

GREECE

Mystras

Brief description

Mystras, the 'wonder of the Morea', was built as an amphitheatre around the fortress erected in 1249 by the prince of Achaia, William of Villehardouin. Reconquered by the Byzantines, then occupied by the Turks and the Venetians, the city was abandoned in 1832, leaving only the breathtaking medieval ruins, standing in a beautiful landscape.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1989

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (ii), (iii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

Mystras fut une ville qui est née et a fleuri dans un Empire en agonie. A la finesse et la qualité de l'art de Mystras, se reflètent influence de l'art constantinopolitain et les liens politiques et intellectuels établis avec la capitale de l'Empire. Sa prospérité est due à des conditions historiques favorisant la création de « cours » mi-indépendantes qui se sont vite évoluées en centres culturels et administratifs fleurissants.

A Mystras on rencontre un art nouveau, original, tel que seul dans un grand centre artistique pouvait se développer :

- à l'architecture ecclésiastique la caractéristique principale reste la combinaison idéale des éléments traditionnels et des nouvelles tendances dérivant de Constantinople avec l'esprit inventif du créateur local.
- à la peinture sont représentés toutes les nouvelles formes de la « Renaissance » des Paléologues dont l'élément principal est le retour aux types antiquisants.

- quant à l'architecture civile, on y rencontre 4 types de maisons originales : Le « A » est simple à 2 étages sans tour ; le « B » est muni d'un large balcon (le « heliakos ») ; les types « C » et « D » sont de riches maisons seigneuriales munies de tours de protection. Nous citons : le « petit palais », la maison de Franghopoulos et celle de Laskaris. Plusieurs éléments des maisons de Mystras ont été conservés jusqu'à présent à l'architecture populaire grecque !

La décoration sculpturale des monuments de Mystra est conservée partiellement mais elle reste représentative de l'ecclésiastisme byzantin des XIIIe, XIVe et XVe s.

La ville de Mystra nous légua non seulement un ensemble architectural et pictural original, conservé jusqu'à nos jours mais aussi une production littéraire très importante. Un grand nombre de gens cultivés ont vécu et enseigné dans la ville. Nous citons entre autres Nicephoros Moschopoulos, métropolite de Crète et président de Lacédémonie qui construisit la cathédrale, Pachomios, fondateur du monastère de Vroutochion, Manuel Tzykandilis, écrivain et peintre, J.Doktianos, Vissarion. La « personnalité » intellectuelle la plus brillante fut sans aucun doute le philosophe néoplatonicien Plethon (ou Ghemistos) qui est arrivé à Mystra vers 1400 et créa là une Ecole.

Mystra constitue actuellement l'ensemble le plus représentatif en Grèce d'une ville médiévale. L'originalité et la pureté de ses formes artistiques, le souvenir de son rayonnement d'autrefois et le fait de sa merveilleuse conservation font de Mystras un ensemble monumental qui mérite d'être placé entre les premiers à la liste du patrimoine mondial.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

RECOMMENDATION: That inclusion of the proposed cultural property be deferred until specific information is provided on boundaries, measures to protect the surrounding landscape and, especially, on the conservation policy for the ruins of Mystras. [...]

ICOMOS can only express a favorable opinion in principle to the inclusion of Mystras on the World Heritage List. There is no lack of criteria justifying nomination of this medieval city whose complex history is so clearly inscribed in the series of fortifications, castles and palaces, churches and convents, houses streets, and public squares. However, given the states of the nomination file, the recommendation of ICOMOS is that inclusion be deferred until detailed information is provided on

protection of the environment and on the restoration policy.

Reconsideration on insistence of Bureau and Secretariat:

The Bureau of ICOMOS met on 8 November 1989 and, in accordance with the request of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee and the wishes expressed by the Secretariat in its letter dated 16 October, examined the documents relative to the site of Mystras forwarded on 28 June, 29 June and 3 October 1989 by the Permanent Delegate of Greece at UNESCO. [...]

The Bureau of ICOMOS therefore unanimously concluded that the inclusion of Mystras on the World Heritage List could not be recommended in view of the project approved by the Central Archaeological Council at its meeting on 4 April 1989. (November 15, 1989)

Committee Decision

Bureau (1989): The Bureau recommended that the examination of this nomination be deferred until the necessary information on the conservation policy applied to the ruins of Mystras and, in particular, on the restoration projects of the Byzantine Palace, is received. In the event this information is received by the fall, ICOMOS was requested to review it and present its findings for consideration by the Bureau in December. The Bureau could then formulate a recommendation to the Committee.

Session (1989): Aware of the incontestable outstanding universal value of Mystras, and taking into account the strong assurance received from the Greek authorities that they will not take any action which might compromise the integrity and authenticity of the site, the Committee decided to inscribe Mystras on the World Heritage List.

