

Cienfuegos (Cuba)

No 1202

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Cuba

Name of property: Urban Historic Centre of Cienfuegos

Location: Municipality of Cienfuegos

Date received: 2 February 2004

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, this is a section of a historic town, which is typical of a specific period.

Brief description:

The colonial town of Cienfuegos was founded in 1819 in the Spanish territory, but initially colonised by immigrants of French origin. It became a trading place for the country's sugar cane, tobacco and coffee production. In the early phase of development, its architecture followed neoclassical style later becoming more eclectic, but retaining a harmony of the overall townscape.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The city of Cienfuegos is located on the Caribbean coast of southern central Cuba at the heart of the country's sugar cane, mango, tobacco and coffee production. It was founded in the Spanish territory in 1819, but settled by the French who came from Bordeaux, Louisiana and Philadelphia. The town was laid out in a grid plan with 25 blocks that formed its original centre, limited by: St Elena Street in the north, St Clara in the south, Velazco in the west, and Hourruitiner in the east. In the late 19th century, new functions were introduced into this emergent commercial port city, which continued growing. The original grid plan was multiplied toward the inland and along the coast. Today, the city is still developing and has some 167,000 inhabitants.

The nominated core zone is 70ha, consisting of a part of the 19th century town. The buffer zone is 105ha, covering one urban block on the landside and two blocks on the peninsula. In addition, it extends along the coast towards the south.

The original central square of the town, Square of Arms, was enlarged with another block to the west in 1830 (together 2ha). This area was reserved for public functions: government buildings, a church, the customs building and similar. The town developed as a compact structure, initially in neoclassical style, later eclectic, forming an overall unity. Most of the buildings have one or two stories. The façades are generally plain without porches.

The most representative buildings include: the Government Palace (City Hall, current office of the Provincial Assembly of the Popular Power), San Lorenzo School, the Bishopric, the Ferrer Palace, the former lyceum building, and some residential buildings.

At present, in the historic centre, there are six buildings that remain from the first half of the 19th century, and 327 buildings from the second half. There are 1188 buildings from the 20th century, most of them from the first half. There are some 300 public buildings, and the rest are mainly residential.

History

The city of Cienfuegos was founded in 1819 as the Colony Fernandina de Jagua. The first inhabitants were partly Spanish, partly from various other origins, such as French colonies, and came from Bordeaux, Louisiana, Philadelphia and Guarico. This formal foundation followed a series of earlier attempts in this region, where the economy was based on cattle raising and cultivation of tobacco. From the 18th century, there was wax production, as well as timber and sugar. In the 1830s, the colony grew based on the increment of sugar production but also due to its favourable geographical location. The settlement was recognised with the category of "Villa" as a confirmation of its urban aspect. It was authorised to trade in domestic and foreign field. In 1840, there were already registered companies in the town, and the growth continued in the following decades. In the 1860s, it was the third city of the country. After the Independence War against Spain ended, there was new capital entering from North America. By 1914, American investors were proprietors of the most important sugar mills in the province. Trade developed mainly with the United States, the principal market for Cienfuegos. With the new administrative division of 1976, the city of Cienfuegos became the capital of the province with the same name, increasing its development further. The local administration remained concentrated in the downtown area. As a whole, this area has retained its historic fabric without such drastic changes as is common in many historic cities.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The nominated area is legally protected by several decrees. This includes the *Law of Protection to the Cultural Heritage of the National Assembly of the Popular Power of Cuba* (1977) and related Ordinance. The *Urban Historic Centre of Cienfuegos* was declared National Monument in 1995. The *Plan of Territorial and Urban Classification of Cienfuegos Municipality* is dated 2001.

Management structure:

The following are amongst the agencies responsible for the management the different aspect of the historic city: *Office of Monuments and Historical Sites, Provincial Commission of Monuments; Provincial and Municipal Direction of Physical Planning; Provincial and Municipal Housing; CITMA (Science, Technology and Environment); Assembly of the Provincial and Municipal Popular Power;*

National Council of Cultural Patrimony, Ministry of Culture.

