

BULGARIA

Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari

Brief description

Discovered in 1982 near the village of Sveshtari, this 3rd-century B.C. Thracian tomb reflects the fundamental structural principles of Thracian cult buildings. The tomb has a unique architectural decor, with polychrome half-human, half-plant caryatids and painted murals. The 10 female figures carved in high relief on the walls of the central chamber and the decoration of the lunette in its vault are the only examples of this type found so far in the Thracian lands. It is a remarkable reminder of the culture of the Getes, a Thracian people who were in contact with the Hellenistic and Hyperborean worlds, according to ancient geographers.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1985

Agency responsible for site management

- National Institute for Cultural Monuments
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (iii)

Justification provided by the State Party

The Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari is an extremely rare and very well preserved monument of the sepulchral architecture containing remarkable in quality and style sculpture and painting. The Tomb is also remarkable for the fact that it represents local art inspired by Hellenism, a rare case of an interrupted creative process, which possesses specific characteristics. The Tomb complies with Criteria I, III and IV.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS recommends that the Tomb of Sveshtari be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I and III.

Criterion I: The tomb itself is a unique artistic achievement with its half human, half vegetable caryatids enclosed in a chiton in the shape of an upside down palmette. The fact the original polychromy has been preserved with its ochre, brown, blue, red and lilac shades adds to the bewitching charm of an expressive composition where the anthropomorphic supports conjure up the image of a choir of mourners frozen in the abstract positions of a ritual dance.

Criterion III: The tomb is exceptional testimony to the culture of the Getes, Thracian populations living in the north of Hemus (at present Stara Planina) and in contact with the Greek and Hyperborean worlds, according to ancient geography.

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement

- No Statement of Significance has been required for adoption by the World Heritage Centre at the time of inscription
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party
- Additional change proposed by State Party: would like to add Justification for Inscription to the web description

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums (1969)
- The Instructions of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Construction, Architecture, and Public Works on preservation of culture monuments and territory usage of the Historical-Archeological Reserve "Sboryanovo" and its protection area (1990)
- The Spatial Planning Act and by-law regulations
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, national park, archaeological reserve

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group formally constituted
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan, however there is support from zoning regulations and conservation planning
- Implementation of related regulations commenced: October 2000
- Title: Special Directions of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works on preservation of culture monuments and territory usage of the Historical-Archaeological Reserve "Sboryanovo" and its protection area
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: National Institute for Cultural Monuments

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Budget sources: Ministry of Culture, Municipality of Ispirih through History Museum of Ispirih, World Monuments Fund
- Bi-lateral: 'Beautiful Bulgaria' programme 2004 (EU and UNDP)
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- number of staff: 11

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education
- Good: visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Museum conservation facilities: The National Institute for Monuments of Culture (NICM); architects, restorers, conservation staff etc.; The Archaeological Institut with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (AIM-BAS); The National Academy of Fine Arts – restoration expertise; The History Museum – Town of Ispirih
- Training on site management: training is needed for the staff involved with the operating of the Tomb as a tourist site - in terms of visitor's management, promotion etc.

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 10,933 counted by ticket sales (2004)
- Trend: growth of 8-9%
- Visitor facilities: visitor centre, exhibition space, café, parking, WC, disposable shoes, guided lecture

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; monitoring exercises; visitor Management
- Studies used for: the results from the studies and the monitoring form the visitors' regime to the Tomb and served as a basis for construction of the air-conditioning system

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Many signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Events: permanent exhibition
- Web site available: www.museumispirih.org

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Conservation: at the time of inscription, the tomb was already protected by a permanent protective building. The tomb's structure was consolidated, the access of external persons was prohibited, and the conservation and exposure project was underway. During conservation, for the sake of the monument's uniqueness and integrity, the frescoes were only cleaned and consolidated, and no retouch or supplementing was done. The plastic stone decoration was consolidated with no additional intervening or supplementing. The cracked frames and lintels above the entrances were glued without anchoring. To increase reliability, a duplicate air-conditioning system was supplied. In 2000, the air-conditioning system was updated and all worn equipment was replaced
- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- No information given

13. Monitoring

- A formal monitoring programme exists
- Measures taken: microclimatic control, air-conditioning systems used
- Key indicators: humidity and temperature

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management
- Strengths of management: an archaeological reserve has been designated; the tomb has been protected by an under-mound cover; it is opened for visitors and a reception tourist centre has been erected in its vicinity
- Conservation and protection benefits: after the Tomb's opening, active research activity and archaeological investigations were carried out in the region. As a result, the territory with great concentration of archaeological monuments was outlined and the Archaeological Reserve "Sboryanovo" was designated

Social advantages:

Enhanced interest and a pride for the local population

Economic advantages:

Development of cultural tourism, hotel-keeping and service as a result of the designation of the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari as a UNESCO-supervised monument and the reserve "Sboryanovo" with the newly discovered sites

Management:

A dedicated management plan for the reserve's territory and the tomb will be prepared