

Trebič (Czech Republic)

No 1078

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Czech Republic
Name of property: Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius Basilica, Trebič
Location: Vysocina region, Trebič district
Date received: 16 November 2001
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 historic town.

Brief description:

The ensemble of the Jewish Quarter, the old Jewish cemetery and St. Procopius Basilica in Trebič represent the co-existence of Jewish and Christian cultures from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. The Jewish Quarter is an exceptional testimony to the different aspects and functions of this type of community. St. Procopius Basilica, built as part of the Benedictine monastery in the early 13th century, is an exceptional witness to the influence of Western-European architectural heritage in this region.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The proposed site is in the town of Trebič, and it has three distinct components: the Jewish Quarter, the Jewish cemetery, and St. Procopius Basilica, all situated on the north side of the river Jihlava. The Jewish Quarter has an area of 4.4 ha, and it is limited by the river in the south, a hillside in the north, and a road in the west. The cemetery lies behind the hill to the north, and St. Procopius Basilica stands on a small hill to the west of the Jewish Quarter. The rest of the historic town of Trebič has developed especially on the southern side of the river. The whole is part of an urban conservation area, and it is surrounded by an extensive buffer zone (ca 143 ha).

Jewish Quarter: The Jewish Quarter rises from the river up on the hillside. The urban layout is characterised by two main streets, of which the lower one is noticeably wider than the other street higher up on the hillside. These streets and the riverside are linked through a number of small alleys. Some of these medieval alleys go through the houses. The buildings are vernacular in character, and consist generally of a vaulted ground floor and one or two upper floors with wooden ceilings. Some of the façades have features dating from the Renaissance or baroque period, but many are of later date, also the 20th century. Considering the characteristic condominium structure of the quarter, the buildings are distinguished by their

diversity rather than unity of style. A typical building may have a medieval alley going through, Renaissance vaults in the ground floor, 18th century façade in the upper part, 19th century main door, and 1930s plaster work in the lower part of the street front. Due to political constraints, the Jewish quarter was limited in space. Due to natural limits, this area was never fully fenced, though there was 'separation' ('*eruf*') until 1875, after which Jews were free to move and buy property elsewhere. As a result, wealthy people moved out, and the area remained in the hands of the poor.

Characteristically the area is organized in condominiums. There were often several owners in one house (even up to 16), and buildings were internally subdivided; owners could change their part of the building autonomously. On the street level there was often a shop or a workshop; the upper levels were reserved for residential use. There were few services within the houses.

There is no special typology for a Jewish house, which is characterised more in terms of the use of a limited space and the condominium structures. This leads to linkage of different houses through acquisition of spaces from neighbouring buildings. There are houses with no street entrance, because these were entered from the other lots. Some houses have entrances at different levels, utilising the possibility of the sloping ground. In Trebič the area has preserved all essential social functions, synagogues, schools, etc., as well as a leather factory. The oldest mention of a synagogue is of 1590; the present Old (Front) Synagogue dates from 1639-42, a simple baroque building, today used as a church for Hussites. The New (Rear) Synagogue dates from the 18th century; it has been recently restored and serves as a museum and meeting room.

Jewish Cemetery: The cemetery is situated above the Jewish Quarter, behind the hill. Access was arranged via a special road for carriages. Historically speaking this is the second cemetery; there was one earlier close to the monastery. The current cemetery has two parts: the first part dates from the 15th century, and the second from the 19th. There are some 4,000 stones; some carvings are important. At the entrance, there is a ceremonial hall, built in 1903, which is intact.

St. Procopius Basilica: The basilica is situated in a good position on the hill with a view over the whole of Trebič. It was originally a monastic church (13th century) and part of a Benedictine monastery (founded 1101). Now, it is linked with the castle built on the site of the monastery after its destruction in the 16th century. The features of the church are rather unusual in its European medieval context. This is partly due to the mixed use of Romanesque and early Gothic elements. It is a triple-choired, three-aisled basilica with an elongated presbytery, an open north porch with square plan, and two western towers. Beneath the east end and the presbytery, there is a crypt with pointed rib vaults. The basilica is built in granite and sandstone. The exterior of the basilica is in square-cut granite blocks. The stones are rather rough on surface and somewhat irregular, suggesting that the surfaces would have been rendered originally. The west elevation is in baroque style, with 'gothicized' features in it, and it has plaster rendering. The walls of the interior are now bare, though some traces of original plaster have been discovered in the choir. The nave has gothicized baroque vaults with rendered fields.