- 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
- Additional change proposed by State Party
 - A) UNESCO's official description
 - B) Change the name of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

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

- The proposal of 5th Ephorate on the delimitation of a zone where building construction is prohibited (zone A) and of a zone having specific building and land use restrictions (zone B) will be evaluated by the Central Archaeological Council. The Archaeological Site includes the medieval residential complex of Mystras and the historically and archaeologically documented surrounding landscape, including a large number of monuments and traditional settlements. The boundaries of the Archaeological Site of Mystras were set by a designation act. All archaeological finds, rescued and yielded during excavations, and all previous legal arrangements for the protection of the site have been taken into account for the delimitation of the boundaries of the site

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- There are no major changes foreseen, which may have a negative impact on the authenticity or the integrity of the Archaeological Site of Mystras

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The Archaeological Site of Mystras, as all movable and immovable monuments, archaeological sites and the cultural heritage of Greece in general, from ancient to contemporary ones, are protected by the Law 3028/2002 «On the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general». Furthermore, the 5th Ephorate has proceeded with the designation and delimitation of the boundaries of the Archaeological Site of Mystras (Ministry of Culture Decision 24700/744/9.5.2001) in order to achieve a more effective protection of the site
- The designated Archaeological Site has been extended (Ministry of Culture Decision 24700/744/9.5.2001 Government Gazette 626/τ. Β'/25.5.2001). The Archaeological Site includes the medieval residential complex of Mystras and the historically and archaeologically documented surrounding landscape, including an important number of monuments and traditional settlements
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- The 5th Ephorate has submitted a proposal to the Central Archaeological Council, for the delimitation of a zone where building construction is prohibited (zone A) and of a zone having specific building and land use restrictions (zone B)

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction; religious use; inside the castle-city of Mystras, there is the Monastery of Our Lady Pantanassa, which is an active convent

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group: the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras was set up in September 1984 and has been operational ever since. It comes under the Credit Management Fund for the Execution of Archaeological Projects. The Committee has hired specialized staff, with the objective to have funds drawn in for the site; the funds, under the management of the Committee, will be allocated to the execution of works in the site of Mystras. The Committee has the jurisdiction to carry out restoration works in the monuments of Mystras, and to enhance the Archaeological Site
- Site manager whose responsibilities have been added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. 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 Mystras the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities is responsible for the management and protection of the monuments

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State budget (Ministry of Culture)
- European Union: 2nd and 3rd Community Support Framework
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 50
- Need for an increase in the number of the guarding staff because the property occupies a large land area and includes numerous monuments; hiring of conservators of works of art, who will be exclusively working in the monuments of Mystras; hiring of archaeologists, museum experts, and architects for the specific site

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

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

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

- Two laboratories for the conservation of works of art are located in the property, for portable icons, wall paintings, marble and stone members, ceramics, objects made of paper, metal, glass etc. Occasionally, workshops and one-day seminars for the information and training of the staff. The scientific staff has the possibility to attend congresses and workshops in Greece or abroad, in order to be informed and keep up with research developments and the latest studies relevant to their expertise
- Training seminars and information workshops organised at regular intervals would provide great assistance to the Ephorate
- Training available for stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 165.900 (ticket counting), 2003 (2003, NOT 2004)
- Visitor facilities: museum where the finds discovered at the Archaeological Site are on display. Two ticket offices, which also operate as points of sale. Drinking water facilities. Explanatory signs. WC
- Visitor needs: one point of sale with independent opening hours from the ticket offices. Two lavatory facilities

10. Scientific Studies

- Archaeological surveys; studies on the architecture, the paintings and the sculptures decorating the monuments of the Archaeological Site of Mystras
- Research excavations in the site, studies on monuments, research works pertaining to the architecture of the monuments, the street plan of the area, etc.
- These studies contributed to: the execution of restoration works in monuments of the site; the redisplay of the exhibition of the museum; the mounting of exhibitions; the marking/signposting of the site with explanatory signs

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem is not used on publications
- Need for awareness raising: through an information campaign communicated to the public on a local but also on an international level. Organisation of events promoting the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List in local and national level
- Are held Information-educational events, musical and theatrical performances, exhibitions and educational programmes. All events stress the particular nature of the monument, as it derives from its inscription on the World Heritage List
- Two educational programmes are running at the Archaeological Site of Mystras; the programme "Exploring Mystras" and the programme "Mystras at the time of the Palaeologoi"
- Web site available (web page at the Ministry of Culture's official website)

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Conservation work on the wall paintings decorating the churches of Mystras; restoration works at the Palaces, the Laskaris Residence and the Palataki; conservation and water-tight work in monuments of the site; Building construction control within the delimited boundaries
- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Development; natural disaster(s); visitor/tourism pressure; agricultural/forestry regimes
- Specific issues: problems arise concerning the state of conservation of the paintings in particular, due to the weather conditions. Inhabitants of the area exercise pressure for an increased agricultural and mainly residential exploitation. Pressure for further tourist exploitation in the wider area, via the establishment of hotels and other facilities for tourists
- Emergency measures taken: proposal for the delimitation of a zone where building construction is prohibited and of a zone having specific building and land use restrictions

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures planned: adoption of a systematic programme for the monitoring of the state of the Archaeological Site of Mystras in the immediate future

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; management
- With the extension of the boundaries of the Archaeological Site, there was achieved a more effective protection of the castle-city of Mystras, including its surrounding natural environment and the monuments in it. Restoration work is in progress. Adequate facilities were built for the visitors; through the numerous events held, the site enjoys a more integrated promotion communicated to the broader public

- Strength/Weaknesses of management: for an optimal preservation and management the following are required: ensure adequate human resources; develop the existing facilities; carry out conservation works on the entirety of the paintings and sculptures decorating the monuments; enhance the awareness of the public in issues related to protection, presentation and preservation and on the particular significance of the site as World Heritage

Future actions:

- Hiring of seasonal staff of various specialties. Development of new facilities in order to better serve the visitors. Organization of cultural events and exhibitions. Enhancement of the educational actions