

# Turkey

## Xanthos-Letoon

### Brief description

This site, which was the capital of Lycia, illustrates the blending of Lycian traditions and Hellenic influence, especially in its funerary art. The epigraphic inscriptions are crucial for our understanding of the history of the Lycian people and their Indo-European language.

### 1. Introduction

**Year of Inscription**

**1988**

**Agency responsible for site management**

- Ministry of Culture and Tourism  
General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums  
II.TBMM Binası Ulus  
06100 ANKARA  
e-mail: [orhan.duzgun@kulturturizm.gov.tr](mailto:orhan.duzgun@kulturturizm.gov.tr)

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria**

**C (ii) (iii)**

### Justification as provided by the State Party

The Xanthos-Letoon complex represents the most unique and characteristic extant specimen of the ancient Lycian civilization. The Lycian culture is known to be one of the most important cultures of Iron Age in Anatolia. It has achieved masterpieces and has exerted a lasting influence.

In architecture, the rock-cut tombs, pillar tombs and pillar-mounted sarcophagus in Xanthos have no parallel. This type of funerary architecture is unique, and are located in still relatively preserved surroundings. Their value was recognized in antiquity and they influenced the art of neighboring provinces: the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus is directly an heir of the Xanthos Nereid Monument. In modern times, the fact that some architectural and sculptural members of outstanding artistic value were taken to London caused a world-wide recognition of their merit, and consequently, the Xanthos marbles became an important chapter in the history of ancient art. As a matter of fact, Xanthos is already a part of the World Cultural heritage.

This is not the only field of interest. Xanthos and the Letoon sanctuary are the places where have been found the longest and the most important texts in the Lycian language. Many of these, engraved in rock or on huge stone pillars, cannot be removed and are the permanent testimony, on the site, of this unique development of the indo-european languages.

Recent historical research insists on studying the contacts of civilizations and the process of acculturation. From this point of view, Xanthos is an outstanding example of crossroads of civilizations. The old Anatolian stratum, represented by the Lycian language and the funerary customs, has swallowed the East Greek influence with the result that appeared an original art, in which the Greek artistic technique was put to the service of the Anatolian religion and political system.

Though this originality tends to fade after the conquest by Alexander the Great, Xanthos and the Letoon sanctuary still have a great religious and political importance as the center chosen by the League of Lycian cities. City and sanctuary are associated with all the historical evolution of the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Lycia. All the royal letters, royal edicts, treaties or laws were engraved on stone and exposed to public view in the federal sanctuary of Leto, which played in this respect a significant historical role.

Finally, the Xanthos monuments illustrate in a striking and unique way the continuity of civilization from ancient times to our days. The wooden houses and granaries that the Lycian country people of today build for themselves are constructed with the same technique that can be observed in the wood-imitating stone cut rock tombs. This is a exemplary case of an heritage still living in the spirit of contemporary dwellers of the country.

In conclusion, the Xanthos/Letoon complex has a beautiful setting, an history ranging nearly 20 centuries, an unique combination of Anatolian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilizations. It offers many well preserved architectural features, most of which are unique (as Lycian Pillar-tombs) and have no parallel, and the major testimonies on the ancient Lycian language. It is known since the mid-19th century as a major site for ancient sculpture, and in this respect is already recognized as a part of manhood culture. We ask and need the inscription on the World Heritage List, and think we have good grounds to do so.

**As provided in ICOMOS evaluation**

(July 1988): ICOMOS recommends that Xanthos and Letoon be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria ii and iii.

Criterion ii. Xanthos directly influenced Lycia throughout Antiquity, as can be seen for example at the archaeological sites of Yatara or Pinara. However, it also considerably influenced the neighboring provinces. The Halicarnassus Mausoleum, which the Ancients ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, is a direct descendant of Xanthos' Nereid Monument.

Criterion iii. Xanthos and Letoon bear exceptional testimony to the Lycian civilization, both through the many epigraphic texts found on the 2 sites as well as by the remarkable funerary monuments preserved there or originating from the area.

