
Arslantepe Mound (Turkey) No 1622

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Arslantepe Mound

Location

Eastern Anatolia
Province of Malatya
Turkey

Brief description

Arslantepe Mound is an archaeological tell located in the Malatya plain, twelve kilometres south-west of the Euphrates River. The archaeological evidence of the site testifies to its occupation from at least the 6th millennium BCE up until the late Roman period. The earliest layers of the Early Uruk period are characterized by adobe houses dating to the first half of the 4th millennium BCE. The most prominent and flourishing period of the site was in the Late Chalcolithic period, during which the so-called palace complex was constructed. Considerable evidence also testifies to the Early Bronze Age period, most prominently identified by the Royal Tomb complex. The archaeological stratigraphy then extends to the Paleo-Assyrian and Hittite periods, including Neo-Hittite levels.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

15 April 2014

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 23 to 27 September 2019.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 3 October 2019 requesting further information about the archaeological stratigraphy of the site, the State Party's present and future plans for archaeological excavation, their relation to

conservation activities, and any potential development pressures in the nominated property's setting.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 20 December 2019 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel. Further information was requested in the Interim Report, including: the comparative analysis; the property's future excavation strategy; future planned conservation measures, including risk preparedness and disaster management provisions; boundaries; local management arrangements; and development plans for future visitor infrastructure.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 4 November 2019 and 24 February 2020, and has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2020

2 Description of the property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The Arslantepe Mound is a 30m high archaeological tell, located in the fertile Malatya plain, 5 kilometres north of Malatya city centre and 12 kilometres south-west of the right bank of the Euphrates River. The mound has been the subject of several excavation campaigns since the early 1960s, which brought to light a multi-layered sequence of levels ranging from the end of the 5th millennium BCE (referred to as Period VIII) to the latest Neo-Hittite phase (referred to as Periods II-III). In line with the historical layers exposed at the site, the description and history will follow the arrangement of these stratigraphic levels below in chronological order.

Period VIII, Late Chalcolithic 1-2, 4300–3900 BCE

This period is documented by three superimposed building levels of domestic structures, which included equipment attesting to the preparation of food, such as numerous ovens and pottery findings. The pottery is of local origin with connections to South-Eastern Turkey west of the Euphrates and hence considered part of a wider post-Ubaid ceramic context which links various areas of Upper Mesopotamia in the initial phase of the Late Chalcolithic.

Period VII, Late Chalcolithic 3-4, 3800–3400 BCE

The earlier construction phase of this period presents comparatively monumental buildings with traces of wall paintings and white plastered adobe columns lining the walls, considered to be residential buildings for the elites. On the other hand, this level is also characterized

by simpler adobe houses of rather small dimensions having one to three rooms, in one case with a geometric painting on the wall composed of alternating black and white triangles. Excavations have revealed two large and monumental ceremonial buildings from the latest phase of this period (Late Chalcolithic 4, 3600-3400 BCE), which were very likely two temples. In these two temples, referred to as Temples C and D, a group of several hundred seal impressions on clay has been found, together with hundreds of pottery bowls, probably used to distribute food to people.

Period VIA, Late Chalcolithic 5, 3400–3100 BCE

Temples C and D were likely abandoned in this subsequent period, during which the religious aspects, though still present, seem to have lost their central importance, whereas public performances have begun to take place in a large courtyard, where people gathered in front of a large secular building. The largest structure identified in the excavation of this Late Chalcolithic period is the so-called “public palace”, an extremely enlarged elite residence and governance complex associated with rulership and extending over more than 3500 square metres. Wall paintings were not only for decoration but fulfilled a significant function in the palace and included figurative motifs and actual scenes painted on the doors and along the main corridor, transmitting ideological and meaningful messages to everyone entering the palace. During recent excavations a possible throne platform has been discovered which is said to illustrate evidence at Arslantepe pointing to the public accessibility of this palatial system. There are indications that the complex also attests to the centralization of economic processes and the operation of an early state system from here. The palace was destroyed by fire around 3100 BCE, which put an end to the political system related to it.

All structures belonging to this period were built on terraces along the slope, their different height levels determining the siting of buildings depending on their different functions and symbolic contexts. The buildings are set on stone foundations and constructed of thick adobe walls with wood and clay roofs. Significant archaeological findings were excavated from this period, such as pottery vessels and a group of arsenical copper weapons including nine swords, some decorated with silver inlay, and twelve spearheads.

VIB1, Early Bronze Age IA (3100-3000 BCE)

Starting with the destruction of the so-called palace, this was a period of transition and change. Scattered wooden structures consisting of huts and fences for animals were built on the palace ruins by pastoralists. A large new adobe building of a different construction technique was built on top of the earlier destroyed structures. The period is also characterized by a distinct type of pottery which was hand-made from red-black material. The most significant find of this period is the so-called Royal Tomb, a funerary cist on the edge of the tell full of funerary gifts including metal items, weapons, tools and jewellery in copper, silver and gold.

Periods between 2950 BCE and 712 BCE

In Period VIB2 (3000–2800 BCE) the site experienced a revival of the wheel-made light-coloured pottery of the Uruk style. During Periods VIC and VID (2750–2000 BCE), the settlement was organised differently, suggesting that a new population built a new settlement on the older ruins. This is referred to as the ‘second urbanization’ phase. It remains legible through the remains of an imposing town wall and semi-circular tower. Also starting with Period VID, corresponding to Early Bronze III, a new process of gradual expansion of the settlement began.

This new organisation and the site’s relationship with its environment remained largely unchanged until the Middle Bronze Age (Period VA, 2000–1750 BCE). Another prominent feature of later periods is the imposing town walls still preserved to a height of 3-4 metres, of the Period II-III (Iron Age, 1100-712 BCE). The neo-Hittite town was destroyed by Sargon II of Assyria in 712 BCE. Even though minor remains of occupation from the late Roman period and a Byzantine-era cemetery have been uncovered, it was this destruction which put an end to Arslantepe’s prosperity and centrality.

