones and at other periods.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not at this stage justify consideration of the 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:

- The at-Turaif district, situated in the ad-Dir'iyah oasis, became the centre of the power base of the first dynasty of the House of Saud in the mid-18th century. The House of Saud developed and protected the site, building imposing palaces of a unique style and with an excellent quality of construction.
- At-Turaif constitutes an exceptional example of earthen architecture by virtue of its diversity, its coherence, and its scale. It includes large structures and forms an outstanding example of the Najdi construction style.
- The site is an architectural and urban ensemble that bears witness to the culture and lifestyle of the first Saudi state, the direct ancestor of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is also an historic place that contains evidence of cultural, religious, and military events on an international scale and of major geopolitical importance.

ICOMOS considers that the historic facts presented by the State Party, along with the originality of the Najdi style, are unquestionable. However, the Outstanding

Universal Value of the nominated property has not been established at this stage, either by the comparative analysis or by the state of integrity and authenticity.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The State Party considers the at-Turaif district to be one of the foremost examples of historic urban properties conserved in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Because of its history and the long period of abandonment that preserved it, the site provides a very full account of Najdi town-planning from the mid-18th century until the start of the 19th century.

The landscape surrounding the site has been well protected from the galloping urban development observed elsewhere in the Kingdom, and particularly in Riyadh, the capital, which is very close to the site. The palm plantations and the oasis landscape bear witness to the agricultural origins of ad-Dir'iyah. A large buffer zone protects this landscape integrity dimension.

The great variety of tangible testimony at very different scales (landscapes, colours and textures of materials, urban plan, historic palaces, remains of built structures, architectural and decorative details) means that the property has great integrity.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property forms a relatively comprehensive urban ensemble, the initial planning of which is well conserved and can be observed in its street network. The structural integrity of the property is thus satisfactory.

The site has not been subject to excessively aggressive modern development. However, to the north and west of the property, at a relatively close distance, the urban development of the modern suburbs of Riyadh is visible. The integrity of the landscape appears to be satisfactory, but it is vulnerable.

ICOMOS considers that the architectural integrity of many buildings has been affected by the history of the property and by its abandonment for more than one and a half centuries. The buildings that have not been rebuilt or restored are in ruins. The integrity of these ruins and remains from the old town is, moreover, subject to erosion and to substantial natural degradation in a manner that is specific to adobe.

ICOMOS considers that the structures on which work has been carried out have been profoundly transformed and that they can no longer be considered to demonstrate integrity. The overall architectural integrity of the nominated property is therefore inadequate.

Authenticity

Since the acquisition of the property by the State and its being placed under State protection in the early 1980s,

several of its structures have undergone major maintenance, rehabilitation, or restoration works; others have been left in ruins or in vestigial form, whilst yet others bear traces of the late reoccupation of the site in the mid-20th century (see Description).

There have been six restoration programmes on various parts of the property, carried out in successive campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s with the help of internationally renowned specialists. The aim was to bring the site back to life and restore its integrity and authenticity by the use of techniques in keeping with the original Najdi style. The programmes focused on Nasir Bin Saud Palace (1981) and Saad Bin Saud Palace (1983), the Visitor Centre in the Salwa Palace, and the reconstruction of the whole of the fortifications and of some associated houses.

The traces of 20th century reoccupation by oasis dwellers are to be found mainly in the Abdullah, Ibrahim Saud, and Mishari Bin Saud palaces. The Moudhi Mosque was rebuilt and the associated Sabala Moudhi was converted to provide accommodation for travellers.

Moreover, the State Party stresses the specificity and relativity of the concept of authenticity for earthen buildings, a degradable material which requires regular maintenance and sometimes substantial interventions in order to conserve structures. It stresses that in such cases the concept of authenticity should be based primarily on the techniques used and the transmission of expertise. From this point of view the site has retained all its authenticity.

ICOMOS considers that the first approach to authenticity should be based on the history of the site before any reappropriation by the State Party. As an urban ensemble and as important testimony to adobe architecture the property has been physically degraded by war and by the passage of time, but it has also been protected, in terms of authenticity, by being abandoned for one and a half centuries. It was finally modified and affected by partial reoccupation in the 20th century.