History

A Benedictine Monastery was founded in a strategic position at the crossing of Jihlava River, in 1101. Its existence stimulated the establishment of a market, which brought traders and amongst them also Jews. This was the beginning of a structural development of the monastery together with the settlement, called 'Podklasteri' (lit. beneath the monastery) in its immediate vicinity, and the town of Trebic itself on the other side of the river.

The Jewish Quarter was sited in the focal point of the commercially expanding settlement, close to the monastery and the ford across the river. Not having any defences, it went through the same fate as the rest of the town, and had to suffer of many attacks and destructions, such as those in the 15th century by the Hungarian king. In favourable years, the site developed and prospered allowing the necessary facilities to be built. In the 16th century, orders were issued to expel the Jews but these were not carried out. As a whole the authorities were here much more tolerant than elsewhere in Europe. In earlier years, the Jews were involved in money lending, but also working in some crafts: tanning, bead firing, glove making, and soap making. From the 17th century on, they were mainly involved in trade and such crafts. There were further destructive events in the subsequent centuries, including fires and frequent floods – in areas close to the river.

From the beginning, the Jewish Quarter had its own self-government with an elected magistrate and two councillors. In 1849, it had its own administration led by a mayor, and it was called Zamosti (lit. over the bridge). In the 1920s, the area was merged with the town of Trebic, and the population started being mixed. In 1890, there were nearly 1,500 Jews in this area, but in the 1930s only 300 were of Jewish faith. All Jewish residents were deported during the Second World War, and none are left at present. The houses are now owned by people of non-Jewish faith.

The Benedictine monastery, established in the early 12th century was richly endowed, and an important centre of ecclesiastical life and economic development. The first monastic church was rebuilt during the reign of King Wenceslas I (1230-53), being ready in the 1250s. After some damage in 1468, the church was repaired at the end of the century. During the first half of the 16th century, the monastery was rebuilt as a castle, and fully renovated in baroque style in 1666-84. There were various minor changes also in the basilica, which was then restored by a well-known Czech architect, Frantisek Maxmilian Kanka. The works began in 1726, and restoration of the nave was concluded in 1733. Externally several windows were widened and buttresses added, the south-west tower was rebuilt, and a new west front with two towers was constructed in the style of gothicising baroque. While avoiding any radical 'restorations', the church was subject to some restoration in the 1920s and 1930s. The southern chapel, which had been destroyed, was rebuilt in the 1950s.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The conservation legislation in the Czech Republic, dating from 1987 with subsequent amendments, includes the protection of historic towns. The historic town of Trebic was declared a conservation area in 1990. The Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius Basilica with the castle and gardens are included within the Trebic conservation area (1990), which extends on both sides of the river Jihlava. All sites are surrounded by a common buffer zone (1996). Out of the 120 buildings of the area, 11 are protected as listed monuments, including the two synagogues and houses, as well as the cemetery and St. Procopius Basilica. At the same time, all buildings in the conservation area are protected, and the buildings in the buffer zone are subject to planning control. Of the 120 buildings in Jewish Quarter, 90% are privately owned.

Management structure:

Management is exercised at different levels. At the level of the Trebic town, it is the responsibility of the city administration and planning office. The Trebic Fund has the role to obtain funding from different sources, and to initiate legal acts to sustain its activities and to promote the profile of local monuments. The District Council, the department of culture, is responsible for the supervision of protection and maintenance in the protected area and buffer zone. The regional office of the State Monuments Institute, Brno, participates in the development of relevant policies. At the State level, the Ministry of Culture, Monument Care Section, assigns financial resources from the state budget. The State Institute for Monument Care, Prague, offers professional methodological assistance in the preparation of conservation and restoration programmes and projects.

The whole nominated area is subject to the territorial conservation plan of the town of Trebic, which is one of the protected historic towns in the Czech Republic. Apart from protection, the plan provides for the functional use, control of heights and volumes of new constructions, and for traffic management in the area. Trebic is registered in the government-approved programme for the regeneration. The citizens of Trebic are reported to be proud of their city.

