

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° 484

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Xanthos-Letoon

Location : Provinces of Muğla and Antalya

State Party : Turkey

Date : December 22, 1987

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

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

C) JUSTIFICATION

Xanthos, the capital of ancient Lycia, and the neighboring and indissociable site of Letoon located five miles away form a famous archaeological complex. Ever since the excavation work carried out from 1838 to 1844 by the Englishman Charles Fellows, the results of which were published in his Travels in Lycia, the monuments at Xanthos have been referred to in all art history textbooks on antiquities. These monuments first became known because of the monumental tombs taken to the British Museum, the most famous being the Nereid Monument, the Harpy Monument and the Payava Sarcophagus.

The Lycians, who were referred to as the Lukka in the Egyptian annals, were one of the "Peoples of the Sea" who invaded the Hittite Empire around 1200 B.C. The Greek legends gave them a place on the fringe of the Homeric cycle. Herodotus relates that under the leadership of one of Minos' brothers they came from Crete to take part in the Trojan War.

Throughout its long history, this ethnic group displayed two apparently contradictory characteristics. In the first place they were extremely loyal to their traditions: the Lycian language was preserved over a very long period of time. And even today the farmers of the region build wooden houses and barns whose structure is comparable to the monuments found in the Lycian rock art tombs. Their second characteristic is their capacity for acculturation. It enabled them to assimilate in turn the cultural contributions of hellenism, transmitted by the Greek colonies located on the Aegean Sea, followed by those of Rome. In 167 B.C. a confederation based in Letoon was formed by Xanthos and a number of other towns. Having

sided with the Romans against Mithridates, it enjoyed a privileged status long after Asia Minor was conquered. The Roman Agora rebuilt in the 3rd century A.D. but still dedicated to their twelve Lycian gods is symbolic evidence of this.

The town was still inhabited in the Byzantine period when several basilicas were built. It was only in the 7th century that the Arab raids left the town in ruins.

A long and complex history has left many splendid but at times hard to distinguish remains on the two neighboring sites of Xanthos and Letoon.

East of the Xanthe River, a first monumental zone includes the old Lycian Acropolis, which was remodelled during the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods. At that time a church was built at the North-east corner, while an advanced defensive structure fortified the western side of the citadel along the river. Directly north of the Acropolis stands a very beautiful theater which dominates the roman Agora. To the west one can distinguish the ruins of a second basilica. This entire area is marked with great Lycian funerary monuments which are characteristic of Xanthos' archaeological landscape and which rise up spectacularly from the ruins.

East of the dirt path that cuts through the site, there is a second more confused archaeological zone that extends between the Vespasian Arch to the south and the Hellenistic Acropolis to the north. This is where the lower part of the town was located; only part of it has been excavated. Several large complexes have been identified such as the Hellenistic Agora and two Byzantine churches.

The archaeological site of Letoon, dedicated to Leto, Artemis and Apollo, includes, in addition to the temple ruins, the ruins of a Nymphaeum dating back to Hadrian. It was built on the site of the sacred source that was at the origin of the creation of the sanctuary. There are other remains of the Hellenistic and Roman periods such as porticos, theaters, etc., coexisting with buildings from the Lycian age which are frequently flooded.

ICOMOS recommends that Xanthos and Letoon be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria II and III.

- **Criterion II.** Xanthos directly influenced Lycia throughout Antiquity, as can be seen for example at the archaeological sites of Patara or Pinara. However, it also considerably influenced the neighboring provinces. The Halicarnassus Mausoleum, which the Ancients ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, is a direct descendant of Xanthos' Nereid Monument.

- **Criterion III.** Xanthos and Letoon bear exceptional testimony to the Lycian civilization both through the many epigraphic texts found on the 2 sites as well as by the remarkable funerary monuments preserved there or originating from the area.

The famous trilingual inscription in Lycian, Aramaic and Greek dated back to 358 B.C. (Year I in the reign of Artaxerxes III Okhos) was discovered near the temple of Artemis in the Letoon. Furthermore, it is in Xanthos and Letoon that one also finds the longest and most important texts in the Lycian language : most of them are carved in rock or on huge monoliths. They cannot be moved and are the major monuments of a unique Indo-European language that disappeared long ago.

The rock art tombs, pillar tombs and pillar-mounted sarchophagi represent a novel type of funerary architecture. The rich series of Lycian tombs in Xanthos and Letoon enable us to fully understand the successive acculturation phenomena that took place in Lycia from the 6th century B.C. on.

ICOMOS Observations

The Xanthos site encompasses an archaeological zone more or less embracing the ancient town. However, a relatively busy dirt path cuts through the site and a rerouting would be desirable. A comprehensive study of the site layout is essential.

As far as the Letoon site is concerned, the protected perimeter is insufficient: the area surrounding the theater is not included and to the south, ruins that are probably from the Early Christian period can clearly be seen emerging from the alluvial deposits. Moreover, no protection has been provided for the vast necropolis zone stretching along the banks of the Xanthe River between Xanthos and Letoon.

Given the intensive farming of these fertile alluvial lands and the recent appearance on the landscape of many greenhouses for tomato-growing, while the proposed demarcation appears compatible with the present situation, it seems to be insufficient in the short term. A management plan, including environmental control and a study of the preservation of the monuments, which are threatened by seasonal rising of the groundwater table at Letoon, is extremely desirable.

ICOMOS, May 1988

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ICOMOS, July 1988