

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° 530

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Delos

Location : Cyclades

State Party : Greece

Date : 6 October, 1989

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria II, III, IV and VI.

C) JUSTIFICATION

Like Delphi and the Acropolis in Athens (included in 1987), Epidaurus (included in 1988) and Olympus (1989), Delos is a site crucial to the credibility of the World Heritage List.

Delos is a minuscule island stretching only 5 km north to south and a scant 1.3 km from east to west. Nestled between Mykonos and Rheneia, Delos does not owe its specialness to its landscape- the fairly flat terrain rises only to 112.6 m at Mount Kynthos, and the subtle beauty of its shores and beaches pales in comparison with other sites in the archipelago- but to a legend which secured it a place in history. It was here, say the Greeks, that Apollo, the son of Zeus and Leto, was born. Like Delphi, albeit for a different reason, Delos is the major sanctuary dedicated to Apollo, the Titan god par excellence, one of the most important in the Hellenic pantheon.

On the island, which had already been the site of earlier human settlements (sparse during the Neolithic age, occupation was more dense during the Mycenaean period), everything revolved around the sanctuary of Apollo, which was the seat of the Ionian Amphictyonia. The Naxians, the Parians and the Athenians disputed the site, with the latter triumphing under Pisistratus (c.540-528 B.C.). They ordered the first purification of the place. In 454, the treasure of the Delian Confederacy, which replaced the Amphictyonia, was moved to Athens. In 426 a second purification decree forbade being born or dying at Delos. Pregnant women and terminally ill persons were to be transported to the island of Rheneia. The decision, strongly motivated by religious reasons, was not without political considerations.

In 422 in a move to strengthen Athenian domination, the Delians were deported en masse. Except for some interludes of reprieves and truces, their exile lasted until 314 when Delos regained its independence in principle and again became the center of an island confederation that was tolerated and more or less controlled by the Lagides of Egypt and later by the Macedonians.

In 166 the Delians were again ousted, this time by the Roman Senate, which wished to supplant trade at Rhodes by making Delos a free port. It was a landmark decision that signaled the end of a period dominated by religious and political considerations and the beginning of a phase of economic expansion as had presaged the extent of diplomatic and commercial relations reflected in the honorific decrees of the late 3rd century B.C. in favour of the rich foreign benefactors of the sanctuary. The great era of maritime trade ended only in 69 B.C. with the sacking of the island by Athenodoros, the last of a series of disastrous events.

Abandoned in the 6th century, captured successively by the Byzantines (727), the Slavs (769), the Sarrasins (821), the Venetians, the Hospitalars of St. John of Jerusalem and the Ottomans, Delos was turned into a quarry site. The columns of its temples were consumed by the lime kilns, the walls of its houses left in ruins. Today the island's landscape consists solely of ruins unearthed systematically since 1872. On an archaeological site estimated at 95 hectares, 25 hectares have been excavated. The principal zones are: the northeast coastal plain (the sanctuary of Apollo, the Agora of the Competialists and the Agora of the Delians); the Sacred Lake region (the Agora of Theopastos, the Agora of the Italians, the renowned Terrace of Lions and the Institution of the Poseidoniastes of Berytos (Beirut)); the Mt. Kynthos area (the Terrace of the Sanctuaries of the Foreign Gods and the Heraion); and the theatre quarter, whose poignant ruins have been overrun by vegetation. The ruins of the temples and the agoras are often overshadowed by the sheer size of the richly decorated Hellenistic houses, the ostentatious signs of the commercial wealth of Delos.

ICOMOS recommends that Delos be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria II, III, IV and VI.