Resources:

Over the past decade, the State has provided financial resources on a regular base both for the Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius Basilica. The District Council of Trebic has also provided funding for the restoration of historic buildings in the Jewish Quarter. The owners of all buildings, whether listed or not, are eligible for financial aid, following conditions based on the conservation law. In 2002, 35 owners have applied for such aid to repair external wall renderings and roofs. In 1999, there was a similar action, focused on the improvement of utilities, including sewage.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The monastic Basilica of St. Procopius is a linking element between the Romanesque/Gothic transitional buildings of France, Germany, Austria and Hungary, and should be regarded as one of the most bizarre buildings of its time. It can be described as a synthesis of the Plantagenet style and the earlier principles of Romanesque building, conditional on the arched vaulting. The Jewish Quarter has been preserved as an exceptionally cohesive unit, and has survived a series of adverse natural catastrophes and incursions by its foes. Its continual existence over 500 years between the monastery/château and the Christian town bears witness to the tolerance of the local population, who generally did not allow reservations regarding Jewish residents to develop into persecution or pogroms, as occurred elsewhere. The Jewish cemetery is one of the largest in the Czech Republic, and contains around 3,000 tombstones.

The nominated area is proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, ii, iii* and *iv*: *criteria i* is associated with the Basilica as a highly original building reflecting late Romanesque and Gothic trends reflected in French and German influences; *criteria ii* as the site expresses the remarkable symbiosis of two cultures, Jewish and Christian; in addition, the basilica is outstanding for its architectural and artistic features that refer to western Europe; *criteria iii* refers to the tradition of Jewish community in this location from the Middle Ages to 1945; *criteria iv* refers to the structure of the community, where all essential elements are maintained. This is extremely rare, and this site is considered the most representative.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in June 2002. ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and architectural historians.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The Jewish Quarter has met with several destructive events, including armed conflicts (eg in 16th century), as well as several fires and floods. The last major flood occurred in the 1980s. Since then, the city has carried out a risk prevention programme, and providing the river with a system to avoid floods.

State of conservation:

The nominated area and monuments are in reasonable condition as a result of rehabilitation and conservation work over the past decade. Several buildings are still in need of conservation work and possibly structural consolidation. In the past, the area has been subject to fires and floods, but initiatives have been taken recently to mitigate these issues. In the Jewish Quarter, there is an on-going programme, and owners can have financial incentives for the repair and restoration of their properties. The Jewish cemetery is in good condition with a

permanent caretaker, and the stone fence has been repaired recently. St. Procopius Basilica is well maintained.

Management:

The management of Trebic is exercised at various levels, with the contribution of the central state, as well as regional and local authorities. The Jewish Quarter has received particular attention in this context. Over the past decade, the on-going management programme has contributed to a systematic improvement of the quality and safety of the area, involving the inhabitants to repair and restore their properties.

Risk analysis:

In the past, there have been many disasters due to fire and floods. In terms of flood prevention, the authorities have recently improved the protection systems along the river. These problems, nevertheless, do remain as potential risks for the Jewish Quarter. Another potential risk is also in over-restoration especially in relation to tourism development. The general character of the Jewish Quarter is vernacular, and the present interventions are consistent with this spirit. It will be important to maintain this character even in the future as it is part of the identity and special quality of the place. It is also related to appropriate control of the correct use of materials and techniques in the area.

Authenticity and integrity

Authenticity:

The Jewish Quarter has been subject a number of changes over the centuries; it has suffered from fire and floods. The changes are due especially to the characteristic condominium structure of the Jewish community within a limited space. Properties were continuously subdivided and exchanged according to needs. The fabric of the area has retained an exceptionally good stratification ranging from the late Middle Ages to the 20th century. Often, in one building, there can parts that relate to several centuries. The vaulted ground floors were built in stone, and have thus often retained medieval fabric. The upper floors tend to be more recent being in wood. In the overall, the area is satisfactory in terms of its historic authenticity. The cemetery has retained a large number of tomb stones from the different centuries, reaching even the present time. The Basilica has had an intervention in the early 18th century (eg the nave vaults), and some minor restorations in 1862, 1929-30 and also recently. The building has well retained its historic character and authenticity. The castle, built over the foundations of the previous monastery in the 16th century, is also in good condition, and used today as a museum.

