

# 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° 529

## A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos

Location : Department of Santa Cruz

State Party : Bolivia

Date : 7 August, 1989

## B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

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

## C) JUSTIFICATION

Sent by the Spanish Crown to assure the conquest of the "Indias del Cielo", that is, to bring Christianity to indigenous communities, the Jesuit fathers arrived at the Vice-Royalty of Peru in 1567. The first collegial church was founded in 1577 at Potosi, on Bolivian territory; in 1592, a new house was established at Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The friars of Santa Cruz carried out missions in the upper valleys north east of the Cordillera only at the end of the 17th century. In 1671 the provincial Father of Lima sent them on the mission of bringing Christianity to the Moxos. Shortly afterward, Agustin Gutierrez de Arce, the Governor of Santa Cruz, encouraged them to go to the territory of the Chiquitos. The establishment in 1696 of San Francisco Javier by Father José de Arce was the first in a series of ten missions that ended in 1760 - seven years after the expulsion of the Company of Jesus -with the mission of Santo Corazon de Jesus.

Armed with their earlier experiences, the Jesuits seemed to have rationalized, in the Chiquito territory, the model of "reduction" which was largely inspired by the ideal cities of the humanist philosophers, Thomas More's Utopia and Philip Sidney's Arcadia. Sources stipulated how to select a site, in a zone that could not be flooded, that could furnish sufficient wood for construction. They defined the urban model: the houses of indians regularly spaced along the three sides of a rectangular square, with the fourth reserved for the church, the collegial church, the workshops and the schools, and sometimes also for the "Casa de la Misericordia" which housed widows and abandoned women.

No white man, except the Jesuits and the civil or religious authorities, could penetrate the theocratic republic of "reductions"; only the Chiquito language was authorized, which led to the grouping of minority groups, Arawaks or Chapacuras, into "barrios". Writings by Father Fernandez and other missionaries describe a unique experience of Christianizing, based on the respect of specific social structures: the Caciques were the chiefs of the community and transmitted the Fathers' orders to it; the class of the "Mapono" and the "Chamanes" obviously disappeared, but the tripartite organization of Chiquito society was respected. In addition to the Caciques, there were two groups: the "families" - privileged artisans, carpenters, painters or sculptors - and the "pueblo". These two groups, moreover, had their representatives: two family alcades and two pueblo alcades.

Unlike other Jesuit missions in South America that were abandoned after 1767, the reductions of the Chiquitos survived the expulsion of the Company of Jesus. In the 19th century, Alcide Dessalines d'Orbigny still admired the regular layout of San Rafael, and Count Francis of Castelnau marvelled at the celebration of a mass of Palestrina in the church of Santa Ana that was attended by an orchestra of 30 musicians.

Today Bolivia offers, as a living heritage, six ensembles of the 10 reductions founded from 1696 to 1760. They are San Francisco Javier, Concepcion, Santa Ana, San Miguel, San Rafael and San José.

- San Francisco Javier - the westernmost and the first of the Chiquitos reductions - is now a small village whose traditional habitat preserves some characteristics of the domestic architecture of the Jesuits, although the height of 6.25 meters established for each house is not frequently encountered. The school has survived, as well as the church, the work of Father Martin Schmidt, a missionary with an appealing personality who was an architect, a composer and instrumentalist and a maker of stringed instruments.
- Concepcion, founded in 1709, was not established permanently until 1722. The church, begun in 1725, is also the work of Father Martin Schmidt.
- Santa Ana was founded in 1755 and its church was erected between 1768 and 1831, after the expulsion of the Jesuits. Note should be taken of the rich interior decoration and, in particular, that of the main altar and the pulpit.
- San Miguel was established in 1721. The church, erected beginning in 1750, was executed according to designs by Father Johann Messner.

- San Rafael has retained from the Jesuit period only its church, constructed in about 1750 by Father Martin Schmidt; it is distinguished by an outside promenade gallery and a wooden bell tower. The very beautiful furnishings it contains - altar pieces, pulpit, paintings and objects in gold - and the ensemble of buildings were restored in 1972.
- San José, founded in 1698, seems to have been one of the most interesting "reductions" of Chiquito: four chapels for processions stand at the corners of the square. In a religious ensemble which was extensively remodeled in the 18th century, there are some vestiges, including, in addition to the stone church, a mortuary chapel built in 1740; a bell tower built in 1748 and a house for the Fathers which was rebuilt in 1754.

ICOMOS notes the merits of the selection which excludes from the nomination form the reductions of San Ignacio, San Juan Bautista, Santiago, and Santo Corazon de Jesus. The nomination form is coherent in that it groups together a significant sampling of well-preserved religious buildings. Interest in the architecture of the Chiquitos missions, dating from 1930 and the work of Mario Buschiazzo, and carried on by José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, took concrete form in 1976 with the first restoration projects that were entrusted to the Swiss architect Hans Roth and, in 1977, with a report published by UNESCO (Jose Xavier Martini, Las antiguas misiones jesuíticas de Moxos y Chiquitos. Posibilidades de su acercamiento turístico). The restoration projects, which are exemplary insofar as they were undertaken with the participation of the population, are now well underway. They concern the churches only.

These churches are now proposed for inclusion; all vestiges of settlements have been excluded, including, it seems, the collegial churches or houses of the Fathers which are not mentioned explicitly.

ICOMOS expresses an opinion in favor of this proposal, which does not overlap with the inclusion of the Jesuit missions of Guaranis (Argentina and Brazil), in 1983 and 1984. The present nomination does not involve an archaeological heritage, but a living heritage, the inclusion of which is recommended on the basis of Criteria IV and V.

- **Criterion IV.** The churches of the Chiquitos missions of Bolivia, large houses with a double-sloping roof and a large porch roof overhanging a west gallery, are a remarkable example of the adaptation of Christian religious architecture to local conditions and traditions. Long walls defining three interior naves divided by wooden columns and two exterior galleries, also supported by columns, constitute- except in the case of San José where the construction, in stone, was inspired by a baroque model- a very unique type of architecture marked by the special treatment of the wooden columns and banisters.

- **Criterion V.** These traditional architectural ensembles, that often enclose remarkable popular art objects (e.g., at the church of Santa Ana), have become vulnerable under the impact of changes that threatened the Chiquitos populations following the agrarian reform of 1953.

#### ICOMOS observations

The inclusion on the World Heritage List of these traditional architectural ensembles, which can offer the international community the occasion to watch over their conservation, would be worse than abandoning them if it were to lead to a major change in the environment under the impact of pressures of tourism. ICOMOS, while understanding the reasons for a limited protection of the churches, expresses the wish that the World Heritage Committee ask for the establishment of a vast protection perimeter around each of the six nominated properties. No text providing for the protection of the environment appears to exist at the present time, with the exception of the Proyecto Misiones de Chiquitos, annexed to the nomination form (Volume I, N°. 944-98).

ICOMOS, April 1990

In response to this wish, the permanent Bolivian delegation to UNESCO transmitted to the Secretariat a copy of the resolutions adopted during the months of July and August 1990 by the authorities designated to protect national heritage in the Santa Cruz region. These are :

- 1) the Pro Santa Cruz committee;
- 2) Cordecruz (public agency responsible for land improvements);
- 3) Plan Regulador de Santa Cruz (technical authority for urban planning and ground use);
- 4) Mayoral offices of towns possessing mission sites.

Through these declarations and regulatory texts, and at all levels of responsibility, the public administration and technical and operational agencies clearly express their determination to preserve the environment of the Chiquitos missions.

ICOMOS applauds this positive response to the questions posed in the Bureau of the Committee.

ICOMOS, October 1990