Excavations started in the 1930s with a French team and have been continued in cooperation with Italian teams from La Sapienza University since the 1960s. La Sapienza University’s excavations continue in ongoing seasonal campaigns to this day. In the past 45 years the archaeological excavations and researches have focused on the prehistoric and proto-historic levels of Arslantepe, mainly in the western and south-western zones of the mound, where the earliest settlements made up the original nucleus of the tell. In 2008, excavations in the north-eastern section of the mound were conducted to investigate the Hittite “expansion” and the transitional periods of the neo-Hittite kingdom of Malatya.

In its first request for additional information, ICOMOS requested clarification as regards the different stratigraphic levels for a better understanding of the different occupation phases. The State Party provided an illustration of stratigraphic levels as well as a map referring to different excavation levels in different areas of the mound. In addition, further information was given on the key features and identified attributes of the levels considered most significant for the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Boundaries

The nominated property has an area of 4.85 ha. The property boundaries are indicated as drawn around the outermost extension of the archaeological tell and known archaeological evidence. In ICOMOS’ view the boundaries of the property are well defined except in the northern, north-western and western directions, where surface surveys suggest archaeological evidence outside the presently-drawn boundaries. ICOMOS therefore recommends undertaking further surveys to determine the exact extent of archaeological evidence and, on that basis, extend in the future the property

boundaries in line with the indications of archaeological ground surveys in these directions.

The buffer zone, of 66.46 ha as indicated in the nomination dossier, has been defined on the basis of the boundaries of the 3rd Degree Archaeological Conservation Site, established in 2018. The reference for this boundary line was basically the result of an archaeological survey project conducted by the *Missione Archeologica Italiana in Anatolia Orientale* (MAIAO) in 2005 in an area of approximately 500 m. radius around the mound. During the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, it was noticed that several roads indicated on the maps provided had not actually been constructed yet which appeared to provide an opportunity for an extended landscape protection in these areas. In response to these discussions on site, the State Party submitted with the additional information supplied at the request of ICOMOS on 4 November 2019, a modified map indicating a proposed extension of the 3rd degree archaeological conservation zone in the southern, south-eastern and eastern directions, constituting an extended buffer zone. In the additional information provided in response to the Interim Report on 28 February 2020, the State Party confirmed that this conservation zone extension proposal also implies a redefined buffer zone boundary. ICOMOS welcomes this extension of protection status and considers the buffer zone now appropriately defined. However, clarification would be necessary as regards the “new arrangements” which are allowed in A3 zone as mentioned in the additional information, which are not detailed.

State of conservation

The nominated property has been regularly conserved since 1961, mostly in campaigns linked to specific excavation seasons. The materials exposed during these excavation campaigns were subsequently conserved. This early and consistent combination of excavation and conservation campaigns and the introduction of annual monitoring of the property since the 1970s has left Arslantepe as one of the best-preserved earthen archaeological sites in the wider geographical region. While most of the conservation campaigns were undertaken by specialized restorers for adobe structures, the discovery of delicate wall paintings required the involvement of specialists from other disciplines, including those for the conservation of wall-paintings and frescoes.

Monitoring and observation of the condition of previous excavations has demonstrated that whilst the adobe structures that were exposed to rain and snow are showing some signs of decay and deterioration, even within short time-frames, those protected by roofing system substantially maintain their condition. This system has been provided for part of the nominated property, which is made of steel poles and multi-layered wooden panels, designed to resist heavy snowfall but not to cause any perforation of the underlying archaeological levels. The shelter remains open at their sides allowing the air to

circulate, thus maintaining stable conditions of temperature and humidity. Despite its great benefits, the roofing system provides an opportunity for improvements as specific areas remain unsheltered and exposed to water run-off, as well as to other weather-related impacts.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is in general good given the challenges of conserving the ancient adobe fabric. For an archaeological property of adobe structures with delicate wall paintings, the state of conservation can in fact be considered commendable. ICOMOS recommends that the temporary shelter that was approved by the Conservation Council's decision on the 19th of December 2019 (see 3rd paragraph in p.15/44), be submitted for technical review to ICOMOS due to the several technical challenges identified during the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission.

Factors affecting the property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the property are negative impacts from urban development pressures, especially new housing or infrastructure developments within Orduzu village; and weather events including heavy rain and snow fall, as well as seismic risks in the area. Since the nominated property is located in a level-1 seismic zone, this type of risk should be considered carefully and given more priority. This also has implications for the way that institutions are storing and showcasing their archaeological findings, which at present do not seem adequately prepared for major seismic events.

ICOMOS considers that despite the extensive protective shelter, some of the areas in the nominated property are vulnerable to flooding resulting from heavy rain, for example on the open roof space near the stratigraphic section. Also, snow and wind may still impact the areas on the edges of the shelter. Coverage and extension or redesign need to be assessed more carefully.

In relation to the buffer zone, ICOMOS notes that there are 25 illegally constructed buildings taller than permissible height levels, which have been legalized retroactively by means of an amnesty issued on 31 December 2018. These buildings are considered to have a significant negative impact on the setting of the property.

In relation to the buffer zone area and the construction activities, ICOMOS requested information in its first letter on the measures in place to control building height and volume, and to mitigate risks of illegal construction. The State Party replied that a conservation development plan has been prepared to address these challenges and has been adopted, as explained by the State Party in the information provided in February 2020. It further indicated that as a legal basis for this plan, a 3rd degree

archaeological conservation zone had been established and again slightly revised as a result of discussions during the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission.

