

# GREECE

## Paleochristian and Byzantine Monuments of Thessalonika

### Brief description

Founded in 315 B.C., the provincial capital and sea port of Thessalonika was one of the first bases for the spread of Christianity. Among its Christian monuments are fine churches, some built on the Greek cross plan and others on the three-nave basilica plan. Constructed over a long period, from the 4th to the 15th century, they constitute a diachronic typological series, which had considerable influence in the Byzantine world. The mosaics of the Rotunda, St Demetrius and St David are among the great masterpieces of early Christian art.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** 1988

#### Agency responsible for site management

- Hellenic Ministry of Culture - 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Eptapyrgio, 55401 Ag. Pavlos, P.O.Box 35, Thessaloniki  
e-mail: [eptapyrg@otenet.gr](mailto:eptapyrg@otenet.gr)  
Website: [www.culture.gr](http://www.culture.gr)

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** C (i), (ii), (iv)

#### Justification provided by the State Party

No single statement submitted.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

The revised nomination presented by the Greek government covers a series of Early Christian, Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments. This diachronic ensemble illustrates the eminent role played by Thessalonika in the Christian world over more than a millenium. Its inclusion is justified on the basis of criteria I, II and IV.

- Criterion I. The mosaics of the Rotunda, St. Demetrius and St. David's are among the great masterpieces of Early Christian art.

- Criterion II. The influence of the Thessalonian churches on the development of the monumental arts was considerable first in the Byzantine and

later the Serbian world, whether in the Early Christian period of the High Middle Ages or the Palaeologan Renaissance.

- Criterion IV. The Christian monuments of Thessalonika are outstanding examples of churches built according to central, basilical and intermediary plans over a period going from the 4th to the 15th century. For this reason they constitute a series which is a typological point of reference.

#### Committee Decision

Bureau (1988): The Bureau recommended inscription of this property, on condition that a new nomination focussing specifically on early Christian and Byzantine monuments be presented to the Committee's December session. The list of monuments proposed for inscription should be drawn up by the Greek authorities in consultation with ICOMOS.

- Statement of significance does not adequately define the outstanding universal value of the site. At the time of initial inscription the WH Committee did not approve a Statement of Significance for the site, which defined the outstanding universal value.
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party

#### Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate; the monuments are situated within the urban tissue of Thessalonika, in an area frequented on a daily basis. In a few distances, such as in Heptapyrgio and SS. Apostles, there is a re-designation and revision of the boundaries of the surrounding area of these monuments
- Buffer zones: partially adequate. Whenever a buffer zone has been delimited, it mainly concerns the enclosure of monuments and is defined on the basis of the existing enclosure of each monument; in some cases this zone extends to the archaeological site surrounding the monument. Further designations and extensions of existing designations, as well as landscaping of the area surrounding the monuments. The corresponding Ministerial decisions are the following: Rotunda: Ministerial Decision 15813/19-12-1961 (Government Gazette 36/B/3-2-1962). Latomou Monastery: P.Decree 25-5-1926 (Government Gazette 191/A/11-6-1926) Church of St. Demetrius: Ministerial Decision 15813/19-12-1961 (Government Gazette 36/B/3-2-1962). Church of Acheiropoietos: Ministerial Decision 15813/19-12-1961 (Government Gazette

36/B/3-2-1962). Church of Aghia Sophia: Ministerial Decision 15813/19-12-1961 (Government Gazette 36/B/3-2-1962). Walls: Ministerial Decision 15813/19-12-1961 (Government Gazette 36/B/3-2-1962). Heptapyrgio: Ministry of Culture Decision 54867/1777/17-10-2001 (Government Gazette 1468/B/26-10-2001)

### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained. There have been changes with a positive impact on the monuments. These changes have contributed to the enhancement of the integrity and authenticity of the monuments.
- Changes in the street layout of Thessalonika or even the execution of major works (for instance the Thessalonika Metro) may expose some of the listed monuments to harmful conditions

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Archaeological legislation, individual designations, exercising of town planning control in areas directly neighbouring the listed monuments. This is of particular importance for Heptapyrgio and the City Walls that are surrounded by a buffer zone of 10-20 meters. Furthermore, in some parts around Heptapyrgio, there are areas that have not been built and where building is either restricted or expropriations take place in consultation with the Municipal Authorities
- Significant changes: the new archaeological law 3028/2002 «On the protection of the Antiquities and cultural heritage in general» was voted and implemented, replacing the previous law 5351/32 «On Antiquities». Delimitation of the buffer zone for Heptapyrgio: Ministry of Culture Decision 54867/1777/17-10-2001 (Government Gazette 1468/B/26-10-2001)
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective
- Actions proposed: there is the intention to extend the buffer zones of the monuments, for a better control of building activities in the area and in correlation with an improved presentation of the monument