There exists the *Plan of Territorial Classification and Urban Development* of the Cienfuegos Municipality, which provides the framework of the economic, social and environmental processes of the historic town. It also provides for the rehabilitation of the cultural and environmental heritage, and controls the quality of new development.

The *Tourism Development Plan* guides development of visitor management, the exploitation of the urban historic centre and its commercialisation based on its historical development. Attention is given the character of the historic architecture, the culture, traditions, and recreational activities.

Resources:

The financial resources are provided by the Municipal and Provincial authorities, the Ministry of Tourism and Commercial Corporations, the property owners and other agencies.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The property is nominated on the basis of three criteria: ii, iv and v.

Criterion ii: Cienfuegos was founded in the early 19th century in a territory under the Spanish domain, but it was colonized by the French coming from Bordeaux, under the control of Don Luis of Clouet Pietre Favrot, native of Louisiana, former French colony. It is the only city of the Caribbean to be founded by the French and it became the most Francophile city of Cuba. The city developed in a cosmopolitan spirit, integrating French, Spanish, North American, African and Chinese immigrants into this multicultural colony.

Criterion iv: The city was born under neoclassical auspices, then shifting toward eclecticism. It can be categorically reaffirmed that this is the Caribbean Historic Centre from the 19th century with the greatest concentration of 19th- and early 20th-centuries classic works (of all types); more than enough reason to demonstrate its transcendence, not only in Cuba but in the whole Caribbean, Central America and part of South America.

Criterion v: ... The city of Cienfuegos, a model of 19th-century urban development in Cuba and the Caribbean, is an exceptional testimony of the European colonial planning under the neoclassical current, where the design of the port city and its adaptation to the local context can be appreciated in all its magnitude. ... The natural physical framework is conserved in this area, along with the built that defines the population's great container, their habitat and the functions of the socio-political and cultural centre that it is irradiated toward the city in its whole.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Cienfuegos in August-September 2004.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Town and Villages.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The historic town of Cienfuegos has been subject to urban growth which still continues to the degree that the population has increased by some 50% in the past 20 years. Through this process, the urban fabric has been extended on the same pattern as the first plan. The historic core has retained its form, and has not been subject to drastic transformations. It is legally protected.

State of conservation:

The state of conservation of the historic sector of Cienfuegos is considered satisfactory.

Management:

The historic area is well protected and well managed.

Risk analysis:

Being the centre of a growing city with various commercial and administrative functions, the centre areas are obviously subject to pressures of change. Nevertheless, the historic area is legally protected and under the direct control of the state authorities.

Cienfuegos is classified as tropical, semi-humid coastal area, which is subject to natural disasters, such as hurricanes.

The historic town is visited daily by an average of 250 tourists, which do not give any particular pressure.

Authenticity and integrity

The nominated historic area has retained its authenticity and integrity fairly well both in terms of the historic architecture and the types of functions.

Comparative evaluation

Even though the Latin American states generally obtained independence by the early 19th century, Cuba formally remained under Spanish rule until 1898. Contrary to South American continent, where the development was fairly slow in the 19th century, Cuba was subject to a strong economic growth associated with the international currents. Few new cities were founded in this century, and Cienfuegos became the first significant example in Spanish-speaking America. It was Cienfuegos which thus introduced the modern concepts of urban planning, based on new order, hygiene and services. In this, it was sharply distinguished from the earlier colonial towns.

This so-called Republican Era was significantly different from the previous colonial period, seen particularly in relation to political and economic trends. The period was marked by the application of the theories developed during the Spanish Enlightenment and aimed to introduce modernity in Latin America. In this context, Cienfuegos became a transitional city between Spanish colonial urbanism and the fully developed modern Latin American

urbanism, later giving rise to cities like La Plata in Argentina.