In addition, ICOMOS in its Interim Report requested further information on the development pressures located in Orduzu and other areas. The State Party replied that the conservation development plan had been formally adopted by the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality on 14 February 2020. According to the development plan, the maximum height of buildings within the conservation zone, which corresponds to the buffer zone, is two storeys. Less than 20% of the buffer zone is zoned for construction, mostly those areas furthest removed from the mound to the east and south. ICOMOS considers that this newly formulated development plan will significantly reduce the risk of inappropriate developments in the buffer zone.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Arslantepe illustrates the complex processes which led to the emergence of a State society in the Near East and a sophisticated bureaucratic system before writing, offering information on the early formation of a new form of society, which was at the basis of our contemporary world;
- Being located in a historic border region, the property illustrates the intensive and varying external relations and changes of various and different civilisations in the Near East;
- The archaeological findings revealed at Arslantepe include exceptional metal objects and weapons, among them the earliest swords so far known in the world, which suggests the beginning of forms of organized combat as the prerogative of an elite, who exhibited these as instruments of their new political power.

Comparative analysis

The nomination dossier presents a comparative analysis which is divided according to three main themes, considering (1) sites of early state formation in the 5th and 4th millennium BCE; (2) archaeological sites providing testimony to urban societies of the Mesopotamian world; and (3) other sites with an extensive presence of adobe architecture. Initially mentioned in the introduction to the comparative analysis but later not explicitly compared were the testimonies to population movements in the Anatolian and South-Caucasian mountains in the 3rd millennium BCE, and testimonies of the Central Anatolian Hittites in the 2nd millennium BCE and the Assyrian cultural world in the 1st millennium BCE.

Among the Late Chalcolithic Greater Mesopotamian settlements which can provide evidence for social complexity and centralization, the State Party draws on the comparison of archaeological sites in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran including, but not limited to, Hacinebi Tepe, Tell Brak, Tell Hamoukar, Uruk-Warka, Ur, Eridu and Susa. The comparison points out that early state formation was not an isolated phenomenon but occurred in different locations in the late 5th and early 4th millennium BCE. Uruk was the largest and first city in the ancient world (covering almost 200 ha in the 4th millennium BCE), which also documents the processes of state formation. It was often considered a capital at this time where not only pictographic references but also a first form of writing developed. Upon direct comparison Arslantepe has the advantage of better documentation and research, easier accessibility and a better state of conservation. Whilst Arslantepe is a unique local expression of a regional phenomenon, which established one of the earliest centralized and hierarchical formations of a prehistoric 'early state' society in the region, it is not an independent first development of such a system at a larger regional scale. Similar contexts can be found in other sites, namely Tell Brak, Hassek Höyük, Hacinebi, Tepe Gawra and one most important, Mersin-Yumuktepe, which was not mentioned in the initial comparative analysis.

In its additional information submitted in response to the Interim Report, the State Party added further comparative details on the sites of Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra, Hacinebi and Hassek Höyük as well as Mersin-Yumuktepe, focussing predominantly on their features testifying to the Late Chalcolithic period. The State Party further added ground plans of the excavated structures at these sites at identical scale to illustrate the comparatively large size of the palace structures at Arslantepe.

As a result of the added analysis, the State Party concludes that Arslantepe is indeed not outstanding as a singular example of early state formation but exceptional because it presents the only example of a new type of monumental public architecture, called the public palace. It further concludes that Arslantepe constitutes the largest unitary complex so far known illustrating the late Chalcolithic period and highlights the incomparable state of conservation of Arslantepe, which cannot be paralleled by any of the other sites analysed.

With regard to the comparison of testimonies of urban societies, the comparative analysis illustrates that Arslantepe was far less urbanized than other, often considerably larger, sites of its time in Mesopotamia. This is in fact considered one of the specificities of Arslantepe as a centre of state outside a highly urbanized environment. The limited urban expansion was likely influenced by its unique border location in the Upper Euphrates valley and the nature of the local societies, which included nomadic and transhumant groups. Among the other compared earthen sites are

Tchogha Zambil, Ashur, the Proto-Urban Site of Sarazm and the Archaeological Ruins at Moenjodaro, Pakistan.

While several of the claims for representativeness of Arslantepe, such as its exceptional representation of State formation or early administrative systems, could not be confirmed, Arslantepe indeed stands out in presenting an impressively level of conservation and legible remains of the Late Chalcolithic 5 level (Period VIA, 3400-3100 BCE), through the very high level of conservation of the palace complex, including wall paintings and objects which have been discovered. This is due to the fact that the palace complex at Arslantepe was destroyed in a single catastrophic fire which caused the structures to collapse in on themselves, sealing a significant portion of the complex and its contents. As such, Arslantepe can be seen as an exceptionally well-preserved testimony of this early period of establishment of governance and administration systems, which does not stand out in terms of its innovation when compared to other ancient early centres of state, but is impressive in its state of preservation, which allows for a much deeper and more detailed insight into the short period between 3400 and 3100 BCE, when Arslantepe was a centre of governance in the region.

ICOMOS considers that the augmented comparative analysis and additional researches undertaken confirm the impressive state of preservation of the Late Chalcolithic evidence of Arslantepe, when compared to other settlements of the time. This justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv).

Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Arslantepe presents an interchange of human values from its plurality of cultural expressions as a result of both the intensity of interactions and encounters between cultures and societies, and the uninterrupted succession of diverse periods and cultural developments, from the 5th to the 1st millennium BCE, which have significantly transformed Arslantepe society across time. The State Party further argues Arslantepe was located at the crossroads of population movements, political and cultural contacts, transhumance and trade routes, all making Arslantepe a “cosmopolitan” economic and political centre where diverse communities lived together.

ICOMOS considers that while the nominated property indeed documents several successive uses by populations with different traditions and building styles,

it is characterized not by a significant value exchange over time but rather by at times radical transformations from one era to another. This suggests that rather than documenting a value exchange and adaptation over time, the settlement location and some of its historic materials were used to create something new.

