

SPAIN

Monuments of Oviedo and the Kingdom of the Asturias

Brief description

In the 9th century the flame of Christianity was kept alive in the Iberian Peninsula in the tiny Kingdom of the Asturias. Here an innovative pre-Romanesque architectural style was created that was to play a significant role in the development of the religious architecture of the peninsula. Its highest achievements can be seen in the churches of Santa María del Naranco, San Miguel de Lillo, Santa Cristina de Lena, the Cámara Santa and San Julián de los Prados, in and around the ancient capital city of Oviedo. Associated with them is the remarkable contemporary hydraulic engineering structure known as La Foncalada.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1985, 1998

Agency responsible for site management

- Department of Culture, Social Communication and Tourism of the Regional Government of the Principality of Asturias
Mailing Address(es)
E-mail:
Website:

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

These buildings constitute a unique artistic achievement in the crucial point in which Spain fluctuates between the continuation of its Visigoth culture and the acceptance of an Arab proposal.

The three churches of this period are outstanding and extremely rare.

They represent an exceptional testimony, showing the development of Spain in the cultural, social and artistic fields during the 8th century.

They are characteristic examples of an architectural style.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(1985): ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of these three edifices on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (i), (ii) and (iv).

- Criterion (i): Pre-Romanesque Asturian architecture represents a unique artistic achievement which is neither a metamorphosis of Paleo-Christian art nor a feature of Carolingian art. These churches which are of basilical layout, entirely vaulted, and which make use of columns instead of piers, have very rich decors which contain Visigoth reminiscences, Arabic elements as well as shapes which associate them with the great sanctuaries of Asia Minor.

- Criterion (ii): Asturian monuments have exerted decisive influence on the development of medieval architecture on the Iberic peninsula.

- Criterion (iv): the palaces and churches in the surroundings of Oviedo provide eminent testimony to the civilization of the small Christian Kingdom of Asturias during the splendour of the emirate of Cordoba.

In a memorandum which it forwarded to ICOMOS during the World Heritage Committee's Bureau meeting, the Spanish government expressed its wish that three further monuments be included: the churches of San Salvador de Valededios and San Julian de los Prados as well as the Cámara Santa in Oviedo. This further request is justified from the standpoint of historical knowledge of the art of the Kingdom of Asturias. The structure of the Church of San Salvador de Valdedios, consecrated in 893, is very similar to that of San Miguel de Lillo and is constitutes a handsome example of "pre-Romanesque" decor influenced by Mozarabic art.

As for the other two buildings, ICOMOS would like to make two comments which should not be considered nullifying: [...]

(1998): ICOMOS does not consider the historic centre of Oviedo *per se* to be of World Heritage quality. It does, however, believe that the Cámara Santa, the Basilica of San Julián de los Prados, and La Foncalada to be worthy of adding to the existing inscription. [...]

Recommendation: That this nomination be **deferred** to await the agreement of the State Party to the proposal to reformulate the proposal for extension to cover only the Cámara Santa, the Basilica of San Julián de los Prados, and La Foncalada.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1998): The Bureau took note of the evaluation of this property by ICOMOS and of its recommendation. Following interventions by members of the Bureau, it was decided to refer back this nomination to the State Party and requested that it be revised and renamed "The Churches of Oviedo and of the Kingdom of the Asturias". This property would include the Cámara Santa, the San Julian de los Prados Basilica as well as the Foncalada.

Bureau (November 1998): The Bureau recommended the Committee to approve the extension of this site to include the Cámara Santa, the Basilica of San Julián de los Prados, and La Foncalada, on the World Heritage List, under the existing criteria (i), (ii) and (iv).

Session (1998): The Committee approved the extension of the Churches of the Kingdom of the Asturias to include the Cámara Santa, the Basilica of San Julián de los Prados, and La Foncalada in Oviedo, on the World Heritage List, under the existing criteria (i), (ii) and (iv).

- Proposal for text has been made by State Party. A proposal for the inclusion of Valdediós is being considered

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate
- A change to buffer zone proposed by State Party

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- The 11 February 1955 Decree granting monumental area status for different sectors of the city of Oviedo. This declaration was reinforced by the 1996 Special Plan for the protection of Monte Naranco and several provisional studies delimiting the buffer zone around San Julián de los Prados and the Foncalada
- Cultural Interest Sites with Monument status by The Cultural Heritage Act, Law 1/2001 of the Principality of Asturias of 6 March

