

Corfu (Greece)

No 978

*Official name as proposed
by the State Party:*

The Old Town of Corfu

Location:

Ionian Islands Region, Corfu
Prefecture

Brief description:

The Old Town of Corfu is located on the Island of Corfu (*Kerkyra*), off the western coasts of Albania and Greece. It is an ancient site, which was in a strategic position at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. The fortifications of Corfu were designed by renowned Venetian engineers, and they were used for four centuries to defend the maritime trading interests of the Republic of Venice against the Ottoman Empire. In the course of time, the fortifications had to be repaired and partly rebuilt several times, more recently under the British rule in the 19th century. The mainly neo-classical housing stock of the Old Town is partly from the Venetian period, partly of later construction.

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 *group of buildings*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2 February 2005) Annex 3 (14, ii), the property is an *inhabited historic town*.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 28 June 1999

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for
preparing the Nomination:* No

*Date received by
the World Heritage Centre:* 31 January 2006

Background:

An earlier nomination was presented in 1999. ICOMOS completed its evaluation of the property and recommended that the property should not be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The State Party withdrew the nomination dossier before its examination by the 24th session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee (Paris, June 2000). The new dossier differs mainly from the first by the presence of a substantial comparative analysis and by a change in the vision of the buffer zone.

Consultations: ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committees on Historic Town and Villages and on Fortifications and Military Heritage.

Literature consulted (selection):

Puppi, L., *Michele Sanmicheli, architetto di Verona*, Padua, 1971.

Agoropoulou-Birbili, A., *The Architecture of the town of Corfu under Venetian rule*, Athens, 1976; *The work of the Corfiot architect I. Chronis*, Technical Chamber of Greece – Corfu Branch, Corfu, 1997; *Documentation of archaeological features during British rule* (in Greek), Corfu, 1997.

Concina, E., *Città e fortezze nelle tre isole nostre del Levante*, Venice, 1986.

Corfu: History, urban life, architecture, 14th-19th c., Cultural Association of Corfu, Corfu, 1994.

Corfu: a Mediterranean synthesis, Acts of the International Conference, Cultural Association of Corfu, Corfu, 1998.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 18-21 September 2006

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 20 December 2006 and the State Party provided additional information on 18 January 2007. ICOMOS sent another letter on 30 January 2007 and the State Party supplied additional documentation on 26 February 2007.

Date of approval of this report: 11 March 2007

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The island of Corfu (in Greek: *Kerkyra*) lies in the Adriatic Sea off the western coast of Greece and Albania. The Old Town of Corfu lies between two fortresses midway along the island's eastern coastline. The Old Citadel and the New Fort form two remarkable monuments in the urban fabric. To the east, the canal dug by the Venetians has transformed the rocky promontory on which the Old Citadel was founded into an island looking down over the tiny harbour of Mandraki. The citadel retains the imposing Venetian fortifications, restructured by the British, laid out on three levels on the far side of the canal linked by a footbridge to the Spianada. A first outer wall leads to the frontal fortification, consisting of two orillon bastions (Martinengo and Savorgnan) and a curtain through which the main gate enters (around 1550). A stone bridge crosses a broad ditch along which runs a 19th century barracks. A second wall protects the base of the two fortified peaks, and access to it is via a series of ramps and stairs. A vaulted passage leads to the harbour of Mandraki which itself also retains a monumental gate, now closed. Some buildings on various levels, mainly dating from the 19th century, have been preserved. These include the former Venetian prisons, raised in height by the British, four powder magazines, the hospital, which stretches from one peak to the other, two barracks, and the Church of St George in the form of a Doric temple (1840).

The imposing structure of the New Fort dominates the north-western sector of the Old Town. A pentagonal salient, a half-salient, and the small fort of Punta Perpetua are connected by a rampart and command the old harbour. Long sloping tunnels lead to the British barracks and the two bastions of the Seven Winds linked by a curtain wall and looking out over the countryside. These look down on

a broad ditch and two bastions preserved from the second Venetian perimeter wall. The two gates of the New Fort still exist, as does the church of Panagia Spiliotissa (rebuilt in 1739). The ring road around the Old Town follows the line of the ancient town wall, some traces of which remain to the west and south and one gate, the Spilia Gate, of the original four (Royal Gate, St Nicholas Gate, Raimonda Gate).