Integrity:

The functional association of the Jewish Quarter, the cemetery and the Basilica (with its castle/monastic complex) is important for the definition of the significance of the place. Visually and structurally, the Jewish Quarter has well retained its integrity. The visual relationship between the Quarter and the Basilica is intact. There is some modern development over the hill also within the buffer zone, but the volumes are within reasonable limits. There are some modern constructions on the 'Christian

side' of the river, such as the head offices of the former Communist Party, which is inside the buffer zone. A few taller buildings have been built, possibly in the 1960s, further away outside the buffer zone. Nevertheless, these do not disturb, and the current planning regime does not allow anymore large volumes to be built.

Comparative evaluation

The Jewish Quarter has been selected by the Czech authorities as a result of a careful comparative study of all Jewish settlements in Europe. It is understood that such settlements have been destroyed in many countries, though some still survive in Central Europe and in the Mediterranean. Such is the case of Evora in Portugal, where a large area of the town was inhabited by Jews, but was 'Christianised' already in the 16th century. One of the most important Jewish quarters was in Prague, but this area was rebuilt in the 19th century, apart from the old synagogue and cemetery. The name 'Ghetto' would have been first applied to the Jewish quarter in Venice, though its exact etymology is uncertain. In its character, however, the Ghetto of Venice is different from the Jewish quarters in Moravia, due to the social-economic situation, and the architectural character of the area. In Venice the area is still inhabited by Jews though mixed with others.

Jewish quarters have been included in the World Heritage List as part of various historic towns. For example, the historic centre of Bardejov (WH 2000) includes a Jewish quarter with a fine 18th century synagogue. Similarly, there is a Jewish quarter with a small synagogue in Ferrara (WH 1995).

In the context of Central Europe, Moravia, due to its more favourable politics, has preserved several examples of settlements. Out of these, the Jewish Quarter of Trebic is considered the most representative. It is considered the most complete, including all the functions of a Jewish settlement, such as synagogues, schools, a hospital, a factory, etc. It is presented in association with the St. Procopius Basilica, which represents the cultural-economic context that motivated the foundation of the Jewish settlement.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The nominated Jewish Quarter, cemetery and St. Procopius Basilica are closely associated with each other, providing an exceptional testimony to the coexistence of Jewish and Christian cultures from the Middle Ages up to the Second World War.

Evaluation of criteria:

Criterion i: The State Party has referred especially to St. Procopius Basilica as a highly original building representing late Romanesque and Gothic trends in French and German influences. While the basilica is certainly exceptional in its geographical and historical setting, it cannot be considered outstanding in comparison to the models in Western Europe. Therefore, ICOMOS does not consider this criterion relevant to the nomination.

Criterion ii: The State Party refers to the site as an expression and a remarkable symbiosis of two cultures, Jewish and Christian. The basilica is considered outstanding for its architectural and artistic features with reference to Western Europe. ICOMOS agrees that the architecture and the urban form of the Jewish Quarter resulted from the adoption of local building and crafts traditions to the special needs of the Jewish community and the challenges that it met over the centuries. This form of interchange over many centuries was specific and important to Europe, where Trebic is seen as an exceptional witness.

Criterion iii: The State Party refers to the Diaspora of the Jewish community in this location over several centuries. ICOMOS agrees that the Jewish Quarter of Trebic, the cemetery and St. Procopius Basilica together bear an exceptional testimony to this cultural coexistence. It is thus considered as an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition, which in this form has disappeared.

Criterion iv: The State Party refers to the Jewish Quarter as an exceptionally well-preserved and cohesive urban whole representing the gradual development of the built-up area. Agreeing that the site does contain the essential elements, ICOMOS however maintains that the Jewish Quarter and the Basilica do not necessarily form a type of urban form that could be defined as outstanding. In fact, it is understood that the typology varied according to local building traditions. Therefore, it is not the type that should be referred to but rather the way the Jewish traditions were expressed within the site, giving it a particular cultural impact.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the future

In the future, particular attention recommended to continuously monitor the appropriate use of materials and the quality of the execution. It is also recommended that training and information sessions be organised in this regard, addressing the property owners and the contractors who work in this area.

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria ii and iii:**

Criterion ii: The Jewish Quarter and St. Procopius Basilica of Trebic bear witness to the coexistence of and interchange of values between two different cultures, Jewish and Christian, over many centuries.

Criterion iii: the Jewish Quarter of Trebic is an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions related to the Jewish diaspora in central Europe.

ICOMOS, March 2003