- **Criterion II**. The island of Delos is among the first important Greek sites in the Aegean world to have captured the attention of archaeologists. As early as 1455, Cyriac of Ancona, one of the founding fathers of archeology ("I resuscitate the dead", he said in defining the discipline), visited the ruins. He made drawings and described the Naxian colossus of Apollo. It was a favorite subject in travelers' sketchbooks, such as the one kept by S. de Vries in 1673. In the 17th century, the Venetians removed it to their city, placing it at the entrance to the Arsenal of Venice where there still stands today one of the ancient marble lions of Naxos from the terrace of Lions. Other works were transported to Rome and to England.

Delos had considerable influence on the development of architecture and monumental arts during the Greco-Roman period, such as seen in the immense Hellenistic sanctuary whose treasure of masterpieces has disappeared today. This influence was matched later by the important role it has played since the 15th century in furthering our knowledge of ancient Greek art from a widely renowned site.

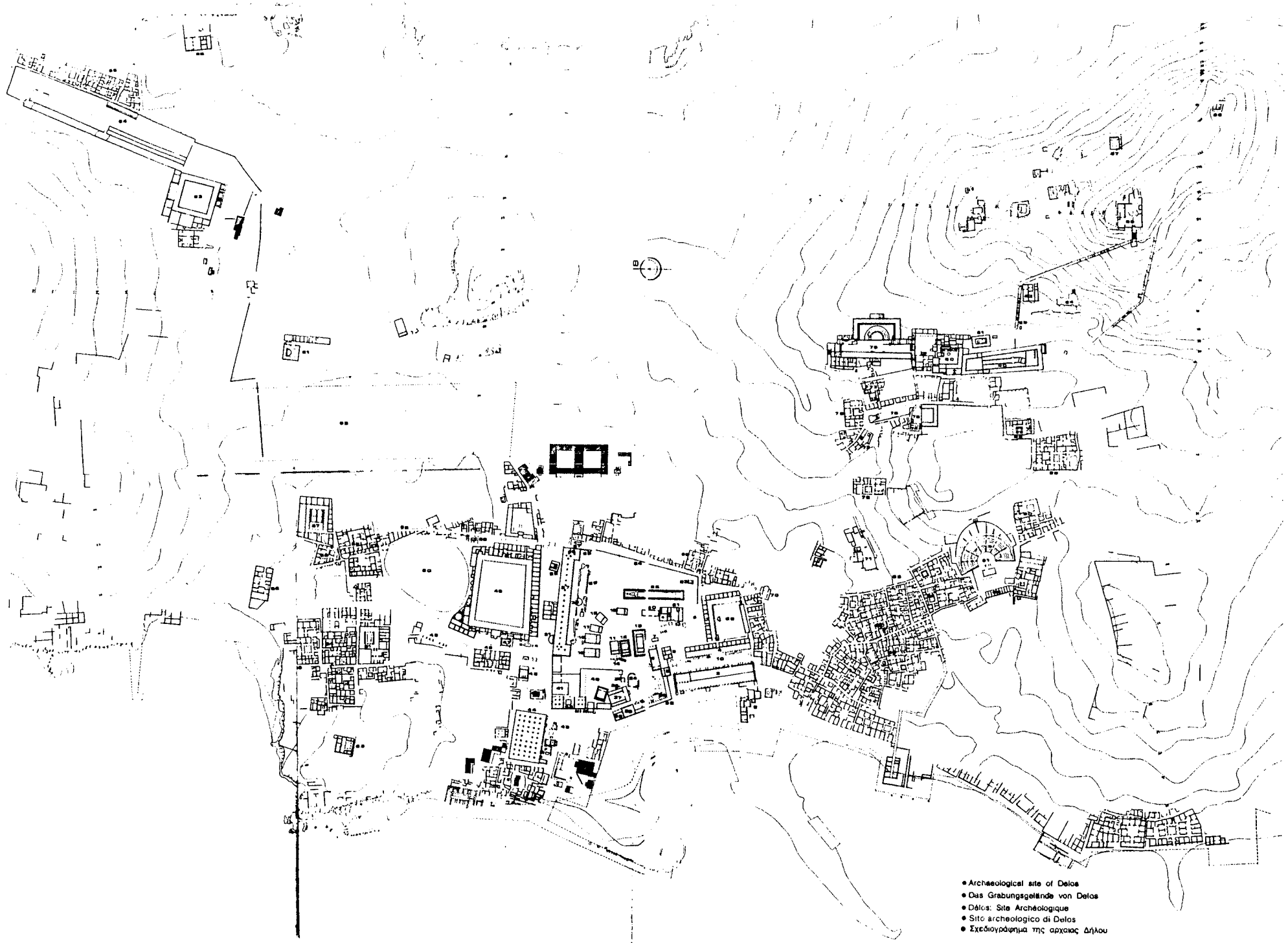
- **Criterion III.** The island of Delos bears unique witness to the civilizations of the Aegean world in the 3rd millennium B.C. (groundworks of prehistoric huts were discovered at the top of Mount Kynthos). During the Paleo-Christian era, it was the seat of the bishopric of the Cyclades which ruled over the islands of Mykonos, Syros, Seriphos, Kythnos and Keos. From the 7th century B.C. to the pillage by Athenodoros, the island of Delos was one of the principal Panhellenic sanctuaries. The feast of the Delians, which was celebrated every four years in the month of May until 316 B.C., included gymnastic, equestrian and musical competitions, strange Archaic Age dances, theatrical productions and banquets. Like the Olympic Games and the Pythic Games, it was one of the major events in the Greek world.
- **Criterion IV.** The archaeological site of Delos restores the image of an extremely important cosmopolitan Mediterranean port that began to prosper in 314 B.C., reaching outstanding levels during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. when the average population is estimated to have been 25,000. Warehouses and trading companies abounded, large residential areas were established, public buildings were founded by associations of bankers, traders