In the second stage, ICOMOS agrees that actions undertaken during the reappropriation phase should be considered in the context of the specific techniques of the conservation of earthen buildings. However, such actions must be conducted with respect for the architectural and archaeological data of the property, and taking into consideration the many existing studies and approaches concerning such questions. The severely degraded state of the property partially reused at the end of the 20th century did not allow the carrying out of simple repairs in order to make its reuse possible; this led in most cases to reconstructions and interpretations of the past state, or even to mere architectural similarity. For example, the enclosure wall was rebuilt in stone, although it was originally earthen, and Unit 5 of the Salwa Palace was entirely rebuilt using modern techniques.

ICOMOS considers that, as it stands at the present time, the Living Heritage Museum project represents an approach based on adapting a site to suit a reuse and upgrading programme rather than giving priority to the overriding consideration of conserving the attributes of authenticity. More thorough archaeological and historic studies are necessary before works are carried out.

To conclude on this question, ICOMOS considers that the urban and architectural elements of the nominated property that have not been transformed, restored, or rebuilt are authentic. They are generally in the form of ruins or remains. By contrast, the authenticity of the restored or rebuilt monuments is only limited and they constitute at best a contemporary interpretation of the use of adobe. A vigorous effort to put a stop to the degradation of the attributes of authenticity is absolutely essential.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity are acceptable in terms of the streets and landscapes, but not in architectural terms; the conditions of authenticity have not been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iv), (v), and (vi).

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 property is a unique example of the Najdi architectural and decorative style, which only developed in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. It illustrates the ingenious use of adobe, a universally employed material used here with great originality to cope with the extreme desert climate of central Arabia and to provide acceptable living conditions.

The site of at-Turaif bears witness to great urban coherence, whose social, political, spiritual, and religious functions have developed simultaneously and organically alongside the property.

ICOMOS considers that the citadel district of at-Turaif is evidence of an original architectural and decorative use of adobe, forming a clearly identified regional style, but that its architectural integrity and authenticity are under threat today. It consists of a large and diversified urban and palace ensemble in an oasis setting and bears witness to the combination of a building method that is well adapted to its environment, the use of adobe in major palatial complexes, along with a special sense of geometrical decoration. However, the comparative analysis of these elements must be made more thorough, and urgent action is needed to preserve the attributes which demonstrate this criterion.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the site illustrates a significant highpoint of settlement in the central Arabian plateau in a desert environment when in the mid-18th century the town of ad-Dir'iyah became the capital of an independent state whose power spread over most of the peninsula.

Located as it is along an underground water-table associated with a wadi, the property illustrates the long-term adaptation of a human group to a territory with difficult geographical and climatic conditions. It is an outstanding example of traditional settlement in an oasis, as illustrated by its material resources, its form of building, and the flourishing of its culture.

ICOMOS considers that the historical and anthropological arguments concerning a remarkable settlement fully adapted to its geographical and climatic environment that are put forward in support of criterion (v) are valid. However, the comparative analysis and the present state of the attributes of the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property do not fully justify the argument that this is an outstanding example of traditional human settlement.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the significance of the at-Turaif district in ad-Dir'iyah is directly connected with the creation and development of the first independent state of the House of Saud in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. This political entity quickly became based on the House of Saud's adoption and support of the religious reform advocated by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdul Wahhab. He lived and preached in ad-Dir'iyah, turning it into a major spiritual and political centre of Sunni Islam. The Wahhabi message spread from ad-Dir'iyah all over the Arabian peninsula and then throughout the Muslim world. The growing influence of the first dynasty of the House of Saud and the religious reform brought a vigorous military reaction from the Ottoman Caliphate in the 1810s, which ended with the taking of the oasis of ad-Dir'iyah and the sacking of its political and spiritual centre, the at-Turaif district, in 1818 and again in 1821.

ICOMOS considers that the historical and cultural facts referred to by the State Party in support of criterion (vi), which marked the history of the town, are undisputable. However, the tangible attributes supporting this testimony are not explicit and are undermined by the inadequate state of integrity and authenticity.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

ICOMOS does not consider that the criteria and Outstanding Universal Value have been demonstrated at this stage.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Development pressures

According to the State Party the nominated site has not faced any pressure from economic development since the Government completed the acquisition of the at-Turaif site in 1982. The buffer zone environment consists mainly of agricultural land in the oasis, the property of the Royal Family, and a cemetery which is a protected site.

The main project affecting the property is the possible construction of a reception centre for visitors at the foot of the Salwa Palace, on the banks of the wadi (see Tourism pressures). Another project planned in the north of the site, and partly inside the buffer zone, is a religious foundation around the mosque of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdul Wahhab.

The urban development of the capital reaches the boundaries of the oasis in the east and north of the property. Buildings are planned at a distance of about 600m opposite the site and on the edge of the buffer zone, but the design of the buildings should be in line with the scale and proportions of the traditional urban fabric. This should be a high-quality residential development, with low population density.

ICOMOS considers that economic and social development pressures outside the property seem to be under control. However, it is necessary to have details about the religious foundation projects, the exact location of which must be indicated, and about the residential development on the edge of the buffer zone.

Tourism pressures

According to the State Party the site is not experiencing any particular tourism pressures as the property is fenced and there is only one entrance, which is controlled by guards. At present there are few visitors to the site and a permit is necessary.

However, the Living Heritage Museum project is intended to increase the number of visitors to the

property markedly, with a centre and space for circulation, particularly in the Salwa Palace. For this purpose a reception building just below the Salwa Palace is to be designed by a foreign architect. It will be about 6m high with a terrace at the level of the oasis, affording a clear overall view of the palace. The project also includes the creation (inside the property or just outside) of three areas for traditional culture performances, and ultimately a series of museums and cultural buildings on the edge of the property (Lifestyle Museum, Museum of Architecture and Technology, Arab Horses Museum, Military Museum, etc.).

ICOMOS considers that the many projects referred to in the dossier as intended to turn the property into a Living Heritage Museum raise a series of questions about the impact on the property, particularly with regard to its authenticity and integrity. First of all, a detailed plan should be supplied, showing the locations of all these projects in relation to the boundaries of the property and the buffer zone. A prospective study should then be carried out covering the Living Heritage Museum and the religious foundation project, in terms of their impact on the value of the property, the flow of visitors, and reception. The documentation provided about the Museum project consists of an architectural design project (in the annexes) and administrative details (in the nomination dossier).

Environmental pressures

According to the State Party there is no major source of air pollution in the ad-Dir'iyah district.

An oasis in a desert zone forms an ecosystem which is normally clean and stable. However, the water table of Wadi Hanifah has been affected by the urban development of the city of Riyadh. The level of the water table is sinking because of excessive pumping and the water quality is vulnerable.

ICOMOS considers that the deterioration of earthen structures by natural conditions is inevitable.

ICOMOS considers that it is necessary to check that the water table is being well managed.

Natural disasters

The region is not situated in an area of geological risk. Storms are rare but violent, and can contribute to the deterioration of the earthen built structure. The lower parts of the property could be damaged by flooding caused by high water in the wadi.

ICOMOS considers that storms contribute to the natural degradation of the property.

Impact of climate change

The climate of Central Arabia is one of the driest on Earth; precipitation is rare but when it occurs it is often

violent and erosive. In the past there have been exceptional droughts, causing a decline in food resources and sometimes severe reductions in population. There is, however, no evidence of a significant climate change over the last two centuries.

ICOMOS considers that the oasis of ad-Dir'iyah is, like the other oases in the region, an area that is sensitive to climate change and that this could make water resources even rarer.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat to the property is the continuous action of the natural elements on the earthen remains. Overuse of groundwater is also a concern. ICOMOS considers that the projected Living Heritage Museum is a threat to the conservation of the authenticity and integrity of the property.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The property consists of the at-Turaif district. Its boundary is the outer fence around the old fortified wall at a distance of 20m. Its surface area is 28.78ha. There have been no inhabitants since 1982 when it was acquired by the State.

The buffer zone, which is located in the ad-Dir'iyah district, entirely surrounds the property; it has a surface area of 237.95ha. It extends over the territory of the oasis, which encloses it on three sides, and to the west over a vast space in the desert limestone plateau. This zone has around 400 inhabitants living in the palm tree groves.

ICOMOS notes that the official decree setting the boundaries of the buffer zone has not been adopted, and that the State Party has committed itself to promulgating the decree if the property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone are adequate.

Ownership

The property is publicly owned by the State. The exercise of ownership rights has been entrusted since 2007 to the SCTA (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities); they were previously exercised by the Deputy Ministry of Antiquities and Museums.