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- Religious use
- No paid visitor attractions

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- Steering group: there is no such planning for the time
- Management by the State Party, under protective legislation
- Site manager who's responsibilities have been added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; the Ecclesiastic Authorities
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

#### **Actions which are being taken:**

- Inclusion of the monuments in support work, conservation and enhancement programmes, for the monuments as well as their surrounding environment; also, steps have been taken to increase the number of visitors

### **5. Management Plan**

- No management plan
- The management and protection of monuments and archaeological sites in Greece is not based on a concrete management plan. Greece has a system of protection, which is administered centrally by the Ministry of Culture through its regional services, i.e. the Ephorates of Prehistoric & Classical and Byzantine Antiquities. The Ministry of Culture is the competent body supervising the sites and overseeing all works carried out. As far as the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage is concerned, there are cases where other competent bodies besides the Ministry of Culture are involved. The Ministry of Culture sets out the guidelines and the general policy for the management of the monuments and sites which is then implemented by the competent Ephorates. In the case of the Early Christian and Byzantine Monuments of Thessalonika the 9th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities is responsible for the management and protection of the monuments

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- State budget; EU resources – Regional Operational Programmes (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> CSF)
- Sufficient

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 17

- The 9<sup>th</sup> Ephorate has access to external collaborators involved in special publications, support and organisation of congresses and other cultural – scientific events

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

- Very good: management
- Good: interpretation, education
- Average: conservation, promotion, visitor management
- The existing human resources are not adequate because they do not cover all the required specialities, and they are not exclusively involved in the management of the specific group of monuments

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

- Training and expertise are not provided on a regular basis; several categories of staff are not acquainted with the listed monuments specifically and their significance

### 9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 234.601 (ticket counting), 2004
- Visitor facilities: in some of the monuments there is a guard house where information is provided and electronic or printed material is distributed or sold
- Visitor needs: electronic information is required, detailed explanatory signs, and implementation of educational programmes per monument
- Visitor management plan: there is such a plan for one of the monuments, the Cathedral of St Demetrius; within the framework of this programme, the visitors area (shop, information centre, service area) is undergoing landscaping. The Archaeological Receipts Fund covers the relevant expenses

### 10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, archaeological surveys, Studies have been elaborated and implemented regarding the conservation, enhancement and protection of the Monuments. These studies have been and continue to be implemented in order to deal with problems related to the management of the monuments
- All studies make special reference to the inscription of the specific monuments on the

World Heritage List, which enhances their importance and gives priority to meeting the requirements related to their safeguarding

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities
- Need for awareness raising through educational programmes, information addressed to the public, special guided tours
- Web site available
- Local participation: such steps have not been taken, given that apart from the churches that are the property of the Metropolis of Thessalonika, the Monuments are state owned and therefore it is not possible to involve the local people in their management

### 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

#### Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

#### Conservation interventions

- Conservation; restoration works in Heptapyrgio: support-work-restoration of the Fortress, improvement and renovation of buildings that were used as penitentiary institutions, organizing the venue of visitors and landscaping the surrounding area. Organization of 2 permanent exhibitions. Church of Acheiropoietos: water tightness work and sprucing up of the Cathedral. Rotunda: aesthetic rehabilitation of the mosaics. Support work, restoration of the minaret's balcony and top part. Landscaping of the surrounding area. Walls: Conservation- restoration of the northern section of the walls. SS Apostles: conservation of the mosaics. St. David: landscaping of the archaeological site, restoration of the roof. Prophet Elijah: landscaping of the archaeological site
- Present state of conservation: good

#### Threats and Risks to site

- Natural disasters
- Specific issues: the monuments are located within the urban tissue of Thessalonika, which is continuously changing

- Emergency measures taken: occasionally, minor or major problems are dealt with, according to the needs of each monument

### **13. Monitoring**

- No formal monitoring programme: monitoring regards the state of conservation of the monuments, the necessity to execute works in them, and the protection of the monuments and their surrounding environment. There are no quantitative indicators

### **14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation and social
- Weaknesses of management: there is a need to deal with the various requirements of Monuments in a comprehensive and definitive way. Also, there is a need to raise public awareness

#### **Future actions:**

- Continuous monitoring of the monuments and their requirements, in order to prevent eventual threats