



AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

World Heritage Convention

Agenda Item	8B
Draft Decision	45 COM 8B.37
Submitted by the Delegation of....	Egypt
Co-author(s) (if any)	Ethiopia, Mali, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia
Date of submission	September 16, 2023

TEXT

Draft Decision: 45 COM 8B.37

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8B and WHC/23/45.COM/INF.8B1,
2. **Inscribes Djerba: Testimony to a settlement pattern in an island territory, Tunisia on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (v).** ~~Refers the nomination of Djerba: cultural landscape, testimony to a settlement pattern in an island territory, Tunisia, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:~~
 - a) ~~Further clarify how each component part contributes to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and ensure that each of them individually does so in a substantial way, as required by paragraph 137 of the Operational Guidelines;~~
 - b) ~~Adjust the combination and/or the boundaries of the component parts and/or their buffer zones to ensure that all attributes that convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are included within the nominated property, and the key structural, functional and visual connections between the component parts are reflected in the proposed boundaries;~~
 - c) ~~Ensure relevant legal protection for all the component parts of the nominated property;~~
 - d) ~~Improve the governance system of the nominated property and create relevant management structures that will take into consideration different rights-holders and stakeholders;~~
3. **Adopts** the following statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief Synthesis

The serial property of **Djerba: testimony to a settlement pattern in an island territory** bears an exceptional testimony to an insular urban system that developed between the 9th and the 18th centuries and still expresses today the way in which an island territory

was occupied by communities of different cultures and faiths who had to coexist to survive.

During this period marked by the predominance of Ibadism, a doctrinal movement in Islam advocating the virtue of work and egalitarian principles while having the religious and social organisation entrusted to an assembly of wise men, this complex urban system developed in response to a combination of environmental, socio-cultural and economic factors. It was characterized by the occupation of the whole island's territory in a remarkable illustration of adaptation of the population to the combined constraints of secular water scarcity, the unfavourable flat topography and insularity's challenges, particularly in terms of defence against threats from the sea.

The complex combination of scattered and low-density settlements (districts combining residential and family scale economic activities) with denser urban ensembles (the secular Jewish quarter and dedicated trading quarters, including the *Souks*) was at the heart of this urban system.

The *Houma* (district), formed by a number of *Menzel* (family domain), was an autonomous economic entity, including handicraft and agricultural activities, representing on a small scale the social and economic organization of the island's urban system as a whole. The latter's defensive orientation highly influenced the architecture of its various components. By its massive form, the lack of openings to the outside and the towers flanking its corners, the *Houch* (house) looked like a fortress, hidden behind the *tabia* (talus of earth covered with hedges marking the limits of each *Menzel*) and palm and olive groves. The numerous mosques of the island were also built based on the permanent prevailing lack of security. With their squat, compact forms, the loopholes that punctuate their façades and the crenellations that run around their terraces, the mosques have often been places of refuge and resistance. Their typology and positioning in the territory are unusual in that they are free-standing features, unlike those found elsewhere in the traditional Arab Islamic towns, where they blend into the dense urban fabric of which they are the centre. Some mosques were placed along the coastline, within earshot of each other, forming a first line of forward defence and surveillance and warning points; others, fortified and massive in appearance, formed a second line of rear defence; still others, scattered inland, sometimes troglodytic to serve primarily as refuge, were dedicated not only to religious functions, but also to teaching and the organisation of civic and cultural life.

This traditional way of using the island's territory as well as building the components of people's daily life with a primarily defensive concern recall the long tumultuous periods of Djerba's thousand-year history, and bear, today, an exceptional testimony to the way men and women adapted to their environment and interacted with it.

Criterion V

Djerba: testimony to a settlement pattern in an island territory is an outstanding example of a traditional insular human settlement, combining land-use and sea-use. The insular urban system resulting from this way of occupation of an island territory bears as an exceptional testimony to human interaction with the environment but has also become vulnerable under the impact of the sociocultural and economic mutations stemmed from the contemporary development, thus making its safeguarding of utmost importance.

Integrity

The key attributes that carry the Outstanding Universal Value of this serial property, both at urban and architectural levels, are included within the property's boundaries. Despite the sociocultural and economic changes that the island has been facing over the last decades due, *inter alia*, to the development of the tourist industry, the evolution of transportation and housing models and the partial abandonment of agriculture, the property has kept its integrity. The traditional road networks linking the *Houma* are still present and so is the complex urban pattern they form. The denser urban ensembles, which witnessed changes to their urban fabric, have also kept enough urban and

architectural elements to express their main features. The majority of the mosques, regularly rehabilitated, are in a good or acceptable state of conservation and so are the other key architectural elements of the property such as the *Foundouks* or the other religious buildings (the synagogue of the *Griba* and the catholic and orthodox churches).

From the landscape point of view, the uninhabited coastal zones and the environment of the remote mosques such as those of Bardaoui and Moghzal (both strongly marked by their relation to their environment, over kilometres almost virgin lands towards the seashore) as well as the lands of olive groves are still in a good state of integrity, despite the growing threats in terms of contemporary urban development. This general good condition of integrity of the property is nevertheless fragile and requires a reinforced vigilance and mobilisation of all parties concerned by its safeguarding.