The buffer zone is largely privately owned (65%), in particular by members of the Royal Family; the remaining 35% consists of public estates belonging to various official bodies at ministerial, governorate, and

municipality level.

Protection

Legal Protection

The property is protected by the Antiquities Law published by Royal Decree No. 26/M in 23/6/1392 Hijra [1972]. The law protects historic movable and immovable properties registered as 'antiquities,' a term which applies to remains that are at least 200 years old. The property was placed under the protection of the Law in 1976. The Ministry of Education and the Higher Council of Antiquities are responsible for applying the law.

However, a new draft law that strengthens protection is currently undergoing the approval process. It will grant responsibility for legal protection to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, which is already responsible for exercising the rights of ownership. The new law will protect the site both as archaeological heritage and as an urban ensemble. It also provides for an updating of property inscription and monitoring methods, in line with international standards.

The new law provides for the systematic application of a 200m protection zone around the boundaries of the property. This will result in very strict control of new buildings, and refusal if they do not have a direct connection with the property and the expression of its value. However, the buffer zone proposed for the property is larger, and corresponds to the actual situation of the property in the oasis and in relation to its immediate environment.

The buffer zone in the oasis is under the protection of the Law for the Regulation of Agricultural Practices. It controls agricultural development and firmly restricts the development of housing, which must be in keeping with the architectural and urban setting of the villages. The buffer zone is also regulated by the Urban Plan of ad-Dir'iyah, which has been drafted (September 2009) but not yet approved.

The application of the law is reinforced by the presence of a police service that is responsible to the Governor.

ICOMOS considers that legal protection will be satisfactory once all the measures have been promulgated, particularly those for the buffer zone.

Traditional Protection

The property itself has been abandoned since the first half of the 19th century. Its partial reuse in the 20th century cannot be considered to constitute traditional protection as the modifications made at that time did not make a real contribution to conservation. Since that time it has been in public ownership.

The buffer zone consists largely of a traditional oasis and a cemetery. Their management and conservation by the inhabitants represent a certain degree of traditional protection of the immediate environment of the property.

Effectiveness of protection measures

ICOMOS considers that the legal provisions in place must all be ratified in order to be fully effective, particularly with regard to the buffer zone (Urban Plan of ad-Dir'iyad, Decree ratifying the creation of the buffer zone).

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place will be adequate and effective once the new Antiquities Law and the Urban Plan for ad-Dir'iyah have been ratified.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

Since 1982 the State Party has regularly carried out archaeological excavation and topographic survey campaigns using the most modern techniques (3D scanning, Geographic Information Systems, etc.). Inventories have also been made of architectural structures and ornamental typologies.

Excavation, survey, and inventory reports are curated by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities. They form a very comprehensive documentation in the form of digitized databases.

The State Party is conducting research initiatives with well known international partners in the field of earthen architecture and its conservation. The objective is to transform the property into a Living Heritage Museum, while at the same time making it into an international centre for earthen architecture. This research effort should lead to the compilation of a guide to the conservation of the ruined elements of the property and to a redevelopment project.

ICOMOS recommends that the existing inventories should be completed by detailed excavations and research, focusing primarily on the earliest remains, carried out systematically and in advance of any conservation or reconstruction interventions, as has been the case in the past.

ICOMOS considers that the research carried out into the conservation of ruined earthen architecture is important. It must, however, be directed primarily towards conserving the integrity and authenticity of the constituent parts of the property, and not towards projects for the reconstruction and architectural reinterpretation of the property or for experimentation. The objectives of research, to find a contemporary use for earthen construction in innovative architectural and urban projects, which are perfectly respectable in their own right, must be kept quite separate from issues relating to the property itself and its conservation.

Present state of conservation

According to the State Party, the site contains archaeological remains, standing monuments, and architectural ensembles that have been restored or reconstructed in a way that complies with traditional earthen construction techniques. The conservation of earthen buildings is difficult, requiring substantial and frequent maintenance, particularly as the site has incurred severe damage from war and the subsequent period of abandonment. A particularly substantial effort has therefore been made and continued for the conservation of the property since 1982.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation effort in the 1980s and 1990s was focused on the reconstruction of several monuments in a style similar to that of the origins of the property, but which resulted in what is sometimes a high degree of architectural interpretation. Furthermore, unsuitable materials have been used in a certain number of cases (the visitor centre of Salwa Palace, Nasir Bin Saud Palace, and Saad Bin Saud Palace, Bath and guesthouse, city wall, and fortifications). Finally, conservation work on the ruined elements that make up the bulk of the property have not been carried out as part of a systematic conservation policy. As a result these elements are under threat from natural degradation (see Factors affecting the property).