While Arslantepe was located in a border location and for this reason was a place of more considerable cultural exchanges than several other archaeological sites in the same region, it has not been demonstrated convincingly in which way the physical remains of the nominated property in situ can testify to these intercultural and trade exchanges and in what way these illustrate the site’s claimed multiculturalism at any historic time. Although Arslantepe, like other settlements, demonstrates how widely and quickly social links, trade routes, technologies and social control ideologies spread over the region before and after the first development of forms of writing, it appears that other sites which were centres of script development illustrate more significant traces of multiculturalism and trade records. ICOMOS considers that criterion (ii) has not been justified.

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Arslantepe presents an exceptional testimony to the first emergence of state society in the Near East, which, although it is related to the 4th millennium Uruk civilization, presents an original form. The State Party considers that its uniqueness when compared to other Uruk culture centres lies in the extensive material in situ, which has made possible the reconstruction of the characteristics of this civilization and the life of these first elites, their activities and relations with the rest of the population, with incomparable details, throwing light on the emergence of a centralized government in a non-urban centre, controlling the basic economy of the surrounding population.

ICOMOS considers that Arslantepe presents an exceptional testimony to the life of early administrative elites and their relationship with the wider public. The archaeological evidence is exceptional in terms of its state of conservation. Whilst other properties likewise represent early and earlier forms of state formation and at times more complex systems of administration and bureaucracy, the level of detail in architectural and archaeological evidence found at Arslantepe is highly unusual. As the result of a catastrophic and perhaps even violent event that led to the sudden destruction of the palace complex and other structures and thereby caused a sealing of evidence in the debris and rubble under collapsed walls, the nominated property provides a complete and vivid picture of society and daily life of the early administrative elites in the Late Chalcolithic period. ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has been justified.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Arslantepe's adobe architecture, due to its antiquity, advanced technology, and state of conservation, is an outstanding example of a traditional building system representative of Near Eastern communities in the 4th millennium BCE, which documents a sustainable and successful human interaction with the environment, well in keeping with the local climatic conditions and easy to maintain. In addition, the State Party highlights that the so-called palace complex is an outstanding example of a new type of monumental public architecture, as it is said to be the earliest known example of a public palace.

ICOMOS considers that whilst the adobe architecture of Arslantepe is indeed in an impressive state of preservation, it does not constitute an impressive type of technology, urban or architectural design or building structure which is innovative or stands out at a regional comparison. With regard to the so-called palace complex being a specific new typology called a public palace, which is said to have occurred here for the first time, ICOMOS notes that this claim is not substantiated by the documentation provided and cannot be backed by contemporary archaeological research in the wider region. Several settlements of the same period and slightly earlier show representative structures with a suspected administrative and power function. Despite the rich archaeological evidence at Arslantepe, it is difficult to fully support a scenario of use that significantly differs from evidence at other settlements which could single out the complex at Arslantepe as a first typological evidence of state governance. ICOMOS considers that further in-depth comparative archaeological research would be needed to substantiate this claim. ICOMOS considers that this criterion is not justified at this stage.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) is demonstrated while criteria (ii) and (iv) have not been justified.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The physical remains of the nominated property show an impressive state of preservation, which confirm the unusual intactness of the Late Chalcolithic period level (Late Chalcolithic 4-5, 3600-3100 BCE), despite a number of challenges which need to be addressed through risk management processes. However, the excavated walls and houses of later periods, and in particular the public monumental buildings from Periods I and II, located in the northeast of the mound, are exposed to the weather and remain without protection. Whilst the physical fabric of these two different Neo-Hittite periods is still in an acceptable state of preservation, additional measures to protect them

should be rapidly considered, given that they remain exposed to all weather conditions, since 2015 and 2016 respectively.

In terms of completeness, the present documentation and information provided raises questions as to which levels of the nominated property are intended to remain in situ and which later levels are anticipated to be removed by future excavations aimed at unearthing earlier levels. The key reference periods of the stratigraphic levels VII and the various VI, and their adobe remains, are well protected by the old and new temporary roof and it appears that the State Party is determined to undertake further excavations to expose these specific historic levels.

With regard to the future plans for excavation, ICOMOS is concerned that excavations that are envisaged aim at removing historical layers which contribute to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. It appears that the archaeologists consider this appropriate, as long as all removed remains are adequately documented. ICOMOS however is concerned that such actions will undermine the significance of the nominated property as a testimony to the multi-layered historic record described in the nomination dossier. Therefore, ICOMOS requested the State Party to provide a single survey map which illustrates the envisaged conservation of archaeological levels and remains in the future, to ensure that a cautious approach is taken to future excavations and that no levels contributing to the justification of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value will be removed. ICOMOS further requested the State Party in its Interim Report to submit a detailed excavation plan for the following decades. In its response submitted on 24 February 2020 the State Party noted ICOMOS' concerns and requests for non-invasive methods of scientific research but highlighted that the excavation team headed by the Italian Archaeological Mission had always paid and continued to pay great attention to the conservation of unearthed remains and that the excellent state of conservation of Arslantepe should be seen as evidence of this ongoing commitment. The State Party added a revised map indicating four specific areas of the mound that are considered to illustrate key attributes and where no further excavation will be undertaken, as well as areas where future excavations are planned.

ICOMOS notes that the excavation programme anticipated cannot be seen as non-invasive. The areas marked where no future digging will be undertaken are those where excavation has already unearthed the lowest levels of significance or where very important findings are situated in later levels, such as the Early Bronze Age Royal Tomb or town wall. No "undisturbed" area was included in the zones indicated to remain as they are. With regard to the areas scheduled for future excavation, area C is particularly problematic as the archaeological team aims at exploring even lower levels than the present key level of attributes, in particular earlier vestiges than those of the Late Chalcolithic (4/5)

palace. ICOMOS recommends revising the excavation programme towards a more cautious approach and that entirely undisturbed areas are designated as no excavation zones.