- The Third Additional Provision of the Cultural Heritage Act of the Principality of Asturias focuses on the "protection of Asturian pre-Romanesque" indicating that specific plans will be developed with a view to establishing surveillance systems and periodic control of the monuments included in this group and guided public visits
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- The buffer zones surrounding a number of Asturian pre-Romanesque monuments still need to be defined. Provisional buffer zones are currently in force and have been incorporated, with full legal protection, into urban planning regulations in the municipalities of Oviedo and Lena. In the case of Oviedo a Special Plan for the Protection of the Monte Naranco Landscape has been in force since 1996. Today, the Department of Culture, Social Communication and Tourism is working on the formal establishment of buffer zones around Cultural Interest Sites declared in accordance with the 1933 Heritage Act or previous applicable provisions which encompass all pre-Romanesque monuments

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

- Visitor attraction, urban centre, religious use, rural landscape

Management /Administrative Body

- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: regional, local
- Management control lies exclusively with the Department of Education and Culture of the Principality of Asturias which consults with its advisory body, the Cultural Heritage Council
- The Oviedo Town Hall
- The Archbishopric of Oviedo
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- The creation of a Consortium for the management of all pre-Romanesque monuments in Asturias is under study by the Principality of Asturias and the Archbishopric of Oviedo
- A draft of the Management Plan

- Integrated Action Plan for The Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Principality of Asturias

5. Management Plan

- Ongoing project to draft a Management Plan for the Asturian pre-Romanesque covering the ensemble of pre-Romanesque monuments in Asturias regardless of whether or not they have been declared World Heritage sites
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Once drafted, an agreement must be reached by the General State Administration and the Government of the Principality of Asturias (the latter having full jurisdiction over Cultural Heritage within the autonomous community). This Management Plan must likewise be supported by the Asturias Cultural Heritage Council given that it affects Cultural Interest Sites

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Budget available
- Budget of the Regional Government of the Principality of Asturias (Department of Culture, Social Communication and Tourism)
- General State Budget (Ministries of Housing and Culture)
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: not provided

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

- Good: conservation, promotion, education
- Average: management, visitor management

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

- The University of Oviedo offers undergraduate degrees in Art History and History, studies indirectly related with the restoration of monuments such as Geology or Chemistry. This university also has a University School for Tourism. In Avilés there is a Advanced School of Art offering studies on the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Assets

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics from ticket sales (number not provided)
- Visitor facilities: Visitor's centre, classroom focusing on Asturian pre-Romanesque Art; guided visits
- Oviedo Tourism Excellence Plan. <http://www1.ayto-oviedo.es/oviedo/es/imageturistica.htm>

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management studies
- Archaeological initiatives, structural pathology studies, conservation technical surveys, petrologic studies, technical treatment studies, exhaustive bibliographical and documentary compilation, study on the state of visitors to Asturian pre-Romanesque monuments was conducted

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Heritage days, conferences, expositions on Pre-Romanesque Art; academic courses
- Education strategy includes compulsory school education in secondary education level on Asturian cultural heritage with a special accent on pre-Romanesque Art
- Web site available
- Local participation: school curriculum and other activities

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Conservation projects, archaeological excavations, building renovation and rehabilitation works, mural paintings and stucco

restoration works, urban planning projects, landscape projects etc.

- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures, environmental; visitor/tourism pressures
- Specific issues: structural deterioration; urban environment and traffic, use of monuments; water seepage; tourism pressure
- Emergency measures taken: Conservation projects for the specific monuments, urban planning scheme

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken: structural pathology measures

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status, conservation, social
- Strengths of management: urban planning improved the buffer zones and access; maintenance and conservation work has been undertaken; multi-disciplinary studies; the conservation of mural paintings; education and information material and dissemination of the values improved
- Weaknesses of management: A joint integrated action plan for pre-Romanesque sites is lacking and is now being developed by The Ministry of Culture and the Department of Culture, Social Communication and Tourism of the Government of the Principality of Asturias; Systematic use of indicators showing the evolution of the buildings and their surroundings is advisable (indicators targeting the evolution of the areas surrounding the monuments; the state of conservation of the buildings; pressure from use; the role of monuments in the lives of citizens); the state of repair, conservation and care is not homogeneous; urban pressure and increasing pressure from liturgical use

Future actions:

- Current drafting of a Management Plan
- An agreement has been signed between the Spanish Historical Heritage Institute and the Department of Culture, Social Communication and Tourism of the Government of the Principality of Asturias with a view to carrying

out urgent work on Santa María del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo as concerns improvements to surrounding areas and specific initiatives targeting the monument itself

- The Ministry of Development and the Oviedo Town Hall are currently setting up a preliminary draft plan to cover the motorway link between the capital city and Gijón and Avilés which runs adjacent to San Julián de los Prados