and shipowners and were placed under the protection of Hermes (Hermaists), Apollo (Apolloniasts) and Poseidon (Poseidoniasts). Moreover, there was an unprecedented number of sanctuaries reserved for foreign religions : temples of Sarapis, Isis and Anubis, temples to the Syrian gods Haadad and Atargatis located on the flanks of Mount Kynthos, and even a synagogue in the stadium district. All this provides an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble that illustrates a significant historical period marked by the island's independence (316 B.C.), the second exile of the Delians (166 B.C.) and the fall of Corinth (146 B.C.) and which lasted until the troubles of the first century.
- **Criterion VI.** Delos is directly and materially associated with one of the principal myths of Hellenic civilization. It was on this arid islet that Leto, made pregnant by Zeus and fleeing the vengeance of Hera, gave birth to Apollo and Artemis after a difficult labor. According to the Homeric hymn composed circa 700 B.C., the island which until then had been floating became anchored to the floor of the ocean. The newborn Phoebus-Apollo threw off his swaddling clothes, bathed the universe in light and began walking with his cithar and his bow. Kynthos, the mountain of Zeus, and the wheel-shaped lake close to which the pregnant Leto suffered labor pains for nine days and nights, remain essential landmarks of the island's sacred geography, which was clearly defined by the additions made to the Delian sanctuary to Apollo between the 6th and the 1st centuries B.C.

ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

ICOMOS, sensitive to the beauty of the Delian landscape, recommends that the Greek authorities ensure the maintenance of their policy of tourist flow control on this fragile and overfrequented site. Grateful for the absence of large hotel structures, ICOMOS recommends the continuation of the principle of guided day tours that exclude the possibility of lodging on the island which must needs be protected in its entirety.

ICOMOS further recommends that general protection of the sites of Rheneia, of Lesser Rheumatiari and of Greater Rheumatiari be undertaken as these sites are indissociably linked to the history of Delos.

ICOMOS, April 1990



- Archaeological site of Delos
- Das Grabungsgelände von Delos
- Délos: Site Archéologique
- Sito archeologica di Delos
- Σχεδιογράφημα της αρχαίας Δήλου