

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Dougga (Tunisia)

No 794

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Dougga/Thugga
<i>Location</i>	Gouvernat de Beja, Délégation de Teboursouk
<i>State Party</i>	Tunisian Republic
<i>Date</i>	9 January 1996

Justification by State Party

The archaeological site of Dougga is the best preserved example of the rise, development, and daily life over more than seventeen centuries of an indigenous Numidian city. Many of its monuments are unique of their type and bear witness to the harmonious synthesis of several cultures - Numidian, Punic, Hellenistic, and Roman, making it an exceptional site.

The important epigraphic collection from Dougga, comprising over two thousand Libyan, Punic, Greek, and, above all, Roman inscriptions has made a decisive contribution to the decipherment of the Libyan language and to knowledge of the social and municipal life of the Numidians, and has thrown light on some obscure aspects of Roman colonial policy and municipal organization in its provinces.

[Note The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier concerning the criteria under which it considers the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List.]

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

According to Diodorus Siculus, writing at the end of the 4th century BC, Thugga was a city of a "fine size." It is thought to have been founded, in the centre of a very fertile region, before the 5th century BC, on the basis of recent excavations of an early

necropolis on the northern edge of the site. When he conquered the region in the early 2nd century BC, the Numidian Massinissa made it one of his capitals, and it shared in the expansion and prosperity of the kingdom (and also some of its political tribulations during the Punic Wars) under his successors, becoming the centre of the Libyco-Punic culture.

After his defeat of Juba I at the battle of Thapsus in 46 BC Julius Caesar annexed eastern Numidia as the Roman province of Africa Nova, and Thugga became a Roman town. For two and a half centuries, starting in the reign of Augustus (27-14 BC), the town was formally composed of two legally distinct communities: a shifting indigenous population who were governed according to their traditional systems, and a community of Roman citizens belonging to the Roman *colonia* of Carthage, who lived according to the Roman way.

The Roman influence was quick to make its impact on the nature of the town. Whilst it retained what was essentially a Numidian urban fabric, Thugga acquired a typically Roman monumental appearance. Although small, its inhabitants never having exceeded five thousand, it flourished from its rural economy based on its rich and fertile *territorium*, especially in the boom years for the North African economy in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and so the quality of the public buildings was high, as was that of the private houses. It should be emphasized, however, that Thugga was in the Roman period never more than a prosperous country market town.

Under the Severan emperors (193-235) Thugga was raised to the status of *municipium*, and Gallienus elevated it to the highest level of provincial town, that of *colonia* in 261. It had also become the seat of a bishopric in the 3rd century. Its prosperity seems to have continued, albeit at a lower level, throughout the 4th century, judging by the considerable amount of restoration and rehabilitation attested by numerous inscriptions, but urban life declined in the 5th century.

The re-establishment of Byzantine rule (533-698) saw Thugga assigned a minor role in the political and economic life of the region. The forum and *capitolium* were enclosed during this period by a wall, for the building of which some of the important public buildings were robbed of their decorative and structural elements.

Little is known of the town in the Islamic period, beyond the fact that it continued to be inhabited for a considerable period, as demonstrated by the erection of the simple Mosque of Sidi Sahbi, to the east of the *capitolium*, in the 14th century. It is hoped that further excavations will throw more light on the eventual abandonment of this once thriving city.

Description

The remains of the ancient city of Thugga cover c 70ha, approximately one-third of which have been excavated. Its remoteness from ancient and contemporary roads and its abandonment in late antiquity has meant that its ruins are relatively complete and well preserved.

The original Numidian settlement was built on a steep hillside, no doubt for defensive purposes. This inhibited the application of the standard Graeco-Roman "Hippodamian" checkerboard layout, and so most of the streets are steep and winding, suitable only for foot traffic.

Despite the relative unimportance of Thugga in the administrative structure of the Roman province of Africa, it possesses a remarkable assemblage of public buildings, most of them dating in their present form from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD - temples and sanctuaries, forum, public baths, theatre, amphitheatre, *circus*, market, public cisterns and fountains, etc. Private life is also well represented by large and small houses, shops, and mausolea. The major public buildings are deliberately sited on the most prominent points of the irregular slopes.

The small rectangular forum, which is surrounded by a marble colonnade, is crossed by part of the later Byzantine fortifications. On one side of it is the *capitolium*, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, one of the finest buildings of its type in North Africa. In front of the *cella* (sanctuary) is a row of six massive Corinthian columns, four of them monolithic. Beneath the *cella* is a crypt, which may have served as a church at one stage.