In terms of visual integrity, ICOMOS have some concerns regarding the height of the constructions in the south and southwest of the buffer zone, where at least two buildings surpass height restrictions. Unfortunately, more buildings appear under construction and might exceed the permitted limits, with several illegal constructions previously retroactively legalised. Despite the additional information provided in February 2020 and the assurances of the State Party that the responsibility for building permissions and control of construction activities has been moved to a higher authority, ICOMOS remains concerned about these ongoing and potential future constructions in the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that to protect the nominated property in the long-term and commit to the high expectations of legal protection under the World Heritage Convention, it is essential that the new legal provisions are strictly enforced and that no additional constructions will be tolerated while illegally surpassing height, density or volume limitations.

Authenticity

The nominated property is considered to meet the conditions of authenticity with regard to a number of qualifying conditions. The palace complex remains preserved in its adobe structures and illustrates several original wall paintings. Both the architectural structure and surface decoration testify the authenticity in material, workmanship and – apart from a few traces of collapse - authenticity in form and design.

ICOMOS considers that the findings are important associated elements to the archaeological site, which can testify to its authenticity in terms of material remains, allowing evaluation of the availability of source materials and capacity for artistic and cultural production at different times. In this context, ICOMOS notes that there is a lack of risk management provisions in relation to the archaeological findings, in terms of storage and natural risks. Security measures for key archaeological findings presented in Malatya Museum should be reinforced in this regard.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met but are vulnerable and conservation management measures to reduce vulnerabilities should be strengthened.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

ICOMOS considers that Arslantepe presents a unique window into the Late Chalcolithic period, recording a specific moment in time which testifies to elite life and early forms of state administration. As a result of the

sudden and violent destruction of the palace and settlement in the late 4th millennium BC, Arslantepe has preserved archaeological evidence with an impressive state of preservation when compared to other settlements within the region. ICOMOS considers that Arslantepe meets criterion (iii) as an exceptional testimony to the life of early administrative elites. Whilst other properties represent similar and earlier forms of structures illustrating early processes of, and at times more complex, systems of administration and state formation, the level of detail in archaeological and material evidence found at Arslantepe is highly unusual. ICOMOS considers that the identified attributes of the nominated property demonstrate both integrity and authenticity. However, both conditions are vulnerable and require stronger commitments in terms of risk and buffer zone management, as well as a very cautious approach to future excavations.

Attributes

The attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value focus on the physical in-situ remains of the Late Chalcolithic period, with a focus on the evidence of layers VII and VIA of the excavation stratigraphy. The attributes include the settlement plan and ground plan of individual buildings, the construction technology, style, layout and thickness of walls, as well as their surface treatments in the form of plaster and wall paintings. The Late Chalcolithic is manifested in at least four main levels of the stratified deposits. This implies that the attributes are likewise multi-layered in the stratigraphy and include elite residences, a ceremonial public area and two temples from period VII, as well as residential structures, and a palatial complex extending over more than 3000 square metres, including a monumental structure referred to as an audience building and a large open courtyard of period VIA. Subsequently, further structures including storerooms and temples were added. The attributes include specifically those elements which preceded the catastrophic events which destroyed this administrative centre around 3000 BC.

ICOMOS notes that, while the later levels of the nominated property, in particular the Early and Late Bronze Age, as well as the Early and Middle Iron Age levels, including the evidence of Neo-Hittite settlements, are not attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value, this by no means implies that these are not significant in their own right and can therefore be removed as part of future excavations. ICOMOS considers that these levels are highly important at national and regional levels and contribute with significant elements to the understanding of these later civilizations. It is therefore even more essential that the property beneficiaries of the latest available and future investigative technologies which allow for non-intrusive investigation of lower levels of archaeological evidence in multi-layered archaeological sites.

ICOMOS considers that the identified attributes are relevant to convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Conservation measures

As indicated above, the general state of conservation of the nominated property surpasses many other archaeological sites with adobe structures in the region. This is mostly the result of two factors: a specific catastrophic event which destroyed the settlement of period VIB; and the commendable excavation approach, which combines archaeological investigations with in-situ conservation works. The scientific archaeological team of La Sapienza University arranges for a conservation team, usually composed of four persons combining different specializations, two conservators and two restorers, to be on site during their excavation seasons and to undertake site conservation and movable restoration, in parallel with the excavation works. This cooperation and combined approach make it possible to pay immediate in-situ attention to the very fragile remains being excavated. ICOMOS commends this cooperative approach.

Different protective approaches have been applied to stabilize as much as possible the surrounding conditions of the site. For instance, permanent and temporary roofing structures, water collectors throughout the roofing system for the drainage of rainwater, protective curtains to avoid exposure to direct sunlight of the wall paintings, vertical shields against snow, and wooden bracing to stabilize steep excavation slopes, amongst others. The nominated property illustrates a clear focus on preventive conservation and only in exceptional circumstances is conservation intervention undertaken, by means of compatible materials and a minimum intervention approach.

ICOMOS considers that the fact that the adobe structures do not have too much of a deterioration problem, reveals that the preventive approach in place is effective. This is also facilitated by low humidity, as one of the major factors of rising deterioration in earthen archaeological remains. This absence also implies that there are few to no microorganisms and plants growing on the site. Whilst the shelter structures are beneficial to the site's state of conservation, in general, they pose some conservation challenges, as in some cases their weight is upon historic archaeological remains. The State Party proposes a new shelter, of which drawings were presented during the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission. In ICOMOS' view, these had technical weaknesses, as it would not fully protect the archaeological evidence underneath in terms of interrelation of both roofs, and presents issues related to the design which should consider a three-dimensional approach rather than a bidimensional. The documentation presented should be further detailed in relation to providing more views of different sections, in relation to the connection between the old and new roof and how the new roof will address places where the rain water mostly accesses the site. ICOMOS therefore recommended to reconsider the design of the proposed new shelter and to submit the revised designs to ICOMOS for further review. In its response to ICOMOS' Interim

Report the State Party did not provide any updated information regarding revised plans for new shelter.

