

Identification

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| <i>Nomination</i> | Roskilde Cathedral |
| <i>Location</i> | Island of Sjaelland |
| <i>State Party</i> | Denmark |
| <i>Date</i> | 30 September 1993 |

Justification by State Party

Roskilde Cathedral is in many ways the most important ecclesiastical building in Denmark. It is the first Gothic building in the country, although it contains older Romanesque parts. It is built of red brick, which was beginning to be made in Denmark at the time. Unlike most other Danish churches, the architecture of the cathedral is influenced mainly from northern France. Since the 15th century the cathedral has been the favoured place of burial of the Danish royal family. Across the centuries a number of architecturally very important chapels were added to the original church building, in each of which the best artists of the period displayed their talents.

The cathedral is a unique artistic achievement and is associated with the history of Scandinavia and the Baltic region, on the architecture of which it exerted great influence. The annexed chapels are outstanding examples of architecture and sculpture from the Middle Ages to the present day. There is no comparable building in the region.

Category of Property

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Roskilde Cathedral is a *monument*.

History and Description*History*

The first religious structure on the site was a wooden church built around 980 by King Harald Bluetooth. This was replaced successively by two travertine structures, built in 1030 and 1080 respectively.

In the mid 12th century brickmaking was introduced into Denmark by craftsmen from Lombardy, and Bishop Absalon decided around 1170 to rebuild his cathedral in this new material; his work was continued after his death in 1191 by his successor, Bishop Peder Suneson. The original structure was in Romanesque style, based on contemporary western European pilgrimage churches, with a tree aisle. However, when only the eastern half was built the plan was changed, under the influence of the Gothic style then being introduced into France. The transept was located further back and the towers planned for the choir were removed to the west end. The inspiration for this early Gothic plan came from the cathedrals of Picardy and the Ile-de-France, such as Noyon, Sens, Laon, Arras, Tournai, and Notre-Dame-de-Paris. Work was virtually complete by around 1275, apart from the north tower, which was finished at the end of the 14th century.

In the centuries that followed, chapels, porches, and other structures were built around the cathedral, first by bishops and nobles and later by the royal family, which partly hid the original structure. These included the chapter-house, gradually extended from the early 13th century to the end of the 15th century, the chapels of St Andrew (1387) and St Bridget (later 15th century). Royal additions included the Chapel of the Magi (Christian I: 1460), the Chapel of Christian IV (early 17th century, replacing two earlier chapels), and the Chapel of Frederik V (1772, in neo-classical style). Two royal chapels were built in the present century: the Chapel of Christian IX (1924) and the detached New Royal Ground (1985).

After the Reformation the cathedral fell into disrepair. In the 1630s Christian IV began restoration work, which involved the addition of spires to the towers and radical redesign of the roof. It has been continuously maintained since that time, with a major restoration project in the second half of the 19th century.

Description

Roskilde Cathedral is an aisled basilica in Gothic style with a semi-circular chancel gallery. Externally it is c. 86 m long and c. 28 m wide (excluding buttresses). The structure is essentially in brick, with occasional use of small boulders in the interior. Externally the walls stand on a plinth of granite ashlars two courses high; in the interior there is a hollow chamfered plinth of the same material. As with many early structures in this material, the bricks vary in both size and colour. Especially characteristic of the early period is the use, both externally and internally, of fluted bricks. Traces have been found of the use of squared oak beams for reinforcement, further evidence of the early date of the structure, at a period when the builders were still uncertain about the properties of the new material, brick.

The interior walls were originally bare, apart from the vaulting and the soffits of the arches, which were plastered. The whole interior was later coated with a greyish-yellow, finely smoothed stucco. Most of the original rich wall paintings have disappeared.

Oluf Mortensen's Porch, named after the mid-15th century Bishop who commissioned it, is one of the finest examples of Danish brick Gothic architecture. Stylistically it is linked with the Gothic brick architecture of northern Germany. It is noteworthy for its fine roof gable and for the asymmetrical but finely balanced form of the lower part of the gable facade. The bricks used for the walling are remarkable for their richness of shading, which demonstrates excellent control of the brickmaking process.