The theatre is small, though large enough to accommodate at least 3500 citizens of this small town, and is of standard Roman form. The *scenae frons* (stage) was originally floored with mosaic and is supported by vaults built of hollow ceramic tubes, a typical Carthaginian technique.

The most impressive of the many temples is that dedicated to Juno Cælestis (the Punic goddess Tanit), built around 230. The sanctuary, surrounded by columns, is situated within a semi-circular courtyard. The temple of Saturn, on the edge of the town in the area of the pre-Roman settlement, is located on the site of an older sanctuary dedicated to Baal.

There are two triumphal arches. That of Septimius Severus, built in all probability to commemorate the elevation of the city to *municipium* status, is much degraded, but the Arch of Severus Alexander still stands to a substantial height. The well preserved 3rd century Licinian baths (remodelled in the 4th century) are an excellent example of this type of municipal facility.

One of the most significant monuments in Thugga is the Libyco-Punic mausoleum in the southern part of the town, dating from the late 3rd or early 2nd century BC. This is the only major monument of Punic architecture still surviving in Tunisia. The six-tiered podium supports a rectangular platform, with Ionic corner pilasters. Three further sets of steps lead to another base, with two embedded Ionic columns on each side. Three further steps give access to a third storey, decorated with quadrigas in low relief and crowned with a pyramid, which has at each corner a winged female figure. The total height of this funerary monument, that of a Numidian prince, Ateban, is 21m.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The theatre, the capitolium, the Arch of Severus Alexander, the Late Roman fortress, the Libyco-Punic mausoleum, the Temple of Saturn, and the aqueduct were listed as Monuments Historiques by decree in June 1891, and most of the other visible remains followed later that year and in subsequent years. In 1961 the Tunisian Government relocated all but two families of the remaining inhabitants of the archaeological site to a new village, Dougga-al-Jadida.

The decision was taken to set up the Archaeological Park of Dougga, which is the subject of this nomination, at a Ministerial Council meeting chaired by the Head of State on 23 July 1991. At the present time the procedure for designating the site as part of the National Heritage (Patrimoine National) is in progress with the acquisition by the state of those parcels of land still in private hands. The whole site comes under the provisions of the Code du Patrimoine, promulgated in February 1994.

Management

The Institut National du Patrimoine, whose headquarters is in Tunis, is responsible for the management of the Archaeological Park. It has set up a special research and management office there for the Dougga Archaeological Park. There are provisions for the permanent protection and preservation of the site, including measures for its enclosure, the consolidation and restoration of the archaeological remains, and a policy for its presentation to the public, but no management plan as such, although this is under discussion.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The site was subject to pillage by collectors in the 19th century. The most outrageous incident was the almost total demolition of the Libyco-Punic mausoleum in 1846 by Thomas Read, British Consul in Tunis, in order to extract the famous bilingual (Libyan and Punic) inscription, now in the British Museum.

Following the listing of successive groups of the monuments of Dougga between 1891 and 1928, work was carried out for their consolidation, restoration, and anastylosis. Since that time the Institut National du Patrimoine has been responsible for their regular cleaning, maintenance, and protection.

Archaeological excavations began in the 1890s and continued intermittently until 1962. Tunisian archaeologists resumed scientific investigations in 1991.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity of the archaeological site of Dougga is very high and has not been significantly affected by restoration and conservation interventions over the past century, which have been

kept to a minimum and have been consistent with the principles laid down in the 1964 Venice Charter.

There are, however, some exceptions to this general observation. The authenticity of the reconstruction of the Libyco-Punic mausoleum in 1908-10 has long been the subject of debate (although it might be argued that this has its own historicity). The theatre has been used for various events in recent years, and some of the reconstruction work such as that of the columns on the *scenae frons* and additions such as the wall built around the *cavea* to restrict access are of dubious authenticity.

Dougga is the best preserved Roman small town in North Africa and as such provides an exceptional picture of everyday life in antiquity.

ICOMOS, September 1997

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Dougga in December 1996. ICOMOS also consulted a distinguished British expert on the classical archaeology of the Mediterranean lands on the cultural significance of the site.

Qualities

The remains of the pre-Roman and Roman town of Thugga are unusually complete and well preserved by comparison with comparable sites in North Africa, to a considerable extent owing to their relative remoteness from ancient and contemporary settlements and routes. As a result they present an exceptionally vivid and detailed picture of everyday life in a small Roman provincial town.

Comparative analysis

The ruins of at least fifty small towns are known from the Roman provinces of North Africa. It is recognized by the archaeological community that the best preserved and most complete is Thugga/Dougga.