The outlines of the Old Town were determined by lack of space and the needs of defence. The urban fabric forms a compact core consisting of ten quarters, differentiated by their form. The quarters which range over the three low hills (Campiello, Agion Pateron, and Agiou Athanassiou) are irregular and fragmentary in their make-up, a sure sign of the original suburbs preserved from the demolition necessary for the construction of the perimeter wall. They are characterised by a network of radial streets, small squares, and compact blocks of housing clustered around the churches. The outskirts of these areas, in transition, and the quarters built in continuation of the perimeter wall present a more regular framework, especially those which open out behind the Spianada in a grid of straight lines running east-west.

The two main streets running east-west and the north-south axis which once connected the Old Citadel to the four gates of the perimeter wall follow an ancient outline. This simple traffic system, dictated by strategic imperatives, contrasts with the secondary alleys (the *kantounia*, between 1m and 3m wide) which form a complex network of stairs and vaulted tunnels running through a series of small squares, of which Kremasti Square is a typical example.

The restricted space within the perimeter dictated the construction of multi-storey dwellings ranged indiscriminately in serried ranks along the streets. Though the Old Town must have numbered many a patrician dwelling during the Venetian period, only a few of these can be identified in the present day, such as the houses of the Ricchi and Yallina families (17th century). The house fronts of this period are characterised by regular rows of windows, stone balconies, ground-floor arcades, and a red and ochre rendering that contrasts with the stone door and window jambs. Many feature doorways ornamented with sculptures. Some public buildings from the Venetian period still survive: the door of one of the grain stores (1592), the pawnbroker's (1630) that forms part of the Commissioners' Palace, part of the Spilia barracks, and the Grimani barracks to the south of the Spianada.

The trend towards building upwards was accentuated in the 19th century when the old buildings were raised to anything up to six storeys or, in most cases, replaced by new buildings which often occupied more space than in the past by annexing the courtyards. The wider frontages were divided into three vertical sections, always with many windows, but tended to become more uniform, particularly along sections of the main streets, while remaining sober in their classically inspired ornamentation. Balconies on every floor created a sense of movement and variety in the facades.

Spianada, the esplanade which divides the town from the Old Citadel, takes up one-third of the surface area of the

Old Town. Once the most populous of the suburbs in the 16th century, it attained its present size in the 17th century for military reasons and is still bordered by 18th century barracks. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries it became an architectural showcase dedicated to leisure activities and civil functions. The French embellished it by constructing arcade-fronted buildings, the Liston, to the west and planting trees. Under the British it became a monumental open space with the Neo-Classical Palace of St Michael and St George (1819-23), once the residence of the Commissioners, to the north and to the south the circular Ionic temple dedicated to Maitland: both are the work of George Whitmore (1775-1862).

At the centre of the Old Town stand two large squares, each leading off one of the two main streets. On Dimarchion Square, once the social and cultural centre of the Venetian town, which lies on the slopes of the hill of Agiou Athanassiou, stand the 18th century Cathedral of St James, the former residence of the Latin Archbishop (rebuilt in 1754), and the *Loggia Nobilei* (1663-69), converted into a theatre in 1720 and home of the Town Hall since the early 20th century.

On Heroon Square stand the churches of St John (pre-16th century) and *Phaneromeni*, a basilica with three aisles dating from the early 18th century and altered in 1832 by Corfiot architect Ioannis Chronis, who designed many public buildings in the Neo-Classical style for the Old Town, including the Ionian Bank which stands on the same square, the home of Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Greek governor, and the Ionian Parliament (1854, then restored after the bombings in 1943). To the north of this square stands the Church of St Spyridon (1589-94, altered in 1670), which houses the relics of the patron saint of the town and the island. Although the Orthodox faith was upheld during the centuries of foreign occupation, contact with the Latin West also influenced the religious architecture of the Old Town, which shows a strong Byzantine tradition. The example of the single-aisled church, often with a low exterior narthex running around the exterior, is much more common than the three-aisled basilica, although both reflect the repertoires of the Renaissance and the Baroque style. The simplicity of the facades offers a remarkable contrast to the elaborate interior decoration. Many ancient churches were enlarged and renovated in the 18th century.