ICOMOS further considers that apart from the seasonal conservation campaigns, a long-term conservation strategy, separate from the development plan, which the State Party refers to as a conservation development plan, for the site is needed. The definition of a conservation plan which is interlinked with future excavation plans, will help to define a desired state of conservation for the property and determine protocols and procedures for all forms of intervention, including monitoring, preventive conservation, maintenance, consolidation, conservation, and risk preparedness. In its Interim Report, ICOMOS therefore asked for information concerning future conservation measures planned, in particular in terms of risk preparedness and disaster response measures. In its response of 24 February 2020, the State Party indicated that risk preparedness measures in place are satisfactory as it considered this was proven during the recent 6.8 magnitude earthquake on 24 January 2020, which did not damage any of the archaeological structures and during which only a temporary shelter was affected by a small-scale land slide. The State Party further described its approaches and methods during the seasonal excavation and conservation campaigns but did not commit to the preparation of a comprehensive conservation strategy or a risk preparedness and disaster response plan. ICOMOS nevertheless considers these essential to the systematic long-term risk preparedness and conservation of the property, and recommends that a comprehensive conservation plan including sections on risk preparedness and a disaster response be prepared.

In addition, ICOMOS requested information in its Interim Report on any envisaged future archaeological campaigns and excavation programs. The State Party replied with provision of a map of four areas in which it anticipates future excavation campaigns, as well as other already excavated areas in which no further excavation is planned. ICOMOS considers that a more cautious approach to research is necessary, which should be largely based on non-invasive methodologies and to designate as yet undisturbed areas which will not be excavated in the near- or medium-term. ICOMOS considers that this more cautious excavation strategy should be developed in line with the overall conservation strategy.

Monitoring

The nomination dossier presents monitoring indicators which are largely focused on potential changes in the archaeological fabric, such as cracks in the adobe structures, fractures, inclination of walls, insect presence, intensity of colour in wall paintings, detachment of plaster, etc., as well as a few generic indicators related to external factors such as visitor numbers, temperature and humidity and condition of the roofing system. The indicators are named but not introduced in terms of benchmarks and verifiable sources. They are merely grouped by periodicity of the monitoring exercise, which is most often annually, with the exception of human or animal disturbances and

presence of water infiltration from the roof, which is monitored monthly.

ICOMOS considers that while monitoring indicators could be further detailed and benefit from attribution of local responsibility, the areas considered within the selection of aspects monitored are sufficient. ICOMOS further recommends extending the monitoring efforts to areas of the buffer zone, which have yielded surface archaeological evidence, to ensure that no construction and invasive agricultural activities are undertaken until the recommended surveys (see boundaries section) and a potential extension of the property boundaries have been considered. Streamlining of the monitoring system with the Periodic Reporting questionnaire would also be useful.

ICOMOS considers that the development of a conservation strategy including a risk preparedness and a disaster response plan, as well as a cautiously designated excavation programme, is essential to the future conservation of the property. The monitoring indicators provided address all relevant areas but would benefit from more detailed designation of verifiable sources and local responsibilities. Streamlining of the monitoring system with the Periodic Reporting questionnaire would also be useful.

5 Protection and management

Documentation

The archaeological excavations, the findings and the conservation initiatives in the context of the annual campaigns are documented in text and images. This documentation is usually written in Italian with only some parts translated into English. ICOMOS notes that the Italian documentation is not fully accessible to the local team, due to language differences. Documentation is stored as a paper copy at Arslantepe site or in the Malatya Museum, which is the office of the site management unit, and as a digital copy in Istanbul at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Sapienza University in Rome retains all original documents in paper and digital versions.

As Arslantepe is located in a zone of high seismic risk, it seems essential to improve the level of documentation of both archaeological remains and excavated objects as a baseline reference for the monitoring system and in case of any major disasters. ICOMOS recommends undertaking a detailed photographic documentation not just of objects but also of all the site structures and, where needed, augment these by drawings indicating positions and exact features of elements of specific significance.

Legal protection

Arslantepe archaeological site is scheduled as a 1st Degree Archaeological Conservation site by the decision of Adana Regional Conservation Council dated 20 January 1989. This provides it with the highest level of

protection at a national level. The boundaries were later enlarged by a decision 2145 of Sivas Regional Conservation Council dated 23 December 2010.

The immediate setting of the site, which is proposed as the buffer zone, was defined as a 3rd Degree Archaeological Conservation site by the decision 4081 of Sivas Regional Conservation Council dated 24 January 2018. This 3rd degree archaeological conservation site boundary corresponds to the conservation development plan boundary. In its additional information submitted on 4 November 2019, the State Party suggested a modification of the southern boundary of this 3rd degree archaeological conservation area, extending it slightly to cover additional areas for protection. In the additional information the State Party submitted in response to the Interim Report on 24 February 2020, it also confirmed the extension of the buffer zone boundary in line with the 3rd degree archaeological conservation zone. ICOMOS welcomes this initiative, which contributes to the long-term protection of the property's setting. ICOMOS however notes that it is essential to adhere to the legal restrictions for urban development, not tolerating any form or type of illegal construction.

Management system

The nominated property is managed by means of the cooperation of multiple institutions. At the local level, two institutions are responsible for the protection and management of the site: the site management unit, which facilitates the management processes, in particular all coordination processes at the national, metropolitan or municipal level and which also coordinates the implementation of the site management plan, and the Malatya Museum, which supervises the cultural heritage resources of the region, including Arslantepe Mound. The museum is responsible for security, visitor access, cleaning and maintenance of the site and houses the collections of archaeological findings discovered during excavations. In its response to the ICOMOS Interim Report, the State Party indicated that a site manager would soon be appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In ICOMOS' view the appointment of a site manager is essential to provide guidance and supervision to the ongoing management processes.