The famous trilingual inscription in Lycian, Aramaic and Greek dating back to 358 B.C. (Year I in the reign of Artaxerxes III Okhos) was discovered near the temple of Artemis in the Letoon. Furthermore, it is in Xanthos and Letoon that one also finds the longest and most important texts in the Lycian language: most of them are carved in rock or on huge monoliths. They cannot be moved and are the major monuments of a unique Indo-European language that disappeared long ago.

The rock art tombs, pillar tombs and pillar-mounted sarcophagi represent a novel type of funerary architecture. The rich series of Lycian tombs in Xanthos and Letoon enable us to fully understand the successive acculturation phenomena that took place in Lycia from the 6th century B.C. on.

**ICOMOS Observations:**

The Xanthos site encompasses an archaeological zone more or less embracing the ancient town. However, a relatively busy dirt path cuts through the site and a rerouting would be desirable. A comprehensive study of the site layout is essential.

As far as the Letoon site is concerned, the protected perimeter is insufficient: the area surrounding the theater is not included and to the south, ruins that are probably from the Early Christian period can clearly be seen emerging from the alluvial deposits. Moreover, no protection has been provided for the vast necropolis zone stretching along the banks of the Xanthe River between Xanthos and Letoon.

Given the intensive farming of these fertile alluvial lands and the recent appearance on the landscape of many greenhouses for tomato growing, while the

proposed demarcation appears compatible with the present situation, it seems to be insufficient in the short term. A management plan, including environmental control and a study of the preservation of the monuments, which are threatened by seasonal rising of the ground watertable at Letoon, is extremely desirable.

**Committee Decision**

Bureau (1988): The Bureau recommended inscription of this property on the World Heritage List, on condition that the Turkish authorities extend the perimeter of protection of the site so that the zones of necropolises be included and that assurances be given that the environment will be protected.

Session (1988): The Committee was pleased to note the assurances of the Turkish authorities to protect the site within a larger perimeter.

- No information available on whether the Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the statement of significance
- Short new text is proposed as a Statement of Significance is provided: "Xanhtos which illustrates the Lycian traditions and Hellenic influence, and one of the religious centers of Lycia are crucial for understanding the history and culture of Lycian people with remarkable monuments and inscription"

**Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined, further work needed; No need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the buffer zone

**Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

**3. Protection****Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Being declared a "First Degree Archaeological Site", it is subject to Conservation Legislation
- Protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

**4. Management****Use of site/property**

- Visitor attraction

**Management/Administrative Body**

- No steering group
- No site manager/coordinator, but is needed
- Levels of public authority primarily involved with the management of the site: national, local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

**5. Management Plan**

- No management plan
- Within the framework of the revised Conservation Legislation put into force in 2004, the preparation of the management plans for the World Heritage sites will be considered primarily

**6. Financial Resources****Financial situation**

- There is not a core funding. Every year state funds are allocated for various purposes (infrastructure and conservation projects) to the related bodies within the site
- No extra funding through World Heritage status
- Financial assistance by the French Government
- Funding is insufficient

**7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 4

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

- Good: interpretation
- Average: conservation, management, education, visitor management
- Promotion: bad

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

- No information
- Training needs related to bioenvironmental problems of Letoon are not being met

**9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: no figure provided
- Visitor facilities: Toilets, information books for Letoon
- Visitor needs: Routing and information panels, excavation and guard houses, workshops

**10. Scientific Studies**

- Archaeological surveys, visitor Management
- The results show the importance of these unique archaeological sites

**11. Education, Information and Awareness Building**

- No signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention emblem used on some publications
- Need of awareness raising of World Heritage site among visitors and local communities
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage site among businesses and local authorities
- Web site available
- No involvement of local participation

**12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)****Reactive monitoring reports**

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 15<sup>th</sup> (1991); 18<sup>th</sup> (1994)

**Conservation interventions**

- Restoration work on various buildings like theatre, temples
- Present state of conservation: good

**Threats and Risks to site**

- Visitor/tourism pressure, agricultural/forestry regimes. Flood at Letoon
- Raising of the water level at Letoon

**Measures taken/proposed**

- For Letoon a project is planned connecting the site with water canals

**13. Monitoring**

- No formal monitoring programme

**14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social
- Weaknesses of management: Agricultural pressure around the site at Letoon

**Future actions:**

- Resize and enlarge the protected area