The two-storeyed *Chapel of the Magi*, completed around 1463, was originally built in glazed brick, but little remains of the glazing. The second storey, known as the Knights' Hall, contains some noteworthy carved stone. The main feature of the Chapel is, however, its rich late medieval mural decoration, which entirely covers the walls and vaults; it includes representations of saints and scenes from the life of Christ, as well as the coats-of-arms of the founders of the chapel, Christian I and his Queen, Dorothea.

Christian IV's Chapel, designed as a sepulchral chapel for the king, was the first post-medieval addition to the cathedral. It is constructed in the Dutch Renaissance style, using small red bricks with sandstone string courses and ornament. The steep ribbed vault is the largest in Denmark. An important feature is the fine wrought-iron gate, the work of Christian IV's smith, Caspar Fincke. The mural paintings date from the mid 19th century and depict outstanding men of Christian's reign.

Frederik V's Chapel is the work of C.F. Harsdorff, the leading exponent of the neo-classical style in Denmark. It has a cruciform central chamber connected by a transverse building to the south aisle of the cathedral. Its plans were approved by the king in 1768, but the original design underwent a number of modifications before it was finally consecrated in 1825.

Many of the medieval furnishings of the cathedral disappeared at the Reformation, and more were sold at a notorious auction in 1806. Of what remains the outstanding piece is the reredos, a masterpiece of Dutch religious art dating from c. 1560. It is a triptych, probably from Antwerp, and bears scenes from the life of Christ. The canons' stalls of 1420 are of considerable importance because of the unique series of pictures on them.

The cathedral's royal monuments, by contrast, constitute an outstanding series, starting in the 15th century with Queen Margrethe. No fewer than twenty Danish kings and seventeen queens are buried in the cathedral, and their tombs represent the evolution of funereal monumental art over several centuries.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Roskilde Cathedral belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Danish Church, the statutes of which are established by the Danish Parliament (Folktinget). The Special Church Surveying Commission, appointed by the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, under the terms of the Act for the Preservation of Churches of Special Importance, supervises the maintenance of some forty Danish historic churches, including Roskilde Cathedral.

The Town Plan (Kommuneplan) regulates the main structure of the development of Roskilde. The Local Plan for the surroundings of the cathedral lays stress on the need for harmony in its setting, and controls aspects such as new building, traffic, lighting, signboards, and paving. It incorporates provision of a buffer zone in the immediate surroundings of the Cathedral.

Roskilde is the subject of one of the fifty "Town Atlas" schemes in Denmark. These detailed studies define townscape quality and also trace the development of the historical and aesthetic qualities of the selected historic towns.

Many of the buildings in the environs of Roskilde Cathedral are protected under the terms of the Preservation of Buildings Act. These effectively double the extent of the buffer zone in the Local Plan.

Management

Primary responsibility for the management of Roskilde Cathedral rests with its congregational council (Menighedsrådet), which is elected quadrennially by the 13,500 adult members of the Church in its parish. The council in turn elects a churchwarden, also for four years, who is directly responsible for the management of the cathedral; his work involves coordinating the work of the cathedral's architect (appointed by the congregational council), consulting engineers, and craftsmen.

The churchwarden is responsible to the congregational council, which is in turn responsible to the deanery committee. This committee, composed of the rural dean and three or four members elected by the congregational councils of churches within the area of the deanery, is the supervising authority in economic and technical matters.

The Special Church Surveying Commission (see above), consisting of highly qualified architects, restoration and conservation experts, and historians, is consulted on all major restoration or alteration proposals; it reports directly to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. The Commission meets the congregational council and the cathedral architect annually to survey the building and produce an appraisal report.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Regular inspections are carried out by the Special Church Surveying Commission. These have established that the main load-bearing structure is very stable. Occasional cracks in the Gothic vaults are kept under constant observation. Problems with the stability of Frederik V's Chapel in the 1970s led to reinforcement being added to the vaults and a steel ring being inserted around the dome.