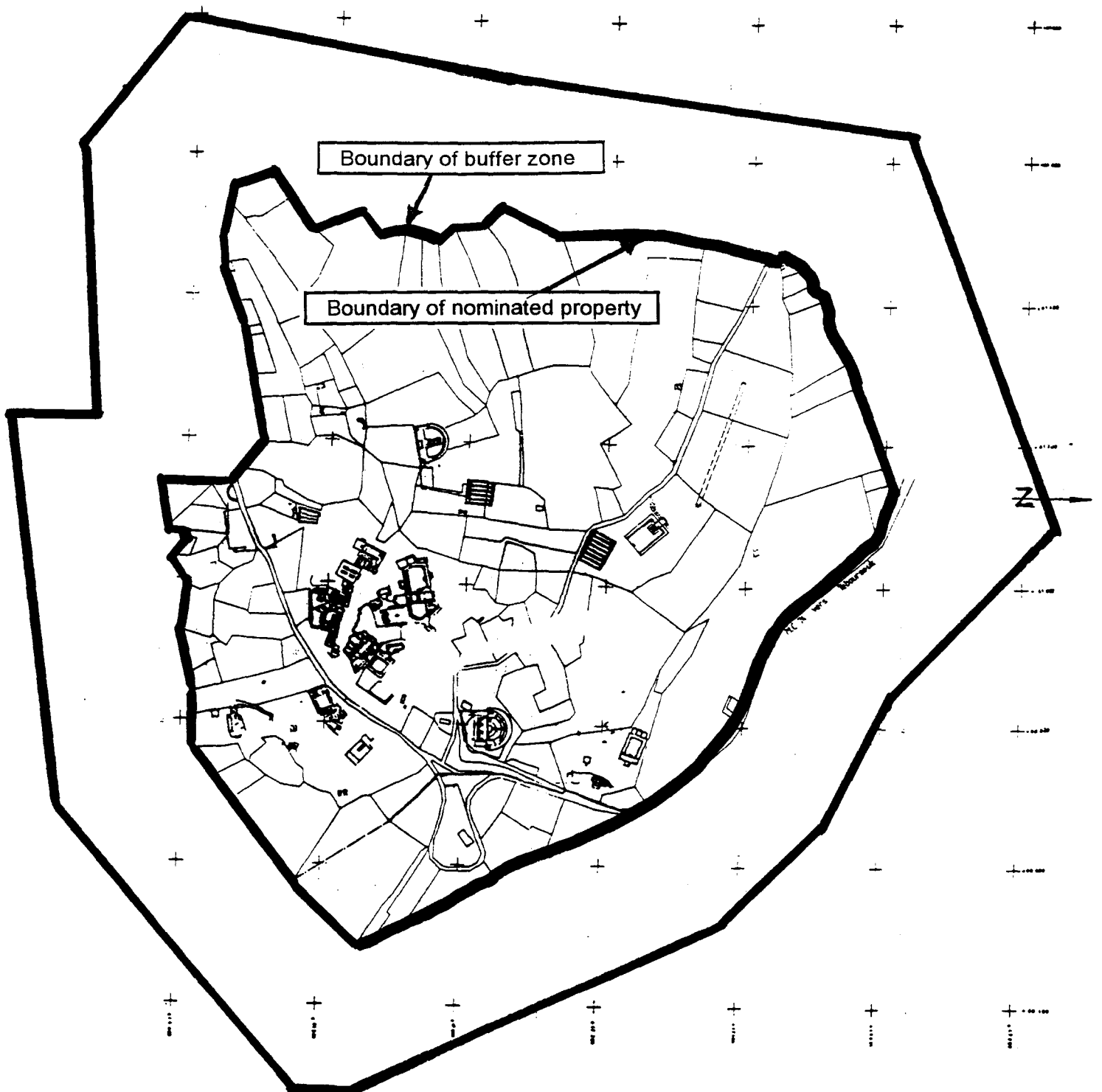
ICOMOS recommendations for future action

Careful consideration needs to be given to the removal of some recent intrusions on the archaeological remains. The private restaurant that formerly operated on the site has been purchased and closed; the Tunisian authorities are urged to demolish it, since it has an adverse impact on the appearance of the site. The modern constructions in the theatre should also be removed and, if it is intended to continue to use the monument for different events, replaced by less obtrusive structures.

There is also a need for a more detailed survey and inventory of the entire site and of the individual monuments that compose it to be carried out, since these are essential for a better understanding, and hence a better presentation, of the site. This information is needed for the development of a proper management plan.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iii*:



Dougga :

**Carte indiquant la délimitation de la zone proposée pour inscription et de la zone tampon /
Map showing boundaries of nominated area and buffer zone**



Dougga :
Vue d'ensemble du site /
General view of the site



Dougga :
Les Thermes Liciniens /
The Licinian Baths