

Saint-Emilion (France)

No 932

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion
<i>Location</i>	Aquitaine Région, Gironde Département
<i>State Party</i>	France
<i>Date</i>	30 June 1998

Justification by State Party

The site of the ancient jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion bears exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition and a living civilization, that of winemaking. **Criterion iii**

It provides an outstanding example of both a high-quality architectural ensemble, in particular the religious and civil buildings of the commune of Saint-Emilion, and also of a landscape that illustrates several important periods of human history, such as the occupation of natural caves in prehistory and the use of geographical and climatic resources in order to create a special form of land use. **Criterion iv**

It is a striking example of settlement that is representative of a culture and unique testimony to perfect symbiosis between land, human beings, and production. **Criterion v**

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. It is also a *cultural landscape* as defined in paragraph 39 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

History and Description

History

The first traces of human settlement in the Saint-Emilion region date back at least to the Upper Palaeolithic (35,000-10,000 BC). The Pierrefitte menhir confirms human presence in the 5th-4th millennia BC. The region was heavily populated during the Celtic-Gaulish period, as testified by an *oppidum* (defended hillfort) on the plateau overlooking modern Saint-Emilion.

The Roman occupation began when Augustus created the province of *Aquitania* in 27 BC. With the prosperity of *Burdigala* (Bordeaux), Valerius Probus used his legions to fell the *Cumbris* forest in AD 275 BC and created the first vineyards by grafting new varieties of grape on the *Vitis*

biturica that grew naturally in the region. There are considerable traces of Roman occupation, especially rich villas, and it was here that the Latin poet Ausonius retired when he withdrew from public affairs in the 4th century.

The first Christian monasteries appear at the beginning of the 7th century. Legend has it that in the mid 8th century a Breton monk, Emilian, sought asylum here from the Benedictine community and led an eremitic life in a cave. His numerous miracles attracted many companions, who lived according to the rule of St Benedict. It was they who began to build the great monolithic church, which was not to be completed for another three centuries. Since the region was on the Pilgrimage Route to Santiago de Compostela, from the 11th century onwards it experienced great prosperity and many monasteries, churches, and other religious buildings were founded. To construct the many large stone buildings that this entailed, the excellent limestone of the region was quarried extensively, an industry that continued until well into the 18th century.

When Eleanor of Aquitaine married Henry Plantagenet (later Henry II of England), the town of Saint-Emilion, by then fortified, became part of the English kingdom, along with all Guyenne. King John granted the town full liberties in 1199.

In 1224, when this part of Guyenne had been recovered for France, Louis VIII began work on the Royal Castle, not to be completed until 1237, by Henry III of England. In 1298 Edward I signed a decree defining the limits of the jurisdiction. Five years later it became once again part of France under Philippe Le Bel, though it was to change hands repeatedly in the course of the Hundred Years' War.

In 1453 it became French permanently, and three years later Charles VII confirmed all the privileges granted by the English to the town to help it re-establish itself. It was to suffer again during the Wars of Religion in the later 16th century and, despite the efforts of Louis XIV, it lost its leading position to Libourne. As a result the town retained its medieval appearance until the 18th century, when its fortifications were dismantled. Profound social changes were introduced during the Revolution which destroyed the old order, dating from the Middle Ages, and many of the ancient buildings were demolish or fell into ruins.

These had an adverse effect on the vineyards, and it was not until 1853 that Saint-Emilion started to recover, thanks to its vineyards. During the 12th and 13th centuries these had produced what were known as *vins honorifiques* (known in English as "Royal wines") because they were presented as gifts to kings and important people, which gives an indication of their quality. A regulatory body known as *La Jurade* monitored the quality of the wine of Saint-Emilion and granted this appellation to a limited number of wines.

The demands of Flemish consumers in the 18th century led to an increase in viticulture, since the quality of the Saint-Emilion wines enabled them to be transported by sea without the wine turning into vinegar. That century saw the quality of the wines from the region becoming recognized as exceptional, as witnessed by countless records of the period. During the Second Empire production of red wines in the region became generalized, replacing the white wines that had been most common in the medieval period.

Their distribution was greatly facilitated by the opening in 1853 of the railway line between Paris and Bordeaux.

