

MEDISTONE
Preservation of ancient MEDIterranean sites
in terms of their ornamental and building STONE :
from determining stone provenance to proposing
conservation/restoration techniques

Duration : 3 years (2006-2008).

Program

The conservation of archaeological sites around the Mediterranean basin constitutes a major challenge for the future. Hitherto, studies of archaeological sites have tended to lack sustained follow-up over time, and not interacted sufficiently with other similar sites to enhance the results of research. As a result investments and expertise has tended to disappear after completion. Due to the absence of durable conservation practices, increased exposure to semi-arid climatic conditions, increasing pollution, and to ever increasing pressure from tourism, many sites suffer from severe degradation.

MEDISTONE project is a contribution to the knowledge and the conservation of three of the most important archaeological sites in North Africa (Volubilis in Morocco, Djemila in Algeria, and the Alexandria Lighthouse in Egypt). It consists in :

- identifying of stones used and determining their origins in terms of geographic areas and, if possible, the former quarry sites
- establishing diagnosis of the state of conservation of the stones, and describing mechanisms of the deterioration to stone for semiarid continental climate
- developing appropriate conservation/ restoration techniques that are liable to be met at the selected sites i.e. reassembling fractured and fissured stones



Desquamation on a Sphynx found underwater and coming from the Alexandria lighthouse, Assouan granite (Egypt).

Photo : Philippe Bromblet © cicrp

The project involves twelve partners (technical institutes, universities and research organisations, government institutions in charge of cultural heritage i.e. users), five from North African countries and seven from Europe (France, Italy, Germany, Greece), having experience in the field of either ornamental and building stone studies and/ or the deterioration and conservation of cultural heritage stones.



Orange patina on the Basilica of Volubilis, grainstone limestone (Morocco)

Photo : Jean-Marc Vallet © cicrp

Moreover, data management of the obtained results includes the circulation of the information between the non-European Mediterranean countries, and the dissemination of the obtained results to partners but also to the whole scientific and technical community through guidelines of best practice for conservation of stones in arid and semi-arid areas.

Research team

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Publications

DESSANDIER D., BROMBLET P., VALLET J.M., MERTZ J.D., LEROUX L., DELORME F. (2006). MEDISTONE: A new research program on the preservation of ancient Mediterranean sites in terms of ornamental and building stone. 7th European Commission Conference "SAUVEUR" SAFEGUARDED CULTURAL HERITAGE Understanding & Viability for the Enlarged Europe, Prague, Czech Republic 31st May – 3rd June 2006, volume 2- Posters, pp1038-1041.

MERTZ JD., VALLET JM., BROMBLET P. (2006). MEDISTONE : Préservation des pierres ornementales et de construction des sites archéologiques antiques du pourtour méditerranéen. Culture et Recherches, n° 110, pp. 14-15.