There are few towns founded after independence in the Spanish America in the 19th century. None of the cities founded in this period are comparable with Cienfuegos neither for importance nor in their urban and architectural quality. At the same time, it is noted that the claim for the influence by the French immigrants cannot be substantiated in terms of architectural or urban development, which were mainly guided by the Spanish authorities. In fact, Cienfuegos is rather comparable or even anticipates the urban development that took place in North America and Spain itself (for example, the case of the late 19th-century planning in Barcelona by Cerdà).

The area of Punta Corda with its wooden architecture in neo-Moresque style, offers a modern version of the colonial port town. While still recalling the traditional models, Cienfuegos here represents a new rationality and new modernity in the relationship of the urban area with the harbour.

There are a large number of Spanish colonial towns already inscribed on the World Heritage List. However, there are no towns representing the 19th century and the introduction of modern planning principles in Latin America. The only modern town in Latin America on the World Heritage List is the city of Brasilia created in the 20th century.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The historic town of Cienfuegos is a significant early example representing the development of modern urbanism in the Spanish America. Having its roots in 18th-century Spanish Enlightenment, the development of the town reflected the specific conditions of this Republican Era. Politically, the aim was to render the town safe at a time of slave rebellions and illicit trade activities. Economically, Cienfuegos responded the 19th-century sugar boom and the pressing for expansion into new agricultural areas.

The economic success of the city, due to an agriculture based on the vast and fertile lands that surround it, allowed for the development of a city that responded to the power, objectives and needs of a rising bourgeoisie, in strong contrast to earlier colonial settlements whose urban organization and forms were a voluntary expression of the joint power of the Church and the Spanish Crown.

In its urban plan, Cienfuegos, while based on a regular grid, reflects new concepts deferring entirely from the earlier colonial towns. These result from the most advanced ideas and trends in socio-economic and cultural fields, finding expression in its Spanish neo-classical character interpreted in America. The urban plan is a continuum as a growing organic entity, and never planned to be fortified. The amplitude of its streets and absolute geometric regularity of the grid were the result of the new ideas concerning urban order, the civic role of public spaces and the need for natural light and ventilation to foster public hygiene. No other city in the region presents these characteristics with the clarity, order, beauty and forcefulness of Cienfuegos.

Evaluation of criteria:

Criterion ii: the nomination refers this criterion to the French influence of the first immigrants in Cienfuegos. However, rather than French influence, the significance of Cienfuegos is considered to be in the early implementation of the ideas of Spanish Enlightenment. The town exhibits an important interchange of influences in urban planning, and it became an outstanding example of the new trends that were developing in Spain and in North America in this period. Cienfuegos also anticipated many of the planning trends that later developed in Latin America and in Europe, for example La Plata in Argentine and Barcelona in Spain.

Criterion iv: Cienfuegos is considered an outstanding example of an urban plan and architectural ensemble that reflects the neo-classical town planning concepts as these were being implemented in the 19th century. The architecture of the town is of high quality, representing neo-classical style in the first phase, and then shifting later toward Eclecticism.

Criterion v: the nomination document proposes the use of this criterion referring to Cienfuegos as “a model of 19th-century urban development ... [where] the natural physical framework is conserved in this area ...”. While appreciating the impact of the urban development in its territorial context, this criterion would be better suited when the question is about traditional land use, which is not the case here. The significance of the nominated property, limited to the historic centre, is considered to be well represented under the criteria ii and iv.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Inscribes the property on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria ii and iv:**

Criterion ii: The historic town of Cienfuegos exhibits an important interchange of influences based on the Spanish Enlightenment, and it is an outstanding early example of their implementation in urban planning in Latin America in the 19th century.

Criterion iv: Cienfuegos is the first and an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble representing the new ideas of modernity, hygiene and order, in urban planning as these developed in the Latin America from the 19th century.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone



García de la Noceda Palace



José Martí Square