In 1867 the Saint-Emilion wines were awarded the Gold Medal of the Universal Exhibition, followed by the highest award, the *Grand Prix Collectif*, of the 1889 Universal Exhibition. *La Jurade*, which had been suppressed during the Revolution, was restored in 1948, and continues to ensure the quality of the Saint-Emilion wines.

The first classification of the Saint-Emilion wines by the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (AOC) was in 1954, when four grades were defined. These were reduced to two - *Saint-Emilion* and *Saint-Emilion Grand Cru* - in 1984. By comparison with other vineyard regions of the Bordelais, Saint-Emilion has been noteworthy for its innovations, such as the establishment of the first wine syndicate in 1884 and the first cooperative cellars in the Gironde in 1932.

At the present time the Saint-Emilion vineyards produce an average of 230,00 hectolitres of wine (all red) annually, representing 10% of the AOC wines of the Gironde.

Description

The 7846ha that are the subject of this nomination cover eight communes, corresponding with the jurisdiction established in the 12th century by John (Lackland), King of England. It is bounded on the north by the Barbanne, a tributary of the Isle, on the south by the Dordogne, on the west by the territory of Libourne, and on the east by that of Castillon-la-Bataille.

The relief is characterized by a stratum of limestone defined by shelves that crisscross the landscape. This disappears to the north, along with the soft sandstone that it overlies, and is replaced by a heterogeneous mixture of clayey sands and gravels, dipping towards the south. Two slopes are clearly distinguishable: the northern one is gentle and cut by valleys, the southern steeply plunging into the Dordogne valley and forming concave valleys (*combes*), in one of which the town of Saint-Emilion is situated.

The climate is admirably suited to viticulture - mild wet winters that begin late in the year, equally late, hot summers, and sunny autumns that encourage the ripening of the grapes. As a result, the landscape presents a monoculture, that of vineyards exclusively, and occupying some 5400ha, ie more than 67.5% of the total area. Apart from the human settlements, the only other traces of exploitation are the abandoned underground quarries, which supplied limestone for the religious and public buildings of Bordeaux and its hinterland until the 18th century.

The long history of winemaking had produced its own characteristic monuments and architecture. However, before viticulture predominated, medieval and Renaissance castles were built on dominant sites as seigneurial residences. Examples are the 13th century Château Laroque (Saint-Christophe-des-Bardes), the 14th century Château de Preyssac (Saint-Etienne-de-Lisse), and the 16th century Château Ferrand (Saint-Hippolyte).

By contrast, the "vineyard" castles are located at the centre of their respective domains. They range in date from the mid 18th century (Château Ausone, Château Canon)

through the early 19th century (Château Cheval-Blanc, Château Mondot) to the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Château Laroze, Château La Gaffalière). The earlier buildings are in a relatively sober classical style, but the later ones are more extravagant.

Settlements are characterized by modest stone houses, most dating from the first half of the 19th century. They never have more than two storeys, and are found in small groups, for the use of vineyard workers. The *chais* (wine storehouses) are large functional rectangular structures built in stone or a mixture of brick and stone, with tiled double-pitched roofs. They began to be built in the 1930s, either as new constructions or as adaptations of earlier structures.

The towns and villages in the region have a number of historic monuments. At Saint-Emilion the most significant religious monuments are *L'Hermitage* or *La Grotte de Saint-Emilion*, the "Monolithic Church" (*Eglise Monolithe*), with its bell-tower, the medieval monastic catacombs, and the Collegiate Church (*Eglise Collégiale*) with its cloister. This ensemble, mostly Romanesque in origin, clusters around the pilgrimage centre of the hermit-saint. There is also a group of secular monuments, including the massive keep of the *Château du Roi* and the elegant ruins of the *Palais Cardinal*. There are fine churches of Romanesque origin at all the other seven villages. The enormous Pierrefitte menhir is in the commune of Saint-Sulpice-de-Faleyrens.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Since June 1968 Saint-Emilion has been a Protected Site; the designation includes all the medieval city. In 1986 a Protected Zone (*Secteur Sauvegardé*) was created under the provisions of the 1962 "Loi Malraux." Many individual monuments and sites in all eight communes are also protected by law.