History and development

Corfu, the first of the Ionian Islands encountered at the entrance to the Adriatic, was annexed to Greece by a group of Eretrians (775-750 BCE). In 734 BCE the Corinthians founded a colony known as *Kerkyra* to the south of where the Old Town now stands. The town became a trading post on the way to Sicily and founded further colonies in Illyria and Epirus. The coast of Epirus and Corfu itself came under the sway of the Roman Republic (229 BCE) and served as the jumping-off point for Rome's expansion into the east. In the reign of Caligula two disciples of the Apostle Paul, St Jason, Bishop of Iconium, and Sosipater, Bishop of Tarsus, introduced Christianity to the island.

Corfu fell to the lot of the Eastern Empire at the time of the division in 336 and entered a long period of unsettled fortunes, beginning with the invasion of the Goths (551).

The population gradually abandoned the old town and moved to the peninsula surmounted by two peaks (the *korifi*) where the ancient citadel now stands. The Venetians, who were beginning to play a more decisive role in the southern Adriatic, came to the aid of a failing Byzantium, thereby conveniently defending their own trade with Constantinople against the Norman prince Robert Guiscard. Corfu was taken by the Normans in 1081 and returned to the Byzantine Empire in 1084.

Following the Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, the Byzantine Empire was broken up and, in return for their military support, the Venetians obtained all the naval bases they needed to control the Aegean and the Ionian Seas, including Corfu, which they occupied briefly from 1204 to 1214. For the next half-century, the island fell under the sway of the Despots of Epirus (1214-67) and then that of the Angevins of Naples (1267-1368), who used it to further their policies against both the Byzantine Empire now re-established in Constantinople and the Republic of Venice. The tiny medieval town grew up between the two fortified peaks, the Byzantine *Castel da Mare* and the Angevin *Castel di Terra*, in the shelter of a defensive wall fortified with towers. Writings from the first half of the 13th century tell of a separation of administrative and religious powers between the inhabitants of the citadel and those of the outlying parts of the town occupying what is now the Spianada.

In order to assert its naval and commercial power in the Southern Adriatic, the Republic of Venice took advantage of the internal conflicts raging in the Kingdom of Naples to take control of Corfu (1386-1797). Alongside Negropont (Chalcis), Crete, and Modon (Methoni), it would form one of the bases from which to counter the Ottoman maritime offensive and serve as a revictualling station for ships en route to Romania and the Black Sea.

The ongoing work on defining, improving, and expanding the medieval fortified perimeter reflects the economic and strategic role of Corfu during the four centuries of Venetian occupation. In the early 15th century activity concentrated on the medieval town, with the development of harbour facilities (docks, quays and arsenals) and continued with the renovation of the defence works. Early in the following century a canal was dug, cutting off the medieval town from its suburbs.

Following the siege of the town by the Turks in 1537 and the burning of the suburbs, a new programme of works was launched to isolate the citadel further and strengthen its defences. The strip of land (now the Spianada) cleared in 1516 was widened by demolishing houses facing the citadel walls, two new bastions were raised on the banks of the canal, the elevation of the perimeter walls was lowered, and the two *castelli* were replaced by new structures. The work, based on plans drawn by Veronese architect Michele Sanmicheli (1487-1559), were completed in 1558, bringing the town's defences up to date with the rapid progress made in artillery in recent decades.

Yet another siege by the Turks in 1571 decided the Venetians to embark on a vast project covering the medieval town, its suburbs, the harbour, and all the military buildings (1576-88). Ferrante Vitelli, architect to

the Duke of Savoy, sited a fort (the New Fort) on the low hill of St Mark to the west of the old town to command the surrounding land and at sea, and also the 24 suburbs enclosed by a ditched wall with bastions and four gates. More buildings, both military and civil, were erected and the 15th century Mandraki harbour was restructured and enlarged. At the same time, the medieval town was converted to more specifically military uses (the cathedral was transferred to the new town in the 17th century) to become the Old Citadel.

Between 1669 and 1682 the system of defences was further strengthened to the west by a second wall, the work of military engineer Filippo Vernada. In 1714 the Turks sought to reconquer Morea (the Peloponnese) but Venetian resistance hardened when the Turkish forces headed towards Corfu. The support of Christian naval fleets and an Austrian victory in Hungary in 1716 helped to save the town. The commander of the Venetian forces on Corfu, Giovanni Maria von Schulenburg, was inspired by the designs of Filippo Vernada to put the final touches to this great fortified ensemble. The outer western defences were reinforced by a complex system of outworks on the heights of two mountains, Abraham and Salvatore, and on the intermediate fort of San Rocco (1717-30).