A third partner at an international level is the Excavation Director and Scientific Coordinator based at La Sapienza University in Rome, Italy. The Italian team is responsible for planning the excavation seasons and active conservation measures but also acts as a management advisor all year round to the local team. Financial resources for the site include resources for the annual excavation seasons provided by the Italian archaeological mission through the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an annual administration and maintenance budget provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

A site management plan prepared by the team of La Sapienza University in cooperation with the local offices and stakeholders has been submitted as part of the nomination dossier. The management plan (2019-2024) provides a detailed description and analysis of the site but very limited management guidance. While formulating a vision and six generic management objectives, it provides merely summarized and tabular guidance with regard to the actions and activities which need to be implemented to achieve these objectives. Although action fields are attributed to local institutions, the plan contains no information on the local management structure, decision-making procedures or responsibilities, and needs to be augmented to provide better guidance on local processes and mechanisms.

ICOMOS therefore enquired about the local management arrangements in its request for additional information as part of the Interim Report. The State Party explained that the authority for management is shared between the Italian excavation team and the Malatya Museum Directorate. Decisions on excavation, conservation and monitoring are under the authority of the excavation team and submitted for approval to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism annually. The Museum Directorate is responsible for administration and storage of findings, collecting entrance fees and recording visitor numbers, providing security, cleaning and interpretation and organizing awareness-raising measures among the local community. The duties of the site manager to be appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will further include supervision of the implementation of the management plan, preparation of the annual budget, supervision of maintenance, repairs and visitor security, as well as ensuring cooperation between institutions and preparing annual audit reports. ICOMOS considers that this extended specification for a local site management coordinator will be important to enable conservation and monitoring decisions as well as year-round implementation of the management plan. Therefore, ICOMOS recommends that a site manager is appointed as soon as possible.

The management plan contains limited information on risk assessment or disaster management despite the fact that the nominated property is in a zone of high seismic risk. In its additional information provided in response to the Interim Report on 24 February 2020, the State Party explained that seismic activity is a serious risk and has therefore already been taken into consideration in the conservation and management approaches as well as the design of the shelter structures. The State Party also reported that during the recent 6.8 magnitude earthquake of 24 January 2020, no damage occurred to the archaeological structures, which is said to prove the effectiveness of the present system.

ICOMOS recommends that as part of completing and detailing further the management plan as well as the conservation strategy, a risk preparedness and disaster response plan should be developed. This should include

a water, wind and snow impact assessment, considering frequency, velocity and quantity, to avoid unexpected damage. Given that seismic risk has not been addressed in detail in the present management plan, ICOMOS considers that adequate benchmark documentation needs to be prepared and a detailed risk preparedness and disaster response plan developed, which should include a routine scenario for seismic events and potential damage arising from tremors.

Visitor management

The nominated property is open to the public during official opening hours and visits can be addressed free of charge. The mound has a specially built non-invasive pathway system for visitors, who must follow these paths and be accompanied by a guide at all times, who takes visitors in small groups. During excavation seasons the guided tours also include viewing and explanation of excavation works taking place. Site interpretation is provided on site by means of several explanatory panels. ICOMOS recommends that further interpretation is provided to assist visitors in understanding the site stratigraphy and the chronology of levels, which are visible in different parts of the excavation.

The State Party is planning a new visitor centre, which is designed to replace a former elementary school building in the southern buffer zone, adjacent to the nominated property boundary. An initial design was considered too modern and did not integrate with its surroundings. No alternative design has been presented so far but ICOMOS enquired in its Interim Report on the current status of plans and if the latest design could be made available. The State Party responded on 24 February 2020 that within the approved development plan, a location and regulations concerning the construction of the visitor centre have been approved. The design has not yet been initiated but is committed to be made available shortly, together with a Heritage Impact Assessment report. According to the definitions of the development plan regulations, the visitor centre will have a maximum height of 7.50 metres and be constructed of adobe as its primary building material. ICOMOS recommends that the revised designs should be provided once they are further advanced and that, as indicated by the State Party, a Heritage Impact Assessment is undertaken before any decision is reached to assess the potential impacts of the visitor centre on the nominated property.

Community involvement

A small residential community lives in the buffer zone of the nominated property whose main source of livelihood is based on agriculture. There have been some recent issues with illegal constructions in the village to the south of the site and the State Party has assured that control of construction activities has been applied with greater scrutiny since. Although not having been actively involved in the nomination preparation, the community supports the nomination of Arslantepe to the World Heritage List and they hope for direct revenues and secondary benefits

with the anticipated increase of visitor numbers. The management plan furthermore foresees a closer integration of the community in management and interpretation efforts at Arslantepe.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of nominated property

While a local site management unit is operational and a management plan was submitted, it appears that several aspects of local decision-making processes and planning supervision are not fully elaborated. A site manager is yet to be appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Significant responsibility falls to the foreign archaeological team of La Sapienza University, not only in terms of their presence and actions during the annual excavation and conservation seasons but also as permanent advisors to the site management authorities. In ICOMOS' view, whilst this cooperative system is somewhat effective, it would be desirable to strengthen local management capacity and coordination of risk management tasks.

ICOMOS considers that while a management team and framework is operational, the appointment of a site manager at local level will increase management capacity and that the management plan should be revised to include risk preparedness, disaster response and visitor management mechanisms.

6 Conclusion

The Arslantepe Mound presents a unique window into the Late Chalcolithic period, recording a specific moment in time, which testifies to elite life and the earliest forms of state administration. Due to an apparently sudden and violent destruction of the so-called public palace complex and surrounding structures in the late 4th millennium BC, Arslantepe has preserved archaeological evidence of an exceptional state of preservation when compared to other settlements within the region. In-situ remains of several layers attributed to the Late Chalcolithic period (3900-3100 BCE) include the settlement plan and layout of individual buildings, the construction technology, arrangement and thickness of walls as well as their surface treatments in the form of plaster and, where evident, wall paintings. Archaeological findings, which however are not stored in situ but exhibited in the Malatya Museum, provide additional detailed evidence as to the lifestyle of elites in the Late Chalcolithic.