Systematic maintenance is carried out on the lead and copper roof panels, window panes and mullions, walls, vaults, fittings, and floors. The wrought iron of Caspar Fincke has recently been cleaned and given rust-protection treatment.

An investigation is in progress to develop a procedure for drying out the walls in the medieval chapter-house, which are affected by rising damp, owing to the presence of underground water sources.

Restoration work is in progress on the Renaissance gable of Christian IV's Chapel; this is coupled with an expert analysis of the allegorical statues, to ascertain their original locations.

Work is also in progress on the Margrethe spire, the copper cladding of which developed holes after reconstruction following a fire.

Authenticity

Like any major religious structure that has been in continuous use since it was built, Roskilde Cathedral has undergone many changes. Earlier chapels were demolished to permit the construction of royal chapels and periodic fires led to restoration and reconstruction, often accompanied by significant stylistic changes.

The major restoration initiated by Christian IV to remedy the dilapidation that followed the Reformation resulted in substantial changes being made. In the latter part of the 19th century the entire building was restored; the work was led by the highly qualified churchwarden of the time, Steen Friis, in collaboration with leading architects and art historians.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

The property was visited in April 1994 by an ICOMOS expert mission which approved highly of the quality of the conservation and restoration work and of the management of the Cathedral and its precincts.

Qualities

Roskilde Cathedral is of significance for three principal reasons. First, it is the mausoleum of the Danish Royal Family over many generations, for which there is no parallel in Europe. Secondly, it represents the earliest use of brick in the construction of large religious buildings in northern Europe. Thirdly, because of the successive addition of chapels and porches to commemorate Danish kings since the 16th century, in each case in the current architectural style, it is an epitome of the history of European architecture in a single structure.

Comparative analysis

This is the first major Gothic place of worship in brick to be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. Gothic cathedrals and abbeys in stone have been the subject of numerous comparative studies, but ICOMOS has been unable to find one devoted to brick Gothic, which is characteristic of the North European plain and south-western France, for example.

At its 18th meeting in July 1994 the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee deferred further consideration of this nomination, to await the results of a comparative study of brick Gothic cathedrals. This was prepared by Professor Hans Andersson of the Department of Archaeology, University of Lund (Sweden) and submitted to ICOMOS for evaluation. In his report Professor Andersson comments that:

"Several features make the cathedral remarkable in a Northern European perspective. There are, it is true, relatively many medieval brick churches in Northern Europe ... Roskilde does not fit this picture. It is a unique example of a large important church from the transition between Romanesque style and Gothic. It shows the heavy influence of French architecture, which is unusual at this time in Scandinavia ... It is also important to point out another architectural feature which is rare in Northern Europe, at least in preserved form. The church has a whole series of side-chapels added over a long period. These give us an opportunity to read the architecture epoch by epoch. ... There is thus a high architectural value and a significant historical content in the building, not only for Denmark but also for other countries."