The treaty of Campo Formio (1797) marked the end of the Republic of Venice and saw Corfu come under French control (1797-99) until France withdrew before the Russian-Turkish alliance that founded the State of the Ionian Islands, of which Corfu would become the capital (1799-1807). The redrawing of territorial boundaries in Europe after the fall of Napoleon made Corfu, after a brief interlude of renewed French control (1807-14), a British protectorate for the next half-century (1814-64).

As the capital of the United States of the Ionian Islands, Corfu lost its strategic importance. Under the governance of the British High Commissioner Sir Thomas Maitland (1816-24), development activity concentrated on the Spianada; his successor, Sir Frederic Adam (1824-32), turned his attention towards public works (building an aqueduct, restructuring the Old Citadel and adding new military buildings at the expense of the Venetian buildings, reconstruction and raising of the town's dwellings) and the reorganisation of the educational system (the new Ionian Academy was opened in 1824), contributing to the upsurge in intellectual interests sparked during the French occupation. At the same time, the British began demolishing the outer fortifications on the western edge of the town and planning residential areas outside the defensive walls.

In 1864 the island was attached to the Kingdom of the Hellenes. The fortresses were disarmed and several sections of the perimeter wall and the defences were gradually demolished. The island became a favoured holiday destination for the aristocracy of Europe. The Old Town was badly damaged by bombing in 1943. Added to the loss of life was the destruction of many houses and public buildings (the Ionian Parliament, the theatre, and the library), fourteen churches, and a number of buildings in the Old Citadel. In recent decades the gradual growth of the new town has accelerated with the expansion of tourism.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity

The Old Town of Corfu is a fortified Mediterranean harbour retaining traces of Venetian occupation, including the Old Citadel and the New Fort, but primarily of the British period.

The strict legal measures enacted after World War II, and the listing of the town for protection as a cultural monument in 1967 have provided the basis for the control of changes and the possibility to retain the integrity of the town. During the British period, three forts were preserved: the Old Fortress, the New Fortress and the small island of Vidos. The plan provided for the demolition of all the western forts. The British did demolish the south-west side in 1937 and fort of Sotiros in 1938 to give space for prisons. In the old and new fortresses, the British intervention related to internal restructuring and some new additions.

The overall form of the fortifications has been retained. Nevertheless, like most fortifications, Corfu has faced many severe military attacks, causing destruction, demolition and rebuilding. The interventions of the 19th century and the rebuilding after the World War II have in fact reduced the historic fabric of the property. Only a relatively small part of the structures actually dates from the Venetian period.

Authenticity

Corfu developed from a small Byzantine town along the lines of a western urban model, which can be seen on all cultural levels and displayed in the town's structure and form. The Old Town of Corfu today occupies the same area as the ancient town whose overall design it still reflects, with the two fortifications, the open space of the Spianada, the compact urban core with its different quarters and the streets. This urban fabric has been shaped by centuries of demolition and reconstruction dictated by military needs. In the 19th century the British were the first to begin dismantling the complex Venetian defence system, the scale of which is amply illustrated by the many maps still extant. The British example was followed by the Greek government after 1864.

About 70% of the pre-20th century buildings date from the British period. There were no large openings made in Corfu as was the case in many other fortifications. Some of the dwellings have undergone further modifications in the 20th century, such as the addition of an extra floor.

World War II bombing destroyed some houses and buildings in the Old Town, particularly in the western section, where whole blocks were destroyed. The buildings thus lost were in part replaced by new constructions in the 1960s and 1970s.

These interventions represent a particular juncture in history and express the aesthetic attitudes of their time,

clearly distinguished from previous buildings. The existence of rich records on the old form of the town has ensured full documentation in the case of interventions to existing buildings.

The fortifications of Corfu and the historic urban areas have been subject to various armed conflicts and consequent destruction. The present form of the ensemble results from the works in the 19th and 20th centuries, even though based on the overall design of previous phases, particularly in the Venetian period.

ICOMOS considers that the fortified ensemble of Corfu is authentic, despite the many structural alterations resulting from its major strategic importance as a military position. It has been actively involved in many conflicts which took place at the point of contact between the West and the Mediterranean East from the 15th to the 20th centuries. It has been rebuilt several times, and altered to allow for developments in weapons of attack and principles of defence, successively by the Venetians and by the British. The integrity of the fortified ensemble, in its current state of conservation, is satisfactory in terms of expressing its outstanding value.

