

ICOMOS

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CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/1542/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 21 December 2018

H. E. Mr Muhammad Abdul Ghaffar
Permanent Delegation of Bahrain to UNESCO
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World Heritage List 2019

Dilmun Burial Mounds (Bahrain) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2019. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to "Dilmun Burial Mounds" was carried out by Robert Carter (United Kingdom) in September 2018. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

At the end of November 2018, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2019. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2019.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Monday 26 November 2018 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the discussions at the ICOMOS Panel meeting. Following the completion of their deliberations, the ICOMOS Panel has identified areas where it considers further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Selection of component sites

The nominated serial property represents a unique sepulchral testimony to the Early Dilmun culture. The ICOMOS Panel discussed how this testimony is currently reflected by the proposed selection of component sites. It is said that around 14,000 – 14,500 burial mounds remain. It appears that the nominated burials include almost all that survive from a much larger number that was prone to great transformations in the 1980's.

The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased if the State Party could provide further explanation on whether what has survived is the fruit of a choice at the time when these clusters of tombs were protected or not, and how these clusters relate to the scope and disposition of what once existed in order to have an understanding of

the methodology which has been used for the selection of the component sites of the current serial nomination.

In addition, the ICOMOS Panel has noted that two other sites are included on the State Party's Tentative List, namely Barbar Temple and Saar Heritage Park. Could the State Party provide clarification on the reasons why they are not included within the current serial nomination?

Justification for inscription

The ICOMOS Panel notes that a very significant amount of information on the Royal Mounds has been published by Laursen¹ in 2017, since the submission of the Nomination dossier and which could enhance the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. The ICOMOS Panel would recommend that this new information be added to the proposed statement of Outstanding Universal Value. In particular the ICOMOS Panel would suggest that the State Party consider the following points:

- How the identification of named kings at A'ali, apparently of Amorite descent, and their specific tombs, and the likely burial rites that accompanied their interment, and relationship with other royal practices in the Ancient Near East, enhances the proposed statement of Outstanding Universal Value outlined under criterion (iii)?
- How the Royal Mound architecture and its development (e.g. from dromos to shaft entrance, and the appearance of the so-called "Palatial Style"), has an impact on the proposed statement of Outstanding Universal Value outlined under criteria (iii) and (iv)?

In addition, the ICOMOS Panel considers that incorporating the Early Type Mounds would be important to support the justification of criterion (iii) for the nominated property to be "a testimony to the Early Dilmun civilization". The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased if the State Party could consider making this adjustment and re-wording to the proposed statement of Outstanding Universal Value. Noting that examples of the Early Type Mounds exist in the nominated property within its current boundaries in Hamad 2 Mound Field (Karzakkan) and that most excavated mounds in this field are of the Early Type Mounds.

Protection

The ICOMOS Panel discussed the condition of some component sites. In particular, the Royal Mound of A'ali, as it is exceedingly entangled in the urban fabric. The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased if further clarification could be provided on how the State Party will address this challenge. How it plans to better protect these tomb? And could the State Party further explain how the local communities will be involved in the protection of these components?

Conservation

The ICOMOS Panel recognizes the great efforts by Dilmun Burial Mounds Unit for the conservation and management of the nominated property, and would like to ask how the documentation of the mounds is created, managed and updated. Also, the ICOMOS Panel would like to know how is the documentation of the previous archaeological excavations and interventions managed and integrated into the documentation system of the property, given that they were undertaken by different archaeological missions.

The ICOMOS Panel would be interested in knowing whether the State Party has developed knowledge and experience in relation to what is the best conservation strategy – for the different types of burial mounds? Is it their reburial (cover in sand), their consolidation?

The ICOMOS Panel would also be interested if further information on how conservation measures are prioritized and implemented for such a big number of mounds, particularly the excavated and opened ones.

¹ ref: Steffen Terp Laursen , with contributions by Gianni Marchesi, Jesper Olsen & Thomas Van de Velde. *The Royal Mounds of A'ali in Bahrain: the emergence of kingship in Early Dilmun*. 2017. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press; 978-87-93423-19-0

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre with the above information **by 28 February 2019 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities - Sector for Culture and National Heritage
 Dilmun Burial Mounds Site Administration Unit
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre