

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Monastery of Santa Maria of Poblet
Location : Catalonia
State Party : Spain
Date : January 3, 1989

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That this cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria I and IV.

C) ICOMOS OBSERVATIONS

ICOMOS had previously recommended inclusion of this site on the condition that the proposed delimitation of the site be adjusted to include the outer enceinte of the monastery. This condition having been met and a modified restoration policy at the site having been adopted, ICOMOS is now prepared to recommend without reserve that this site be included on the World Heritage List.

D) BACKGROUND

Poblet presents a unique blend of architectural forms. First and foremost, it is a Cistercian abbey, one of the largest and most complete that exists. North of the church, laid out in the usual way, is a group of monastic buildings which include the great cloister with its fountain, the chapter room, the monk's dormitory, the parlor and its annex, the closed cloister, the monk's room which is now a library, the calefactory, the refectory and the kitchens. The former lay brothers' buildings are on the west and the infirmary to the north. The monastery is complete : it has its private buildings -gatehouse and guest house on the west, the abbot's residence on the south, the prior's lodgings on the north- and its work buildings -the kiln is on the northwest side, an oil mill on the south. The spatial organization of common areas for the living is as clear as a textbook model; even the space reserved for

the dead seems regulated in the same spirit, i.e. a cemetery for monks, one for lay brothers and one for the laity.

Poblet is also a fortress, impressive in its massive size. Lying midway between Tarragona and Lerida, at the foot of the Sierra de Montsant, the old Cistercian monastery founded in 1150 by the monks of Fontfroide was transformed into a stronghold by Peter IV the Ceremonious, King of Aragon (1336-1387) during the War of Castile. It was he who had the 608 meters of interior walls built. These walls are an excellent example of 14th-century military architecture : crenelated battlements with walls 2 meters-thick and walkways, reinforced with high towers that are either square or polygonal, and its Royal Gate (1379-1397) defended by machicolations.

Poblet is, finally, a royal residence, directly associated with the history of the houses of Barcelona, Aragon and Castile. The monastery was founded upon the demand of Raimond Beranger IV, the saintly Count of Barcelona, to colonize reconquered lands. It was later considered a symbolic monument of the dynasty. Shortly after 1349 Peter IV decided to do more than fortify Poblet. In the abbey church he had Jaime Cascalls and Jorge de Deu, masters of royal works, build a sumptuous dynasty burial place, using a completely new principle : two enormous sarcophagi reposing on surbased arches, providing for communication between the choir and the deambulatory. The sarcophagi served as sepulture for several kings of the houses of Catalonia and Aragon, identified by their recumbent statues : Alfonso II the Chaste, John I and John II on the southern, epistle side, James I the Conqueror, Peter IV and Ferdinand I on the northern, gospel side. Several queens are buried alongside their spouses. The royal pantheon extends through the arms of the transept with individual sepultures. Poblet was both the necropolis and the home of kings. In 1397, Martin I commissioned the architect Arnau Bagués to transform the former lay brothers' building into a palace. The project was never completed, but royal chambers, on the east side, later were reserved for royal visitors.

The history of Spain can be traced in the additions made to Poblet : the King of Aragon, Alfonso IV the Magnanimous, had the St. George Chapel built in 1452 to commemorate the victory at Naples in 1442; the Golden Gate was completed on the occasion of a visit by the Catholic sovereigns and restored during the visit of Philip II. The symbolic value of Poblet in the cultural heritage of Spain was more recently marked by the visit of Alfonso XIII to the disused

monastery in 1926 and by the return of ashes to the royal pantheon in 1952.

ICOMOS recommends that Poblet be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria I and IV.

- **Criterion I.** Poblet is a unique artistic achievement and one of the most perfect expressions of Cistercian style in the 12th 13th and 14th centuries. The abbey contains masterpieces from every period such as the great alabaster retable by Damian Forment (1529).

- **Criterion IV.** The Santa Maria of Poblet complex presents a unique blend of architectural forms generally reserved for distinct applications. Poblet has served as one of the largest and most complete of the Cistercian abbeys, as a massive military complex, and as a royal palace, residence and pantheon.

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