ICOMOS considers that the urban site of Corfu is representative of an urban history which is closely associated with the structure of forts and ramparts. ICOMOS considers however that the authenticity and integrity of the urban fabric are primarily those of a neo-classical town.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the authenticity and integrity of the fortified ensemble of Corfu enable the expression of its outstanding value.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis in the 2006 nomination document refers to the following Mediterranean fortified cities: Rhodes, Valletta, Dubrovnik, Trogir, and Heraklion. In the supplementary information provided by the State Party, the comparison has been extended to several other port towns in Italy, the Near East and the Dalmatian coast. Corfu is distinguished partly due to archaeological evidence of history from the 8th century BC and from the Byzantine period.

It is argued by the State Party that Corfu is characterised due to its European influences and for its identity resulting from its role as a crossroads of civilisations. The fortifications of the Venetian period, designed by architects Sanmicheli, gave Corfu a major role as one of the strategic military bases of Venice at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. It is also one of the few areas that avoided Ottoman occupation keeping its western character.

There are a number of important fortifications in the eastern Mediterranean region. Of these, Valletta and Dubrovnik are certainly the most impressive. The maritime republic of Venice established its reign through a series of fortifications along the Dalmatian coast, and Corfu was one of these. The Ottoman Empire ruled in the inland of the Balkans and in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, including the old town of Rhodes and the town of Heraklion on the island of Crete. From the mid 14th

century Dubrovnik became an autonomous republic and a rival to Venice. Valletta instead was ruled by the Knights of Malta and remained the most important fortified port in this part of the Mediterranean until the 20th century.

ICOMOS considers that Corfu certainly had an important strategic position at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. For this reason it also had to face the many attacks by the Ottomans. Historically, the property has its origins in antiquity, but architecturally the fortification represents a typical Renaissance fort, which was rebuilt several times. The housing stock is in neo-classical style, but without special architectural features for which it could be distinguished.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative study that accompanies the new dossier is satisfactory, and that it enables a suitable assessment of the value of the property.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The State Party considers that Corfu has an Outstanding Universal Value for the following:

The Old Town of Corfu, internationally renowned, is a unique cultural entity of a high aesthetic value: the aesthetic value is recognised in the structure and form of the once-walled town, as well as in its arts, letters and social life. The Old Town developed diachronically, through the osmosis of features of the two worlds of the Mediterranean, the East and the West. It has been preserved, alive and substantially unaltered, until the present day.

The defence system and the urban fabric were designed and developed during the Venetian period, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, and then by the British Empire during the 19th century.

The importance of Corfu's fortifications for the history of defensive architecture is huge. From both the technical and aesthetic point of view they constitute one of the most glorious examples preserved, not only in Greece, but across the Eastern Mediterranean more widely. At various occasions, Corfu had to defend the Venetian maritime empire against the Ottoman army.

Neo-classical in its architecture, the old town bears witness to the duration of European architectural and cultural influence in the Balkans, which were mainly dominated by the Ottoman empire. Corfu is also important for studying the development of urban multi-storey buildings, since it is the first Greek city in which the idea of horizontal ownership appeared. The composite character of the town that resulted from its history and the ability to assimilate differences without conflict led to the development of a particular cosmopolitan atmosphere with intense European symbolism.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria i, ii and iv.

Criterion i : According to the State Party, the forts of Corfu are highly important in military architecture, from

15th to 19th centuries. Work of the leading architects and engineers, the fortifications required all the creative genius of those involved to be united in an organised effort in which science and art triumphed over nature.

ICOMOS considers that the fortifications of Corfu are an illustration of the military architecture of the late Renaissance period, in a remarkable geographical position. The defensive site has maintained its general structure over several successive sieges and reconstructions. It would however be going too far to say that criterion i is fully illustrated by the site.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion ii: According to the State Party, Corfu is unique in preserving traces since the 8th century of Corinthian, Macedonian, Roman, Byzantine, Angevin, Venetian, French, British and Greek influences. Corfu has never known racial, political or religious hatred.