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

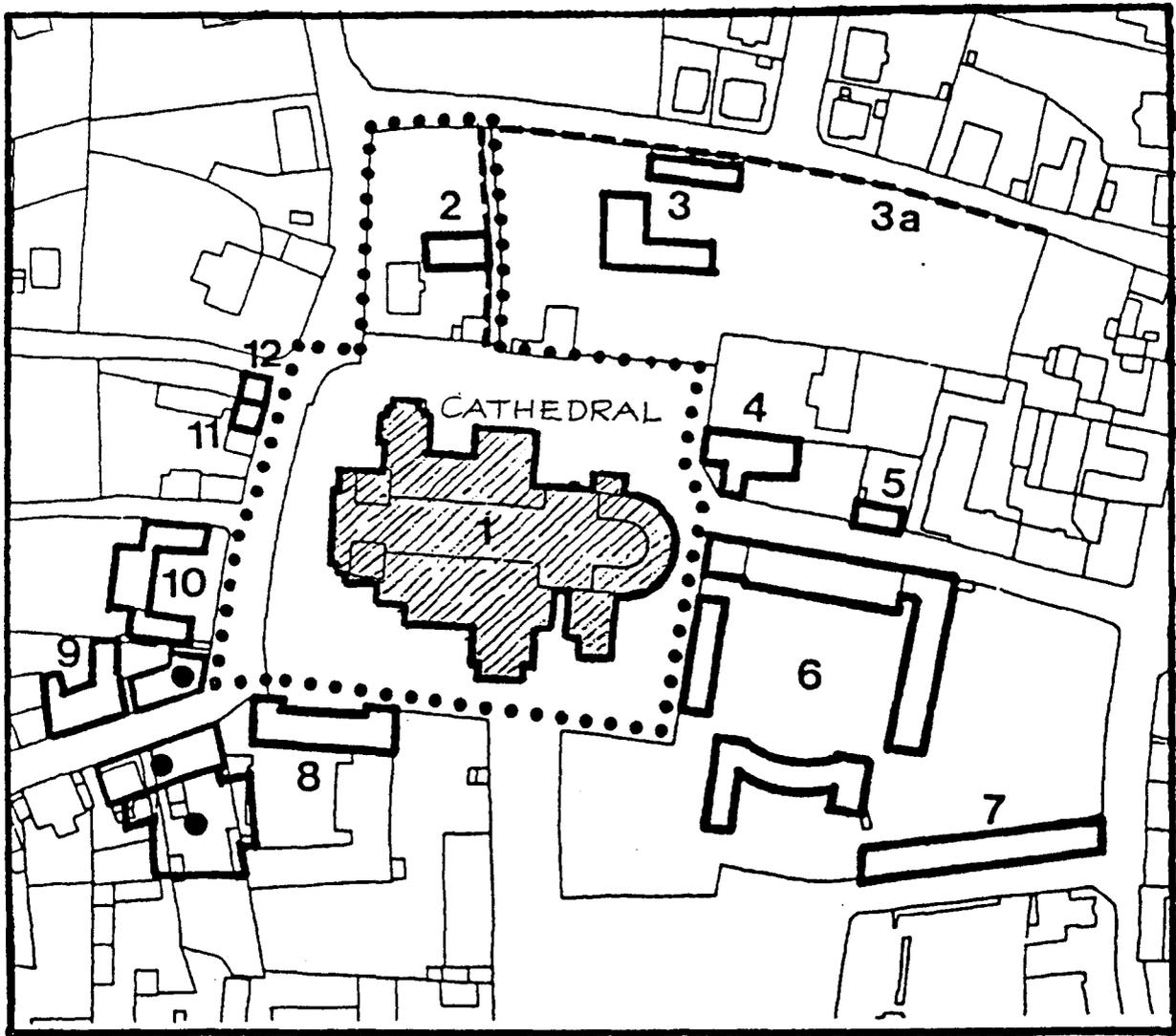
ICOMOS urges the responsible authorities to expedite its programme for the square to the south of the Cathedral, especially in relation to the reduction of parking.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*.

Roskilde Cathedral is the earliest major ecclesiastical building in brick in northern Europe and had a profound influence on the spread of brick for this purpose over the whole region. Both in its form and in its setting it is an outstanding example of a north European cathedral complex, especially noteworthy for the successive architectural styles used in the ancillary chapels and porches added during the centuries during which it has served as the mausoleum of the Danish Royal Family.

ICOMOS, September 1995



SURROUNDINGS OF THE CATHEDRAL

Dotted line: The Buffer Zone proper.
 Boundaries of Local Plan No. 136. (Premises of the Cathedral)