ICOMOS considers that Arslantepe Mound meets criterion (iii) and demonstrates both integrity and authenticity. However, both conditions are vulnerable and require stronger protection, conservation and management commitments, most specifically risk and buffer zone management, as well as a very cautious approach to future excavations. For this reason, a detailed excavation and future conservation strategy and a comprehensive conservation plan are needed. While the property enjoys an adequate level of

protection, areas to the north and west of the property presently used for agriculture should be further surveyed as they appear to present surface traces of archaeological evidence and may hold important archaeological underground remains. The degree of protection of the enlarged buffer zone, which corresponds to the 3rd degree archaeological conservation area for which a conservation development plan was adopted on 14 February 2020, is adequate but requires rigorous implementation of the development plan regulations, in particular in terms of building density and height as well as land-use attribution.

While a local management unit exists in the Malatya Museum, a site manager is yet to be appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Once the appointment of a site manager has happened, the property will benefit from further local capacity and better definition of management roles and responsibilities. The management plan submitted should be augmented to capture the specific responsibilities of the different management partners in line with actions and activities envisaged to achieve the strategic objectives formulated. ICOMOS recommends that within the management plan, important additions, which are not presently covered, be prepared, most importantly risk preparedness and disaster management but also visitor management approaches. ICOMOS further recommends that a comprehensive conservation strategy and plan be developed and linked to a future cautious excavation strategy for the property, which is based primarily on non-invasive methodologies and designates undisturbed areas which are not planned to be excavated in the short- or medium-term.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of Arslantepe Mound, Turkey, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

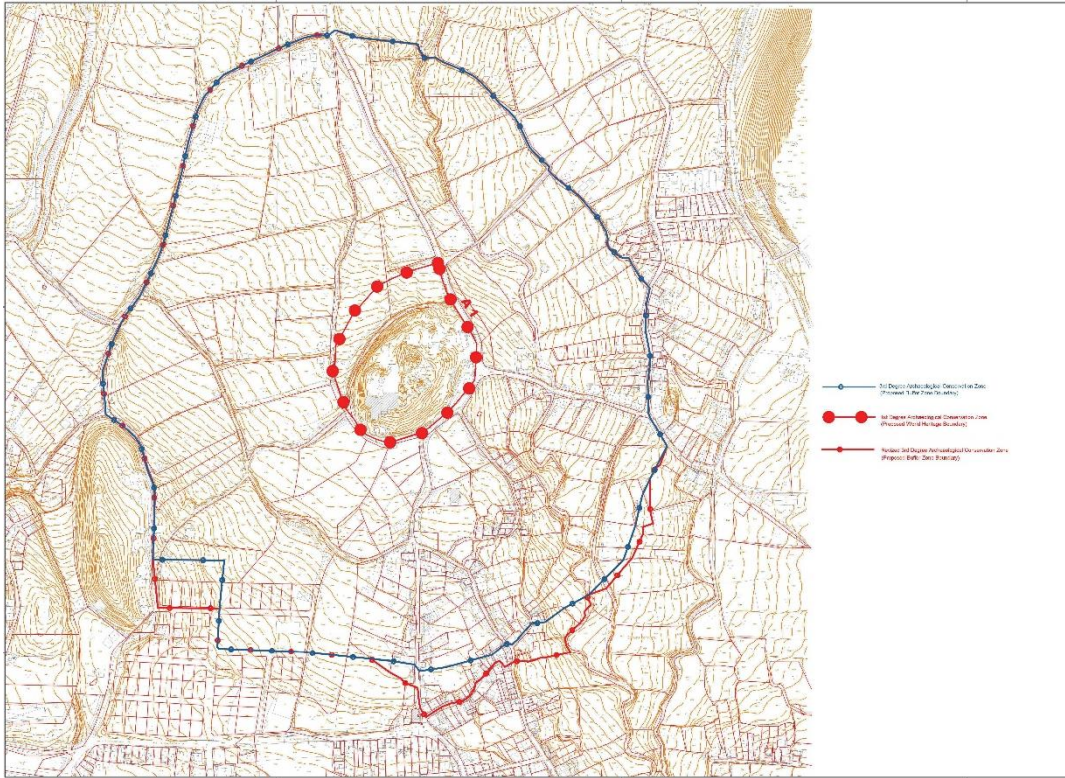
- Prepare a conservation strategy and plan for the site, which determines protocols, priorities and procedures for all forms of conservation and maintenance interventions needed;
- Prepare within the context of the conservation plan a cautious strategy for anticipated archaeological researches and excavations in the next decades, predominantly based on non-invasive research methodologies, and the designation of undisturbed areas, which are not planned to be excavated;
- Augment the management plan to include local management roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, a comprehensive risk assessment and risk preparedness plan;

- Strengthen the local management capacity through the appointment of a local site manager;
- Provide clarifications on the new arrangements allowed in A3 zone with the enlargement of the buffer zone;
- Reconsider the design of the proposed new roof shelter by providing more views of different sections, detailing the connection between the old and new roof and how the new roof will address places where the rain water mostly accesses the site; and submit it for further review.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Undertaking further surveys to determine the exact extension of archaeological findings towards the north and west of the property and on that basis, if necessary, extend the property boundaries in line with the indications of archaeological ground surveys in these directions,
- b) Studying unsheltered areas previously excavated and the edges of the present protective shelter to ensure minimum exposure of earthen architectural remains to weathering phenomena,
- c) Undertaking a periodical detailed photographic documentation of all the site structures and objects, where needed, augmented by drawings indicating positions and exact features of elements of specific significance, as a baseline for monitoring and risk and disaster management processes,
- d) Undertaking Heritage Impact Assessments for any new visitor infrastructure or museum buildings before any decision is taken, to assess their potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property (November 2019)