ICOMOS considers that the main features of the property are its fortifications and the old town, which are the result of modern influences. The reference to the Venetian, British and Greek periods is common to most places in the Mediterranean. As such, there are not enough elements to support this criterion.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion iv: According to the State Party, the structure and form of Corfu has been preserved more or less unchanged keeping its late medieval and Renaissance features. The Corfu urban dwelling that took the form of a multi-storey building, as it came to be in the Venetian period and continued to develop during the 19th century, is a very interesting building type, unique in Greece for its early appearance and valuable for the study of the historical development of horizontal property ownership from its beginnings to the particular form it takes today.

The State Party refers to the neo-classical multi-storey building of the old town as being of interest in the Greek context. ICOMOS does not consider that this is sufficient to justify this criterion.

On the other hand, the comparative analysis set out in the nomination dossier of 2006 highlights the remarkable nature of Corfu's defence system, which is characteristic of fortifications of the Venetian period.

ICOMOS considers that Corfu does represent one of the significant fortifications in the eastern Mediterranean. Designed by the Venetians, it has demonstrated the quality of its design through the many attacks to which it has successfully resisted. Even though the property has been repaired and rebuilt after the various damages, it has still retained its overall form.

ICOMOS therefore considers that this criterion is applicable.

ICOMOS considers that the Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated and that the nominated property meets criterion iv.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

The nomination dossier includes an identification of the following factors.

Development pressures are seen particularly in the need by inhabitants to make alterations to existing buildings, such as building new upper floors. In the old town, part of the building stock has been taken over by poorer social strata with limited ability to afford expensive repairs. Some of the problems that have required special intervention relate to weak structural conditions. However, recent renovation works have already improved the situation.

Environmental problems relate to high humidity and dampness, and the risk of heavy rains, which can result in floods. Corfu is not located in serious earthquake hazard area. Fire is noted as a possible hazard but has been rare. Only 6% of the visitors to the island actually visit the old town area.

In addition to these factors, ICOMOS has concerns regarding the large size of the buffer zone. Particular attention is required to ensure that no tall buildings are built in the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat facing the site is the risk of uncontrolled private initiatives affecting housing stock inside the site and in the buffer zone. ICOMOS recommends great vigilance in this matter.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The site nominated consists of the two fortresses and the old town located in between them; it occupies a surface area of 70 hectares.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed site is appropriately defined.

The buffer zone in its new definition covers an urban area which is relatively large and homogeneous. It includes many elements of the neo-classical town, green zones and more recent urban extensions. It also includes ancient monuments, Byzantine monuments, many archaeological excavation areas, and museums. Forming a homogeneous whole, the buffer zone occupies a surface area of 162 hectares. The coastal strip, to the north of the buffer zone but not included in it, is public property under the supervision of the Ministry of Marine Commerce, and is managed by the Corfu port authority. It is therefore a closed space with the function of a port. Any intervention modifying the built structure must be submitted for approval to the local and ministerial authorities, including the Ministry of Culture.

ICOMOS considers that the buffer zone is appropriately defined, and that the regulatory arrangements for its management are also appropriate.

Protection

Legal Protection

The responsibility for protection is shared by several institutions and relevant decrees. These include the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (ministerial decision of 1980), the Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works (Presidential decree of 1980), and the Municipality of Corfu (Presidential decree of 1981).

Furthermore, the Greek law on the shoreline of towns and of islands in general applies to the whole length of the site and its buffer zone, for which the control distance is up to 500 m for any intervention which could modify the urban landscape, the natural landscape and the archaeological situation. The parties concerned by the application of these provisions are the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Architectural Committee of the Municipality of Corfu through the building permit scheme. Furthermore, any modification involving an action affecting the sea bed is subject to the approval of the Antiquities Department of the Ministry of Culture.

ICOMOS notes that there are two new provisions that affect Corfu. One is the law on the protection of antiquities and cultural heritage in general (n° 3028/2002), which is linked with town and country planning and will improve protection around listed monuments. The other is the establishment of a new independent Superintendence for Byzantine and post-Byzantine antiquities, in 2006.

Conservation

History of Conservation

The intervention of the Greek government concerning fortresses, to ensure their preservation and restoration in the interest of history and heritage, began in 1922.

