

PORTUGAL

Monastery of Batalha

Brief description

The Monastery of the Dominicans of Batalha was built to commemorate the victory of the Portuguese over the Castilians at the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385. It was to be the Portuguese monarchy's main building project for the next two centuries. Here a highly original, national Gothic style evolved, profoundly influenced by Manueline art, as demonstrated by its masterpiece, the Royal Cloister.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription

1983

Agencies responsible for site management

- Comissão Nacional da UNESCO
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (i) (ii)

Justification provided by the State Party

L'important monument de l'architecture gothique en terre portugaise, le Monastère de Batalha, dépasse le niveau artistique national et mérite son inclusion dans le patrimoine esthétique de la communauté internationale.

A - Cependant, avant de présenter les arguments à l'appui de cette candidature, nous allons présenter brièvement les coordonnées stylistiques dans lesquelles s'insère l'ensemble monastique de Batalha.

1. Nationales : Parmi les antécédents de l'architecture gothique au Portugal, se détache le couvent de Alcobaça (1158-1200) « uno dei piú importanti monasteri cisterciensi d'Europa » de nette ascendance bourguignonne. Cependant, contrairement à la plupart des abbayes anglaises, telles que Salisbury, Petesborough, Worcester, Norwich, Durham, Exeter, Wels, etc. - exception faite de Gloucester et Canterbury - les cloîtres d'Alcobaça et de Batalha se situent du côté gauche de l'Eglise. Portugais du style de l'Alentejo et de saveur franciscaine, se révèle le plan du portail latéral.

2. Extra-nationales : L'on trouve des analogies avec le gothique orné anglais dans la façade, dans le système de fenêtrage et dans certains aspects des voûtes. Mais l'on décèle déjà, dans la morphologie et la grammaire décorative du portail principal, des influences du gothique français, ainsi qu'à l'intérieur de l'église où règne une verticalité spécifique de ce même style. Cependant elle s'en éloigne par l'absence d'autres caractéristiques fondamentales de ce style, soit la « structure diaphane » des murs, l'utilisation de la lumière comme matériel de construction et la vision diagonale de l'espace.

En ce qui concerne l'aspect de la dialectique de la lumière et de la couleur et contrairement à l'état actuel, la tradition affirme que le Monastère de Batalha ne possédait des vitraux que dans le chœur de l'Eglise et dans la Salle du Chapitre, d'où l'absence du chromatisme lumineux, caractéristique des grands monuments gothiques de France.

B - Inclusion du Monastère de Batalha sur la Liste du Patrimoine Mondial

En ce qui concerne cet important problème, nous voulons mettre en relief les arguments justificatifs suivants:

1. La qualité esthétique originale du grand portail des « chapelles inachevées », attribué à Mateus Fernandes.

Avec suffisamment de valeur « a se », et sans préjudice de sa parfaite intégration dans l'ensemble monastique de Batalha, ce grandiose portail constitue, sans aucun doute, un des sommets du patrimoine artistique de la communauté des nations, car il représente une des premières et magnifiques synthèses des arts européens, africains et asiatiques, stylistiquement unis dans l'art manuel, relié, du point de vue politico-économique, à l'entreprise maritime portugaise. Ainsi, le portail du Panthéon de D. Duarte présente des influences ornementales provenant du « horror vacui » des grammaires décoratives musulmane et indienne, alliées à une domination technique absolue du calcaire qui transforme le bas-relief en visions de très fines dentelles ou en écume d'énormes vagues. Le portail constitue donc, en soi-même - nous insistons sur ce point - une valeur du patrimoine artistique de l'humanité à conserver, à protéger, et à défendre des intempéries, des agents naturels et de l'action éventuellement maléfique des êtres humains.

2. La Salle du Chapitre :

A la rareté, la hardiesse et la beauté de la conception de son espace intérieur, se joint une science technique rare dans l'exécution du système de toiture qui constitue une leçon historique de la statique, de la solidité, et reflète la conscience professionnelle, chantée d'ailleurs dans la littérature portugaise de l'époque romantique.

