

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ  
WORLD HERITAGE LIST N° 448

## A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The Hierotheseion of Antiochos I of Commagene on Nemrut Dag

Location : Adiyaman Province

State Party : Turkey

Date : December 31, 1986

## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, III and IV.

## C) JUSTIFICATION

When the empire of Alexander the Great was breaking up, numerous kingdoms were formed in the Hellenized provinces of the East. One such kingdom was Commagene, which, from 162 B.C. to 72 A.D., existed as a semi-independent state, its sovereigns defending their autonomy first against the Seleucids and then against the Romans. The monarchs of this dynasty bore the Greek names of Antiochos or Mithridates. They left behind, in the mountainous region that stretched from the north of the high valley of the Euphrates, not far from Adiyaman, several breathtakingly beautiful funerary sanctuaries. Locations include Eski Kâhta, Karakus, and, especially, Nemrut Dag, where the most impressive of all the tomb sites is found, that of Antiochos I of Commagene (69-34 B.C.).

Discovered by chance in 1881 by Charles Sester, an engineer, it was not until 1953 that exploration of the site was undertaken. Dominating the summit of Nemrut Dag (alt. 2150 m) is a conical tumulus 50 m high and 150 m in diameter, made of stone chips. This funerary mound, whose interior layout remains unknown despite numerous attempts to locate the dromos, is surrounded on the east, west and north sides by artificial terraces. The east terrace has two distinct levels dug out of the rock. On the upper level, a row of five colossal seated figures (7 m high) representing deities shares a common substructure with two pairs of equally immense statues, each pair comprising a lion and an eagle, symmetrically positioned at either end. Inscriptions on the statues identify them from left to right as being: 1) the god Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes; 2) the goddess Tyche of Commagene; 3) the god Zeus - Oromasdes; 4) Antiochos himself; 5) the god Heracles-Artagnes-Ares. The heads of these statues have broken off and tumbled to the lower terrace, which is bordered on its east side by a pyramid-shaped

altar, and on the north and south sides by rows of orthostats. On the north side, these stones are decorated with relief sculptures representing the Persian ancestors of Antiochos. On the south side, his Macedonian ancestors symmetrically face the others. Engraved inscriptions on the backs of the slabs identify the geneological links.

The west terrace has similar features, with the same series of five statues between the two lion-eagle pairs, but does not have an altar. The orthostats repeat the dual geneology of Antiochos I, the Persian branch on the south, the Macedonian on the west. The symmetry is somewhat modified by the topography of the mountain. Three superb reliefs show Antiochos exchanging a handshake with Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, with Zeus-Oromasdes and Heracles-Artagnes-Ares. They are framed by an allegorical group of Antiochos and the Commagenes on the left and an astrological relief called "the king's horoscope" on the right. The inscription, which has been deciphered, gives the date of 10 July 62-61 B.C. -the date that Antiochos I was invested as king by the Romans.

The north terrace is dominated by a wall 80 m in length, which has eagles at either end but no large statues. Assuming that it was not left unfinished, it may have been used as a processional path.

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the archaeological site of Nemrut Dag on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, III and IV.

- Criterion I. The tomb of Antiochos I of Commagene is a unique artistic achievement. The landscaping of the natural site of Nemrut Dag is one of the most colossal undertakings of the Hellenistic epoch (some of the stone blocks used weigh up to nine tons).

- Criterion III. The tomb or the Hierotheseion of Nemrut Dag bears unique testimony to the civilization of the kingdom of Commagene. Antiochos I is represented in this monument as a descendant of Darius by his father Mithridates, and a descendant of Alexander by his mother Laodice. This semi-legendary ancestry translates in geneological terms the ambition of a dynasty that sought to remain independent of the powers of both the East and the West.

- Criterion IV. More so than the tombs at Karakus and Eski Kâhta, the tumulus at Nemrut Dag illustrates, through the liberal syncretism of a very original pantheon, a significant historical period. The assimilation of Zeus with Oromasdes (the Iranian god Ahuramazda), and Heracles with Artagnes (the Iranian god Verathragna) finds its artistic equivalent in an intimate mixture of Greek, Persian and Anatolian aesthetics in the statuary and the bas reliefs.

Having formed a favorable opinion, ICOMOS regrets not having been notified of the restoration projects and the management plan of the site that were drawn up in 1984. Without prejudging the intentions of the archaeologists and the General Direction of Antiquities and Museums, ICOMOS observes that any systematic anastylosis is to be discouraged insofar as it would seriously modify the topography of a site whose beauty lies largely in the fact that the statues have been damaged and the heads are scattered among the large stone slabs on the terraces.

ICOMOS, May 1987