As indicated earlier, the town suffered from bombing during World War II. The reconstruction of the old town was then managed by the Greek Ministry of Reconstruction, until 1967. Various decisions concerning the reallocation of premises and areas in the old citadel or urban palaces have been taken since then, concerning for example the Archives of Corfu, the Public Library, University of the Ionian islands and the Music Academy. From 1967 onwards, the town has been classified as a historic urban ensemble and the fortresses as historic monuments.

The setting up of a proactive policy of heritage conservation dates from the early 1990s, with programmes of actions based on historic studies respecting restoration standards in line with international criteria. Nineteen conservation and enhancement programmes have been drawn up since then for the citadel and the new fort. The programmes have been implemented or are in progress, under the supervision of the Fort Restoration and Conservation Office. The work carried out has primarily

concerned the fortification system and the restoration of buildings which are today used for public activities.

Present state of conservation

The proactive policies of restoration and enhancement of the fortifications and of the citadel, which have been under way for some fifteen years, have resulted in a generally acceptable state of conservation, enabling the expression of the outstanding value of this part of the property.

Notable results have been achieved in the rehabilitation to heritage standard of the most significant parts of the urban fabric. Many works however have still to be completed or started.

The current status of the maintenance of the buildings in the old town is as follows: 11% of buildings in excellent condition, 55% in good general condition, 31% in mediocre condition for which intervention will ultimately be required, and 3% in a situation requiring urgent intervention.

Active Conservation measures

At present, nine additional restoration programmes are being considered for the fortifications, of which seven are autonomous programmes of the Office, and two are cooperation projects.

The restoration of the urban fabric of the town is covered by eight restoration programmes, either completed or in progress, representing an amount of more than ten million euros. Four are being conducted by the municipality on its own, and four in cooperation, the two main ones being the restoration of the streets of the town (4.1m euros) and the rehabilitation of the Jewish quarter (1.8m euros).

Various funds have been allocated and programmes implemented over the last ten years of so, aimed at restoring the town's many public buildings and encouraging private owners to carry out heritage conservation actions, particularly on facades. Actions under the urban rehabilitation programme over this period have amounted to an average of 1 million euros per year, with 0.3 million euros a year for the fortresses, and 0.4 million euros a year for the archaeological programmes. The restorations and works on properties carried out by the University amount to 13m euros.

The application of new legal protection provisions (in particular, the law of 2002) have led to a consolidation of the funds committed to the restoration and maintenance of the old town and the fortresses.

ICOMOS considers that all the measures taken have contributed to the good state of conservation of the property, enabling it to express its outstanding value.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the protection of historic monuments and archaeological sites (law of 1967,

amended in 1980). This is reflected in provisions to prohibit the demolition of buildings under its protection, recommendations for restoration, particularly concerning facades, and conformity controls of actions by the municipal and regional authorities. It directly protects 35 historic monuments and 9 contemporary buildings (i.e. constructed since 1830) in the nominated site, and 21 historic monuments and a large number of contemporary buildings in the buffer zone.

The Ministry of the Environment controls all projects affecting the natural environment and landscape (Law of 1980). It controls the application of the building permit provisions by the municipalities (Decentralisation Law of 1981).

The Municipality of Corfu monitors building development and manages various town planning and property management plans in concertation with the ministerial departments. The plans include: the General Urban Planning Scheme (1987), the Town Plan (1958), Programme for Local Development (1998), and Action Plans for the Old Town, the Fortifications, and Tourism.

An urban action plan, which is in line with the management plan of the nominated site, has just been adopted (2005) for the period 2006-2012.

ICOMOS considers that the management system is satisfactory, in view of the concertation procedures linked to the management plan.

Management plans, including visitor management and presentation

In connection with the new nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status, a management plan has been drawn up by the various parties already mentioned (Ministries, Municipality), joined by the Region of the Ionian Islands and the Technical Chamber of Greece (TCG). Since then they have constituted an official Steering committee, endowed with planning powers and in charge of the general monitoring of the projects and programmes associated with the site. A coordinator is in charge of examining dossiers and financial monitoring; he is also in charge of making proposals to the Steering committee.

The coordinator also works in conjunction with the Committee of owners and users of the site, to determine future actions.

The main objectives of the 6-year plan are:

- The protection and conservation of the site, and in particular the monitoring and evaluation of the heritage and its condition; a programme of technical recommendations for building facades (architecture, materials, etc.) and of support for property owners; ensuring that the main balances are maintained so that balanced urban life can continue.
- To work on the various points of access to the town and urban traffic control (selective entrance authorisations, car parks for local inhabitants,

public transport); and on the establishment of protected pedestrian routes and cycle paths inside the old town.