3. Le cloître royal :

Ses proportions poétiques ainsi que la décoration manuelle des baies des galeries, attribuée à Maître Boylac, rendent ce cloître digne de figurer sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

As a monument charged with a symbolic value from its foundation, the convent of Batalha was, for more than two centuries, the great workshop of the Portuguese monarchy. It is not surprising that the most characteristic features of a national art would have been determined there, both during the Gothic and the Renaissance periods. Batalha is, thus, the conservatory of several privileged expressions of Portuguese art: the sober and audacious architectural style of the end of the 14th century, with the stupendous nave of the abbatical, of which the two storey elevation (broad arcades and high windows) renders more impressive its dimensions (80 m high and 22 m wide); the exuberant aesthetic of the capelas imperfeitas; the marvellous flamboyant arcades embroidered in a lace-work of stone: the "Manueline barque" even more

perceptible in the openwork decor of the tracery of the arcades of the royal cloister than on the immense portal attributed to Mateus Fernandes, the Elder: and finally, the hybrid style of João de Castilho, architect of the loggia constructed under João III.

ICOMOS recommends the inscription of the monastery of Batalha on the World Heritage List based on criteria (I) (represent a unique artistic achievement) and (II): have exerted great influence, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture; while insisting on the necessity of deviating the highway which is close to this remarkable complex and which endangers its preservation.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1983): The Bureau requests the authorities to state their intentions concerning the project for the re-routing of the highway next to the Monastery.

- 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

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone has been defined, but is not adequate; 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

- Regulation of the Municipal Director Plan : certain chapters can be found specifically concerning classified heritage, the protection of heritage (alteration of buildings and materials, etc.) ; Resolution of the Council of Ministers nº 136/95, of the 11 November ; Basic law of Cultural Heritage : notably controlling alternations made on classified buildings, as well as the archaeological excavations when necessary ; Law nº 107/2001, of the 8 September ; protected zones of architectural heritage DG 223, of the 23 September 1967; DR 268, of the 19 November 1977; J. O. 223, of the 23 September 1967; J.O. 268, of the 19 November 1977

- Protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed

- "Deviation at Batalha": The construction of an alternative lane which would lessen automotive traffic passing in front of the monument; Timeframe: 2006-2007

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, religious use
- Monument to the Unknown Soldier and the Museum of the Veterans League

Management/Administrative Body

- Site manager/coordinator on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced in 05/2002; revision will be completed in 05/2008
- Management plan is considered to be adequate;
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Regional direction of Coimbra by the IPPAR

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Funding provided by: State Budget; Support Programs from the European Union
- Extra funding through World Heritage status
- Funding is sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: not provided

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

- Average : conservation, management, promotion, interpretation ; education ; visitor management

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

- Training initiatives most importantly in heritage management, surveillance, security, and conservation/maintenance
- Training needs in educational services for school support

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 296,709 in 2004 (computer generated)
- Visitor facilities: Church, Founder's Chapel, D. João I Cloister, (capitular room, museum of offerings to the unknown soldier, etc.), D. Afonso V Cloister and unfinished chapels

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, visitor management
- The studies try to diagnose positions aiming to realize posterior situations. Concerning visitors, we offer better information on the monument

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage site amongst visitors, local communities, businesses and local authorities
- Web site available
- Involvement of local population: The monument is the main point of monumental tourist interest in the region and draws many visitors. Nevertheless, the local population does not actively participate in cultural initiatives taking place at the monastery.

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 14th (1990)

Conservation interventions

- Restoration or substitution of the columns in the D. João I cloister; Construction to avoid infiltration in the Church; Intervention for the stained glass windows of the Church; Exterior repair of the D. Afonso V cloister
- Present state of conservation: good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure; natural disasters; visitor/tourism pressure
- Problems of chemical pollution and vibrations caused by the vehicles passing in front of the monastery
- Problems caused by rising humidity and other outside aggravations resulting from the added noise and vibrations from shows or parties organized near the monument

Measures proposed/taken

- "Deviation at Batalha": deviation of the lane. Timeframe: 2006
- Waterproofing undertaking: solve the problems caused by rising humidity. Timeframe: 2006

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- The mission of the IPPAR, the organization responsible for this building, is to protect and value heritage, as in the case of this monastery

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, economic and management
- Strengths of management: the nomination of a director who coordinates the daily management of the monument, in order to follow up on cultural and economic goals; the implementation of multiple cultural activities for visitors and the local population, in order to attract a new public: heritage-themed conferences, exhibits on sculpture, painting, and photography, concerts taking place in different areas of the monument, International Meeting of Vitrail (1995), International Meeting of the Stone (1995), European Heritage Days (each year)
- Weaknesses of management: lack of human resources; insufficient training; allotted budget is insufficient