Active Conservation measures

Several conservation and restoration campaigns have been carried out on the site by labourers, craftsmen, and master masons, with the help of national and international specialists. At the present time the entire conservation policy is integrated into the ambitious Living Heritage Museum project. This project includes a programme of research into the conservation and reconstruction of earthen structures, a reception centre programme, a programme for circulation inside the property and interpretation, a programme for the reuse of areas inside the property, and ultimately large programme for various museums which are peripheral to the property but have no direct relationship to it.

ICOMOS considers that the Living Heritage Museum project, although highly elaborate in technical terms, is at present more in line with a policy of partial reconstruction and interpretation of the remains that make up the property than with efforts to achieve conservation that is fully in line with the integrity and authenticity of the property. A conservation policy must be clearly defined for the property in its present state and without reconstruction. It must be clearly distinguished and separated from research into earthen structure reuse/reconstruction in general (in the context of which the property becomes no more than a space for experiment and demonstration).

Maintenance

The maintenance of the property is included in the

conservation measures put in place.

There has been a plan for the management and cleansing of Wadi Hanifah over its entire length (120km) since 1994.

ICOMOS considers that the routine maintenance measures should be set out in detail as part of a comprehensive conservation policy for the property.

Effectiveness of conservation measures

ICOMOS considers that the efforts made since 1982 prove the effectiveness of the State Party's interventions for the conservation of the property, or more precisely its determination to succeed in this aim by the significant mobilization of human and financial resources. Many programmes have been undertaken and successfully completed, bringing together international collaborations of high quality with the aim of reusing traditional methods and materials. These have contributed an interesting research and experimentation dimension which backs up the various projects for the conservation of the property. However, the current project is more strongly directed towards partial reconstruction and the showcasing of the property for purposes of museum applications and cultural tourism rather than towards a real policy of conservation of the authenticity of the property. The major Living Heritage Museum project has relegated the systematic programming of the conservation of the ruined parts of the property to a secondary role.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation policy applied by the State Party tends to favour the partial reconstruction of the property for museum and cultural tourism purposes rather than the preservation of its attributes of integrity and authenticity. A systematic programme for the conservation of the property must be set up without delay and the plans for a museum and the development of tourism in the property subordinated to it, and not the reverse.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The management of the site is entrusted to the public body, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, which is in charge of the Department of Antiquities and Museums, through which it is the manager of the site. The management is also the responsibility of the High Commission for the Development of Riyadh, the capital city. The Ar-Riyadh Development Authority, which is responsible for technical matters relating to the site, reports to the Commission. The operations and programmes planned by the Commission and by the at-Turaif Development Authority must be approved by the Governorate of Riyadh, the Governorate of ad-Dir'iyah, and the Municipality of ad-Dir'iyah.

At the moment there is no management authority for the property in place locally, since the site director still has his office at Riyadh (September 2009). The current Living Heritage Museum project provides for the setting up of a local team based in the reception building; it will be staffed with specialists and technicians. In addition to reception and museum development, the management authority will be in charge of relations with the local authorities (Municipality of ad-Dir'iyah) and with tourism development partners (tour operators, travel agencies).

Three charters guide the introduction of the future management authority and the exercise of its responsibilities in the implementation of the future Management Plan. The first regulates internal relations at the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, at grades up to the site director. The second sets out details of the relations between the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and the executive committees of the development programmes of the City of Riyadh and of ad-Dir'iyah, and particularly with the Ar-Riyadh Development Authority, which is in charge of technical matters relating to the property. The third sets out the internal organization chart of the Living Heritage Museum project and its relations with the various supervisory authorities.

ICOMOS considers that, in the current project, the property management structure should be the Living Heritage Museum; however, this is not yet in existence and, indeed, has not even been approved. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that the management structure should be redefined, in order to give priority to the organization and monitoring of the conservation of the various historic components that make up the property. A scientific committee for conservation must be set up with extensive powers, in order to define, supervise, and monitor the works programmes and projects for the property. The Museum project should be subordinate to this committee, and not the reverse.