- A programme of scientific documentation and pedagogical action for the public (signs, information at entrances, general documentation and heritage routes, etc.); the development of tourist facilities and targeted actions (themed routes, concerted projects with tour operators, etc.).
- A heritage tourism promotion action, as only 6% of tourists arriving on the island (1.1 million) currently visit the site of the old town and forts.

ICOMOS recognises the recent efforts made in the 6-year management plan, including a Steering committee and a Committee of users and owners, and the presence of the coordinator. ICOMOS considers that the management plan proposed is satisfactory, while recommending that attention should be paid to the technical competency and the quality of the executive team working with the coordinator, and its links with the municipal departments in charge of the old town.

Involvement of local communities

The Municipality of Corfu has always played a leading role in maintaining and enhancing its urban, military and archaeological heritage. The legal decentralisation provisions together with all the concerted actions proposed in the management plan strengthen this major role played by the Municipality. The Municipality intervenes through the Technical Department of the old town, and an Architecture Committee.

The prefecture of Corfu is also involved in the 2006-2012 plan.

The 6-year management plan takes into account users and owners, and professional actors in the field of tourism.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

The financial resources are provided by the Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works, the Archaeological Receipts Fund, Ministry of Culture, and Municipality of Corfu. We have seen that the various institutional partners have committed significant amounts of funding for recurrent actions or specific programmes over a period of several years. The management plan strengthens these efforts in terms of amounts of funding and concerted actions for the future.

The human resources centre on local companies which already have considerable experience of working with the municipality and the relevant ministries, while complying with heritage criteria. A substantial effort is also being made to have executives (historians, archaeologists and technicians) trained by the University of the Ionian Islands. Agreements have been signed in this regard with the School of Architecture and the Polytechnic School of Athens. The Technical Chamber of Greece is capable of playing a role of advice and scientific guidance.

Corfu has good contacts with various academic institutions. It also participates in a network of historic Mediterranean towns and organises regularly working meetings and scholarly conferences focused on issues that concern the built heritage of Corfu.

ICOMOS considers that the active mobilisation of the funds necessary for conservation, together with the available human resources and expertise, are satisfactory.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the measures taken for the protection and conservation of the site are appropriate, and that they will fully benefit, over the coming years, from the management plan drawn up for 2006-2007.

6. MONITORING

Sixteen monitoring indicators have been defined for the built structure and town planning of the old town, most of which apply for five years; the most important indicators are however revised every two years, and this applies in particular to works to be undertaken and costings. Six indicators concerning works on the forts have been defined.

Monitoring of heritage and its indicators are under the direct responsibility of the Municipal Department of the old town, and for archaeological matters the Ministerial Antiquities Department. These indicators are also examined by the Ministries of Culture and the Environment, which intervene through financing in particular.

The management plan strengthens the concertation of scheduling between the various bodies, and also between the various levels of technical expertise.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators and policy are favourable for the expression of the outstanding universal values of the site.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that the application of the continuous buffer zone, as proposed in the new dossier, constitutes an acceptable level of protection.

ICOMOS considers that the application of the management plan as defined in the final version of the nomination constitutes a good management tool in terms of expressing the outstanding universal value of the property.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that The Old Town of Corfu, Greece, be inscribed in the World Heritage List on the basis of ***criterion iv*** :

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

The ensemble of the fortifications and the Old Town of Corfu is located in a strategic location at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. Historically, its roots go back to the 8th century BC and to the Byzantine period. It has thus been

subject to various influences and a mix of different peoples. From the 15th century, Corfu was under Venetian rule for some four centuries, then passing to French, British and Greek governments. At various occasions, it had to defend the Venetian maritime empire against the Ottoman army. Corfu was a well thought of example of fortification engineering, designed by the architects Sanmicheli, and it proved its worth through practical warfare. Corfu has its specific identity, which is reflected in the design of its system of fortification and in its neo-classical building stock. As such, it can be placed alongside other major Mediterranean fortified port cities.

Criterion iv: The urban and port ensemble of Corfu, dominated by its fortresses of Venetian origin, constitutes an architectural example of outstanding universal value in both its authenticity and its integrity.



General view of the town



Old Fortress



Street of Corfu



Venetian dwellings