Authenticity

Despite the changes mentioned here above, the property has maintained its authenticity. The traditional road networks linking the *Houma* have not suffered from major modifications and globally remain in their original form, despite the evolution of the transportation services and the increasing number of vehicles. Although a number of contemporary functions (health and education centres, financial structures, etc.) has appeared with time, the denser urban ensembles have kept their main original function (primarily as commercial places, including the *Souks*) and so is it for their other key components, notably the *Foundouks* and the religious buildings. The architectural components of the property have largely kept their original form, materials, and functions, except for some of the *Menzel* that are not anymore inhabited and for which measures have been put in place to have them occupied again for housing, even in a more contemporary way. The uninhabited areas that are part of the property (coastal zones, lands of olives and palm groves, environment of remote mosques) present either their original setting or very limited disturbance to it.

Protection and management requirements

The property being a complex series of public and private areas of various scales as well as of numerous buildings of different typologies and functions, its legal protection relies on the combination of several legal tools covering not only the urban fabrics and the buildings but also the coastal zones, the agricultural lands, the environment, and the development of tourism.

The Heritage Code (adopted on 24 February 1994) ensures the protection of historic and traditional ensembles as well as historic monuments. Among the 24 monuments included in the property's boundaries, 7 benefit from legal protection as national historic monuments. A legal process is currently underway to provide the remaining monuments with adequate legal protection. Their dossiers are currently being drawn up and will be submitted to the National Heritage Commission (decree no. 1475 dated 24 July 1994) at a special session scheduled for the end of 2023. The 7 zones of the property (5 scattered and low-density settlements and 2 denser urban ensembles located in the districts of Houmt-Souk and Hara Sghira) will benefit from a decree creating protected areas in accordance with the Heritage Code (Art. 6) and the Buildings General Regulation.

The Urbanism Code (adopted on 28 November 1994) brings a high level of protection to the island of Djerba as a whole, based on the production of legal relevant planning documents and special zoning restrictions. The current development of an adapted master plan to the specific context of Djerba (SDAZS) is the main framework for an integrated protection and sustainable development of the island while ensuring the safeguarding of the property.

The Law on Agricultural Lands (1983 Decree) is a key tool for the protection and management of the scattered and low-density settlements as well as the agricultural lands included in the property. The Law stipulates that a minimum of one hectare of land

is required to obtain a building permit. This protective measure was reinforced by the establishment of the Agricultural Map in 1985.

The protection of the coastal zones is ensured by Law no. 95-73 of 24 July 1995 on the Public Maritime Domain (DPM) and whose easements are set by the Code of Land Use Planning and Urbanism (CATU) and Law no. 75-16 of 31 March 1975, promulgating the Water Code and the Public Hydraulic Domain (DPH).

Regarding the management system of the property, the consultation within the Government and with regional and local authorities has led to the adoption, by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the most adapted available tool to ensure adequate cooperation between all concerned parties, both public and private. This tool consists in two Ministerial Decrees, one establishing the property's Steering Committee (signed on 1st september 2023), involving all concerned ministries and regional and local institutions; and the other establishing the Property's Management Unit (signed on 1st september 2023), as executive operational body, formed by a multidisciplinary team of locally based representatives of national and regional institutions, selected on the basis of their expertise and experience.

3. 4. Recommends the State party to give consideration to the following:

- a) *Putting in place urgent conservation measures to preserve the ~~nominated~~ property,*
 - b) ~~Completing the inventory of the attributes of the nominated property and preparing the assessment of their conservation needs which would further inform conservation plans (for each component part and the overall conservation plan for the entire serial nomination) and constitute the basis for the development of the monitoring system for the nominated property,~~
 - c) *Ensuring a sustainable source of funding for long-term conservation and regular maintenance,*
 - d) *Including the assessment of the carrying capacity of the individual component parts of the ~~nominated~~ property in the study on the carrying capacity of Djerba as a tourist destination to establish relevant indicators, which would also take into consideration the Ramsar sites and help prevent loss of their internationally-recognised natural values,*
 - e) *Considering the proximity of some component parts to the Ramsar sites when planning for tourism activities, so that the pressures exerted on the latter are not exacerbated.*
- ~~4. Also recommends that the proposed name of the nominated property be revised to reflect better the nature of the nominated property as a once-prevalent spatial organisation pattern of Djerba rather than a cultural landscape.~~
5. *Requests the State Party to submit a minor boundary modification request so that complementary attributes (including uninhabited coastal zones and olive groves lands) are included within the property's boundaries, before 1 February 2024, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session in 2024;*
 6. *Also requests the State Party to pursue its efforts to ensure relevant legal protection for all the component parts of the property and improve the latter's governance system and create relevant management structures that will take into consideration different rights-holders and stakeholders;*
 7. *Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2024, a report on the implementation of the requests and recommendations set in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the present decision, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session in 2025.*