

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 460

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Trinidad and the "Valle de los Ingenios"

Location : Province of Sancti Spiritus

State Party : Cuba

Date : January 19, 1987

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the inclusion of the proposed cultural property on the World Heritage List be deferred until the government of Cuba has adopted adequate measures to protect the sugar mills and their environment of the "Valle de los Ingenios".

C) JUSTIFICATION

In 1514 the conquistador Diego Velasquez founded a new town in honor of the Holy Trinity. He chose a site not far from the southern coast of Cuba, midway between the island's two tips.

Protected on the north by the mountainous region of El Escambray, and lying at the edge of the Caribbean Sea on the south, Santissima Trinidad, or simply Trinidad, was one of the bridgeheads for the conquest of the American continent. It was the departure point for the expeditions led by Francisco Hernandez de Cordova in 1517 and by Cortez in 1518. At the end of the 16th century, Trinidad's economic role increased, relaying the town's strategic utility.

In the 17th century, cattle, tobacco and contraband were the economic mainstays of a largely Spanish population. Towards the end of the 18th century, the sugar industry was firmly established in the "Valle de los Ingenios" (valley of the sugar mills) and Trinidad prospered. In 1779 the city had 6,486 inhabitants; in 1795, 13,881; in 1827, there were 28,706, of which 11,697 were slaves working in the 56 mills. By 1796 Trinidad was the third largest city in Cuba and a Lieutenant Governor was named there, invested with authority over the whole centre of the island. The town's golden age was the 19th century, with record productions of sugar : in 1846 there were 669,192 arrobas (about 7,700 metric tons).

The urban layout of Trinidad dates for the most part from the first two centuries of its existence. But stone buildings were rare prior to the big sugar industry period, and the present city owes its charm to its 18th and 19th-century buildings.

On the Plaza Mayor, overlooked by the campanile of the convent of San Francisco, several great edifices attract one's attention (the Palacio Brunet and the Palacio Cantero). Elsewhere, other 19th-century public buildings, constructed between 1824 (the Dragoons' barracks) and 1857 (Plaza Serrano), are landmarks easily identifiable by their size and quality in an area of extremely homogenous streets. Characteristic of the city's domestic architecture are the single-story houses whose verandas and wide awnings, and sometimes, wood balconies stand out against their polychromatic background of vibrantly multi-coloured walls, with door frames and windows often in a contrasting color. A draft master plan was drawn up in 1979 to protect them in their entirety, but at the present time only the articles dated 4 August 1977 and 10 October 1978 have passed into law.

ICOMOS is favorable in principle to the inclusion of the proposed cultural property on the World Heritage List at a future date. However, faithful to the principles expressed with regard to Potosí (Bolivia) and Guanajuato (Mexico), ICOMOS considers that the nomination must be more explicit about the symbiotic relationship between the industrial heritage of the "Valle de los Ingenios", the source of Trinidad's economic prosperity, and the architectural heritage of the city.

Among the remarkable groups of buildings in the "Valle de los Ingenios" only the major industrial complexes (the Manacas-Iznaga, the San Isidro and the Palmarito sugar mills) and a few villages of craftsmen, like San Pedro, have been specifically proposed.

No perimeter of protection has been defined and there is no written guarantee that the sugar mill buildings, the machinery (if it still exists), the plantations or the environment will be preserved. If the criterion of exemplarity, justifying Trinidad's inscription on the World Heritage List, is to be demonstrated, it will be necessary to ensure that the industrial infrastructures, the cultivated lands and the environment will be safeguarded on the same basis as the major monuments in the city and its traditional domestic architecture.

ICOMOS, September 1988