Saint-Emilion, Saint-Christophe-des Bardes, and Saint-Sulpice-de-Faleyrens have statutory Land Use Plans (*Plans d'Occupation des Sols - POS*), which regulate all forms of development within their boundaries.

The wine-producing areas are protected by means of a 1980 decree from the Ministry of Agriculture which designates the group of communes producing AOC wines to be of public interest. Further statutory instruments from 1990 and 1998 regulate any interventions on the land that might be prejudicial to its integrity.

In 1991 the forest areas at the summit of the plateau on the territories of five of the communes were inscribed as a "natural zone of ecological, faunal, and floral interest" in the ZNIEFF inventory. This has no statutory force, but it is a factor in drawing up POSs, and they already figure in those of Saint-Christophe-des-Bardes and Saint-Emilion.

Management

Ownership of the individual properties that make up this nomination is vested in a range of private citizens and institutions and public bodies at different levels of government.

There is no overall management plan for the entire region, but three communes have POS. However, in 1966 the *Syndicat Intercommunal à Vocation Multiple (SIVOM)* of the Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion, covering the eight communes, was set up to coordinate "works and services of common interest for all the communes." Among the subjects that it has addressed is the protection and preservation of the historic monuments within the Jurisdiction. It has been used by Saint-Emilion to remove all television antennas from the town.

The Saint-Emilion SIVOM is currently preparing an integral conservation plan for the entire architectural and landscape heritage protection area, with the support of the Regional Council for Aquitaine and the Regional Council of the Gironde.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

There is a long tradition of systematic conservation of the main religious and secular buildings in the region, and especially of those which are protected under French monuments legislation. As a result the ensemble has an overall high level of conservation. Consolidation is in progress on the protected buildings, and the Saint-Emilion POS is being implemented to ensure that the streetscape of the town is properly maintained, with no new constructions in the vicinity of historic monuments.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity is high in the urban areas; this can be confirmed by reference to historic plans and photographs.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the nominated area in January 1999.

Qualities

The Saint-Emilion Jurisdiction and its eight communes constitute an outstanding ensemble of indisputable monumental and landscape value. The many individual monuments in the region, some of them of exceptional value, such as the Pierrefitte menhir or the church of Saint-Emilion, admirably symbolize the course of history in the region and the richness of the different cultures that have left their imprint there, creating a priceless monumental heritage. They derive a special character from the way in which they have been adapted to the needs of human existence. However, the most significant quality is the way in which all these activities have been adapted to conform with the characteristics of the landscape. Without destroying it, human communities have made the most of these characteristics in landscape's conditionings to develop their work and way of life. Exploitation of material resources by quarrying, the establishment and development of urban settlement, the building of churches, monasteries, and dwelling houses - all have come together to create a brotherhood in perfect harmony with the topography. The search for quality, respect for the soil, and

development of production techniques have both ensured the survival and consolidated the beauty of the ensemble.

For this reason the Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion conforms completely with the second category of the organically evolved landscape (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraph 39) - the continuing landscape which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life in which the evolutionary process is still in progress and at the same time exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

Comparative analysis

ICOMOS is of the opinion that Saint-Emilion is exceptional, uniting as it does monuments of outstanding quality which have survived intact over time with a landscape of great beauty and stability such as to justify its inclusion in the World Heritage List. *ICOMOS comments*

Although all the area proposed for inscription is protected by various laws, it lacks an integrated plan which defines and evaluates the components of the landscape and establishes general provisions for the formulation of more precisely defined management plans.

This lack was pointed out during the ICOMOS expert mission to the competent authorities, which are prepared to start work on such a plan with the minimum delay. ICOMOS does not believe that further consideration of this nomination should be deferred to await the completion and implementation of this plan, but it is of the opinion that there must be serious commitment on the part of the State Party to urgent action.

In the light of the fact that further nominations of vineyard landscapes may be anticipated in future years, a comparative study of similar properties at European level will be initiated by ICOMOS.

Recommendation

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

Criterion iii The Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion is an outstanding example of an historic vineyard landscape that has survived intact and in activity to the present day.

Criterion iv The intensive cultivation of grapes for wine production in a precisely defined region and the resulting landscape is illustrated in an exceptional way by the historic Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion.

ICOMOS, September 1999