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

The Management Plan set out for the property is based on its becoming the capital of Saudi tourism; it proposes a vision of economic development based on cultural tourism. This type of tourism focuses on the presentation of the historical, cultural, and religious roots of Saudi identity. It will highlight in particular its building and architectural dimensions, its territorial organization, and its regional decorative style.

The Management Plan is the product of collaboration between the two entities that are currently cooperating in the management of the site: the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and the Ar-Riyadh Development Authority. The Management Plan, which is mainly focused on the enhancement of the value of the site, is set out in the form of a relatively detailed technical document, the implementation of which will be entrusted

to the Living Heritage Museum. However, the plan had not yet been approved at the time of writing (September 2009).

The Plan provides for the development of tourist reception facilities in appropriate buildings in front of the Salwa Palace and inside the property, together with special itineraries to make possible the interpretation of the property and to ensure safety.

The Management Plan is also related to a number of other plans and programmes:

- the programme for the development of the historic site of ad-Dir'iyah, with special regard to cultural and religious aspects, and for the development of the Al Bujairi district, which is close to the property,
- the Master Plan for the Development of Riyadh, the capital city,
- the Development Plan of ad-Dir'iyah,
- the Tourism Promotion Plans for Riyadh and the surrounding region,
- the Management and Maintenance Plan for Wadi Hanifah.

ICOMOS notes that the study and future implementation of the Living Heritage Museum development programme are directed by the Ar-Riyadh Development Authority (ADA), after consultation with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA), whose opinion is, however, not binding. Furthermore, it is regrettable that the programme of museum and tourism development is presented as though it constituted a true management plan for the property aimed primarily at conservation.

ICOMOS considers that the Management Plan must be revised. It must include a section ensuring that priority is given to the conservation of the present state of the many ruins that make up the property, in order to conserve the attributes of integrity and authenticity. The museum and tourism development programme must in its turn be no more than a part of this plan, and must be completely subordinated to the conservation of the property's attributes of integrity and authenticity, under the surveillance of a scientific conservation committee.

Risk preparedness

The Management Plan includes a section evaluating present and future risks for the management of the property. There are basically two types of protection. The first consists of offering itineraries that are completely safe for visitors in a property containing many elements that are in ruins and potentially dangerous. There are two levels of accessibility: unrestricted access zones and more extensive zones open to groups making guided visits. Access to the most dangerous and vulnerable parts will be prevented by means of fencing. In addition, access is provided for the emergency services to use in the event of accidents.

The second type of protection consists of protecting the property against archaeological theft and vandalism. As indicated earlier, the property is entirely fenced and under surveillance.

A fire protection plan is in place, even though the risk is limited, and a plan for the evacuation of the site is currently in preparation.

Involvement of the local communities

The local communities are involved in the development of the site through the Municipality and by the employment of local labourers and craftsmen.

The property development project contains a section on information and education for local inhabitants, particularly school children.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

In connection with the planned Living Heritage Museum, management of the site has been entrusted to an archaeologist, who has already been appointed. The initial team will consist of nine employees, four archaeologists, two assistants, an administrative team, and a tourist guide. There will also be four security guards for the surveillance of the site. The size of the team will then be modified depending on needs and the number of tourists, and also on the development of projected new peripheral activities.

The financial resources are guaranteed by the supervisory authorities for the property: the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and the Ar-Riyadh Development Authority.

The conservation, maintenance, restoration, and reconstruction projects are carried out in partnership with the Department of Egyptian Antiquities and the specialist earthen architecture body CRATerre (France).

The property can also call upon the services of the specialized personnel of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, which includes five holders of doctorates and fourteen high-level specialists in various academic fields, together with architects and planners.

Effectiveness of current management

The current management of the property is set out in the programme of reconstruction and restoration of buildings being prepared by the project for the Living Heritage Museum, which will be open to the general public. The project is ambitious in terms of tourism and the highlighting of the cultural value of the property, and more widely of traditional earthen construction techniques specific to the interior of the Arabian peninsula.

ICOMOS considers that management must be rapidly reconsidered along the following lines:

It is necessary to modify the Management Plan in its current form so as to turn it primarily into a tool for conserving the property's attributes of authenticity and integrity. The projects for the reconstruction and architectural interpretation of the remains on the property must be abandoned. Research into the current possibilities of traditional earthen architecture must be more clearly distinguished and kept separate from the values that are specific to the property.

