

A) IDENTIFICATION

<u>Nomination</u>	:	Notre Dame cathedral, Palais du Tau and former Abbey of Saint Remi
<u>Location</u>	:	Region of Champagne Ardenne
<u>State party</u>	:	France
<u>Date</u>	:	1 October 1990

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

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

C) BACKGROUND

Of great importance in the early days of Christianity in Gaul, Reims had a number of archbishops who were major figures in the Catholic Church and canonized after their death. This was the case for the most famous among them, Remi (440-533), the archbishop who baptized Clovis and instituted the Holy Anointing of kings. The ceremony was fully established in the 12th century, and after that time nearly all French sovereigns were consecrated at Reims. For the Royal Anointing, which took place in the town's cathedral, the Ampulla containing the Chrism, or holy oil, was brought from the Abbey of Saint Remi.

Remi died in 533, and was buried in St. Christopher's chapel, which was replaced in the 11th-12th centuries by a Benedictine abbey church. The monastic buildings date from the 12-13th century, but were extensively remodeled during the 17th century. However some very interesting medieval parts were conserved.

The present cathedral, built on the site of the Carolingian church which was destroyed by fire, is one of the great French cathedrals of the 13th century. Along with the cathedrals of Chartres and Amiens, it is at the summit of the classical Gothic style. At Reims all the innovations introduced at Chartres may be found, except that the builders of Reims, perhaps conscious of erecting

the church for the coronation of the kings of France, enhanced the structural elements with greater lightness and made more openings in the walls to allow a maximum of light to filter through the stained glass and illuminate the sacred space. Nowhere is sculpture so prevalent on a Gothic façade than it is at Reims. More than simple ornamentation, the sculpture of the Reims cathedral is an integral part of the architectural composition. Reflecting both Ile-de-France traditions and the minor arts of the Champagne region, the sculpture possesses a monumental character and a grace inspired by the silver or goldsmith's art. While the smiling figures on the west façade are of great fame, one must not overlook the sumptuousness of the composition of the Crowning of the Virgin (above the central portal) or the grave antique nobility of other figures, e.g. Elizabeth, in the composition depicting the Visitation.

The old archepiscopal palace was both the episcopal see and an important step in the coronation ceremony (the banquet was held there). It was nearly entirely rebuilt by Robert de Cotte on the behest of Archbishop Le Tellier. The beautiful 18th-century Palatine chapel and the 15th-century banquet hall were kept intact.

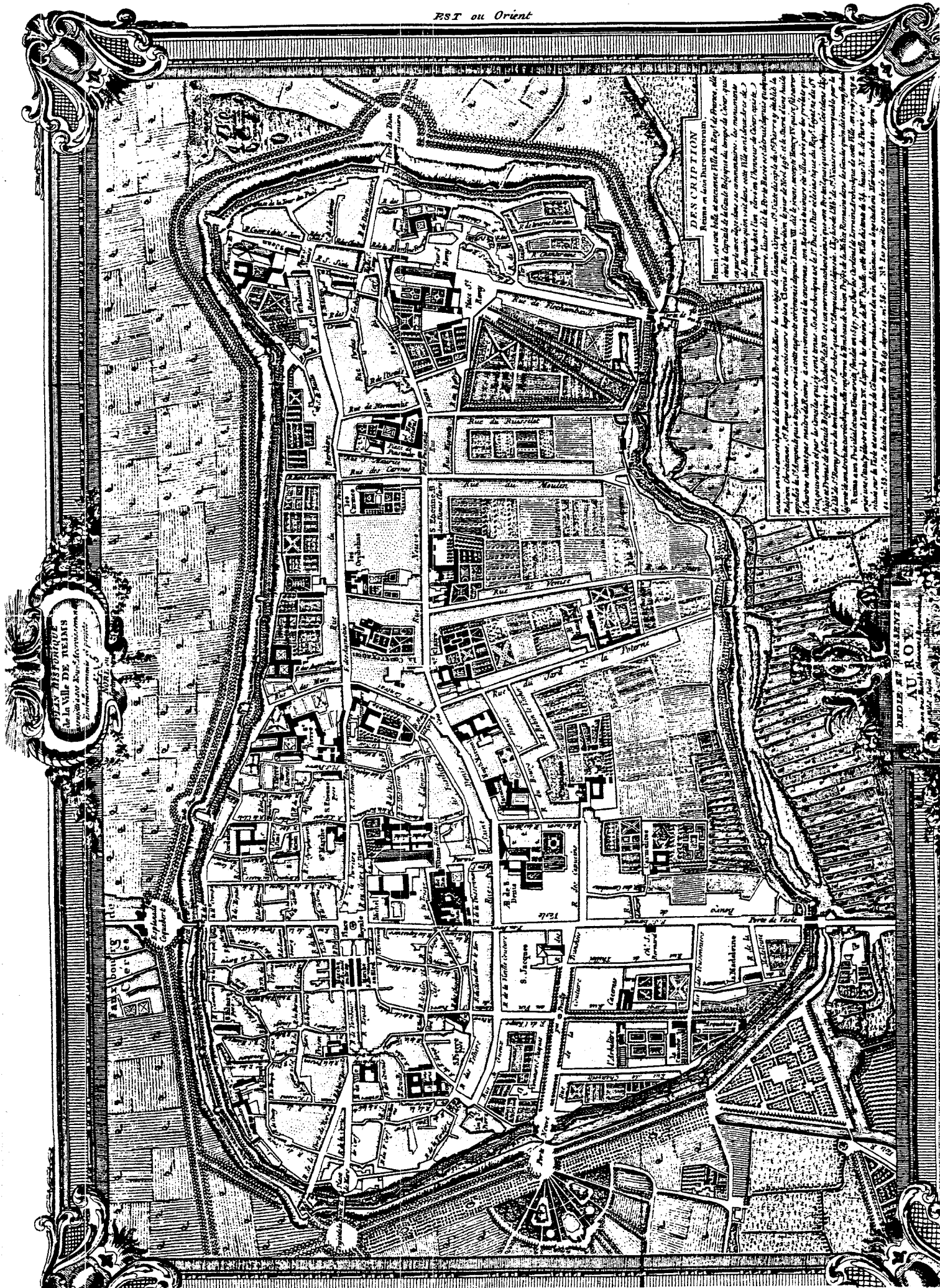
Reims was seriously damaged during World War I. This had repercussions particularly on the urban environment of the monuments proposed for inclusion on the World Heritage List for they also benefited from extensive work to safeguard and restore them.

- **Criterion I.** By virtue of the outstanding handling of new architectural techniques in the 13th century and the harmonious marriage of architecture and sculpted decoration, Notre Dame cathedral at Reims is a masterpiece of Gothic art.

- **Criterion VI.** The cathedral, the archepiscopal palace and the old abbey of Saint Remi are directly linked to the history of the French monarchy and, hence, to that of France in general. These places were part of the coronation ceremony, the result of a perfect balance between Church and State which thus made the French monarchy a political model throughout Europe until modern times.

- **Criterion II.** The perfection of the architecture and the sculptural ensemble of the church were such that numerous later edifices were influenced by it, particularly in German regions.

ICOMOS, May 1991



Reims : plan de la ville (1715) / map of the Town (1715)