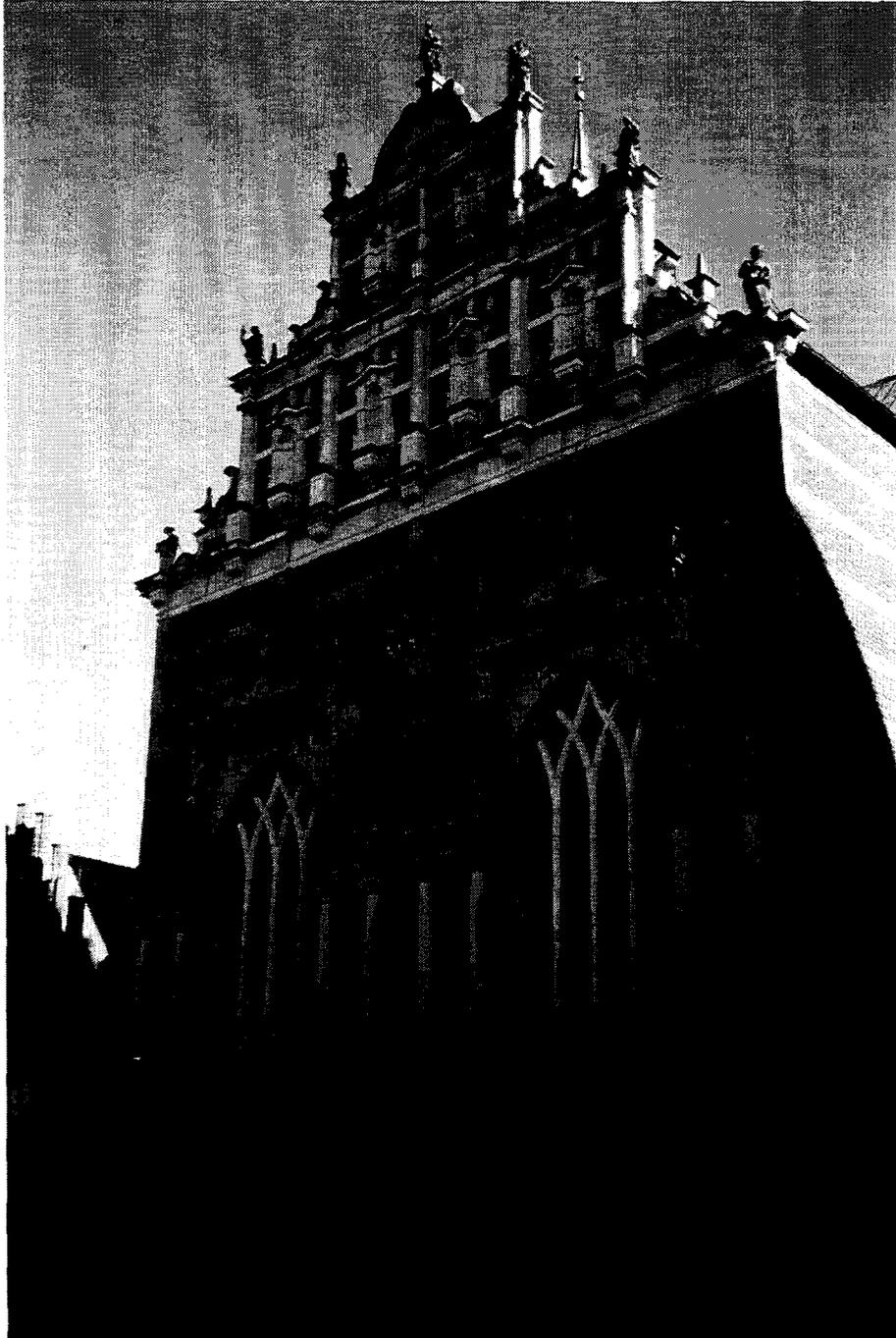
Buildings 1-12: Listed Buildings
 (Heavy lines) protected through the "Preservation of Buildings Act" which ensures a very effective additional Buffer Zone around the Cathedral.

(Beyond this the whole quarter of the town surrounding the Cathedral is protected through strict Town Plan regulations).

Roskilde : délimitation du site et de la zone tampon /
 delimitation of the site and the buffer zone



Roskilde : façade sud de la cathédrale, chapelle de Christian I
et chapelle de Frédéric V /
southern facade of the cathedral, Christian I chapel,
and Frederik V chapel



Roskilde : chapelle de Christian IV /
Christian IV chapel