In order to put in place a plan for the management of the conservation of the property, it is necessary to institute a scientific committee to be put in charge of implementing the plan.

In the framework of the Management Plan, the projects for museum, tourism, and cultural development must be subordinated to the conservation programme, and made subject to the discretionary recommendation of the scientific committee for conservation;

ICOMOS considers that it is necessary to revise the current Management Plan project, to give priority to conservation objectives, supervised by a scientific committee for conservation, and to make tourism and cultural development projects compatible with the values of the property.

6. MONITORING

The Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities is in charge of monitoring the property. The key factors taken into consideration for the monitoring of the property in the Management Plan are:

- meteorological data (daily monitoring);
- natural evolution of the Wadi Hanifah (satellite photographs, annual monitoring);
- urban changes to the commune of ad-Dir'iyah (satellite photographs, annual monitoring);
- visitor numbers (daily) and satisfaction index (half-yearly);
- erosion of the ten main monumental remains (photographs, drawings, reports on a half-yearly basis, particularly after rainfall);
- erosion of buildings in use (half-yearly);
- erosion of ruined structures (annual);
- archaeological excavations (annual).

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring of conservation must be reinforced by more systematic campaigns of photographs, observations, and 3D scanner monitoring, particularly in the most vulnerable zones of the property. The monitoring must be directly correlated with property maintenance and conservation operations.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring of conservation must be strengthened, and that it must lead to the establishment of a database directly linked to the Management Plan conservation programme.

ICOMOS considers that, in respect of urban and agricultural development in the area around the property, work permits and development projects must be monitored in order to support the decisions taken by the authorities.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring of the property must be strengthened by closer monitoring of conservation and development projects in the buffer zone and in the area surrounding the property.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that the property probably bears witness to remarkable values linked to the development of earthen architecture in an oasis in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. These values must, however, be confirmed by a more thorough comparative study. Furthermore, the citadel of at-Turaif, and more generally the oasis of Ad-Dir'iyah, were the setting for important events in the political, social, and religious history of the Middle East and the Islamic world. However, the architectural integrity and the authenticity of the property are insufficient to give full expression to these architectural and historic values. The attributes of integrity and authenticity are currently being undermined by the building, restoration, and earthen architecture experimentation projects linked to the future Museum. The safeguarding of the attributes of authenticity and integrity must be placed at the centre of the Management Plan by the introduction of a thorough conservation programme. Future actions to enhance the value of the property must be guided by this programme, rather than the reverse.

At this stage, the Outstanding Universal Value of the property has not been demonstrated.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of the at-Turaif district in ad-Dir'iyah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to the World Heritage List be ***deferred*** in order to allow the State Party to:

- Make the comparative study more thorough and extend it to include monumental and urban ensembles where earthen construction techniques are used outside the Arabo-Muslim world;
- Ratify the new Antiquities Law and the Urban Plan of ad-Dir'iyah;

- Abandon the current policy of reconstruction and cultural interpretation of the remains on the property and adopt instead a conservation policy the priority of which is the safeguarding of the property's attributes of architectural integrity and authenticity. It is necessary to separate the conservation of the property from the research under way into the contemporary reuse of traditional earthen architecture;
- Place the safeguarding of the attributes of authenticity and integrity at the centre of the Management Plan by means of a thorough conservation programme. This programme must guide future actions aimed at enhancing the value of the property, and the Living Heritage Museum project must be revised accordingly;
- Put in place, under the auspices of the overarching management authority for the property, a scientific committee in charge of defining the conservation policy for the property, verifying that it is implemented, and monitoring the conservation process. This committee must, moreover, constitute a higher echelon of scientific evaluation for tourism and cultural development projects and for the management of the property;
- Confirm the presence of the overarching property management authority at local level;
- Strengthen the monitoring of development in the buffer zone and in its immediate vicinity.

ICOMOS considers that any revised nomination, with a new property conservation and Management Plan, would need to be considered by a mission to the site.

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

- Carrying out preventive excavations when any major conservation works are undertaken, in order to document the remains of the earliest structures, which in some cases have served as the foundations for later buildings;
- Ensure that the groundwater of Wadi Hanifah is well managed.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



General view of the nominated property



Aerial view



Surrounding wall of at-Turaif



Archaeological excavations