

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

San Pedro de la Roca (Cuba)

No 841

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	San Pedro de la Roca Castle
<i>Location</i>	Province of Santiago de Cuba, Municipality of Santiago de Cuba
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of Cuba
<i>Date</i>	15 July 1996

Justification by State Party

San Pedro de la Roca Castle has unquestionable artistic and aesthetic value. A group of Italian, Spanish, and Cuban military engineers worked there to construct it between the 17th and 19th centuries. Its powerful image and the quality of its composition demonstrate both its strength in terms of form and technology and its functional role in warfare.

Its exceptional location and its adaptation to the topography puts it into a widely recognized group of three such fortresses designed by the famous father and son military architects, Bautista and Juan Bautista Antonelli, the others being the Castle of the Three Kings in Havana (Cuba) and San Sebastián Castle in San Juan (Puerto Rico).

These castles constitute a defensive group, reflecting the application of European military engineering in the New World. However, although San Pedro de la Roca is comparable with the other two in its general layout, it has its own individual significance, deriving from its scale and proportions, its sequence of terraces, and the integration of its component elements (stairs, batteries, bastions, etc), as well as its perfect insertion into the natural environment.

[Note The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier or in its tentative list concerning the criteria under which it considers the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List.]

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 *monument*.

History and Description

History

With the growth of shipping in the Caribbean and the policy of Philip II of fortifying the Spanish colonies there after losing naval supremacy in 1588, a ravelin and battery were installed between 1590 and 1610 on the south-western beach of the promontory (*morro*, from which the Castle of San Pedro de la Roca derives its alternative name, the Morro de San Sebastián, and its popular name in Cuba, *El Morro*). This fortification was built to protect the entrance to the town of Santiago de Cuba.

As the conflict between Spain and England grew in the 17th century the governor of the town, Pedro de la Roca y Borja, began the construction of a stone fortress, linked with the existing ravelin, following the visit of the noted military engineer Juan Bautista Antonelli in 1638.

English expansion in the Caribbean reached its high point with the conquest of Jamaica in 1655. This had repercussions for Santiago de Cuba, which had been involved in the conflict. An English attack in 1662 led to the destruction of the castle. However, it was rebuilt and substantially enlarged in 1663-69. Its efficacy was demonstrated by the frustration of attacks by the French in 1678 and by the freebooter Franquesma in 1680. As a result the town enjoyed almost total security from the "Coast Brotherhood."

The Castle was weakened by earthquakes in 1675, 1678, and 1679, but it was reconstructed and consolidated in 1693-95. After a short period of relative tranquillity, England adopted an aggressive stance again in 1738-40, and so further enlargement was carried out. When the English Admiral Vernon blockaded Santiago in 1741 he did not attempt to storm the Castle, choosing instead to land at Guantánamo, from whence he was dislodged with heavy losses. An attack on the Castle led by Admiral Knowles in 1747 was repulsed.

The Castle suffered from earthquake damage in 1757 and, more drastically, in 1766, but it was once again restored, when the opportunity was taken to incorporate more recent developments in military architecture. From 1775 the Castle served also as a prison and many important political figures were imprisoned there.

It underwent many vicissitudes during the political tumult and unsuccessful revolts against the Spanish during much of the 19th century. Some minor additions were made to it, the last in 1898, during the Spanish-American War. It declined during the 20th century owing to lack of maintenance, until it was restored by Francisco Prat Puig in the 1960s.

Description

The Castle of San Pedro de la Roca, with its associated batteries of La Estrella and Santa Catalina by the canal leading to the port of Santiago de Cuba and the battery of Aguadores on the southern coast, protect the bay of Santiago, which was of great importance because of its geographical situation, its favourable currents, and its protected anchorages.

The Castle is representative of the Spanish-American school of military architecture. It is a classic bastioned fortification, Italian in origin and of Renaissance design, in which geometrical form, symmetry, and proportionality between sides and angles predominates. It is built on a promontory with steep cliffs rising to more than 20m. The terrain is such that the various elements could be built in a series of terraces, one above another, and linked by a series of stairways.

The oldest part of the Castle is *La Lengua del Agua Ravelin*, where the fortification of this strategically important promontory began in 1590. It is at the lowest level, just above high water mark, on the extreme tip of the promontory. Built in masonry, it is a gun battery covering an area of 320m². In addition to the fortified gun platform, it consists of a powder magazine, a command building, and a guard post.

Moving up the promontory, next comes the *Santísima Sacramente Platform*, which is a fortified area covering 1.6km², construction of which began in 1663. Its elements include gun emplacements, a powder magazine, and quarters for its garrison. It communicates by stairways with *La Lengua* and with the smaller platform above it, *El Aljibe* (also built in the 1660s), and there are covered passage ways communicating with Morro Beach and the main esplanade of the Castle. The *De Adentro* and *Napoles* platforms adjoining *El Aljibe* are also from this phase of building. The whole of this part of the Castle took its present form during the mid-18th century reconstruction, and it was at this time that the *North and South Bastions* were added.

The *Santísima Trinidad Platform* is the highest level of the main Castle, and was built in the 1660s. To the north lies the *La Avanzada Fort*, from the 1760s, which was intended largely as a musketry fort. It completes the chain of smaller defensive works down the north side of the promontory, consisting of *La Estrella Fort* (now partly obliterated by the construction of a road) and two smaller forts built in the 1660s. The massive *Main Powder Magazine*, well behind the main Castle, is also from the 1660s. Later additions were the *Semaphore Tower*, the *Chapel of Santo Cristo*, and the *Lighthouse*, all built in 1840, and two batteries, *Scopa Alta* and *Vigia*, built in prefabricated concrete in 1898 at the time of the Spanish-American War.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Castle of San Pedro de la Roca is a designated National Monument, under the provisions of the 1977 Law on the Protection of Local and National Monuments. Article 4 of that statute prohibits all forms of non-authorized activity within the monument, and also within the delineated protection zone. It should be noted that protection under this law covers only the main Castle and does not extend to the *La Estrella*, *Santa Catalina*, and *Aquadores* forts, which are an integral part of the defensive system of Santiago Bay. *Santa Catalina* and the *Socapa*

batteries, on the other side of the Bay, moreover, do not fall within the protection zone.

The property is located within the *Sierra Maestra National Park*, where there are similar prohibitions and controls.

Management

The Castle is the property of the Republic of Cuba, and is under the control of the National Council for the Cultural Heritage (*Consejo Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural*). Its current use is to house the Pirate Museum (*Museo de la Piratería*). It is managed by the Provincial Council of Cultural Heritage (*Consejo Provincial del Patrimonio Cultural*). The staff, headed by a director, comprises guards, guides, and a maintenance team.

A number of national bodies collaborate in the protection and management of the site. These include the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Engineering, Universidad de Oriente, the Casa del Caribe, CUBACAN SA, and the Institute of Hydrography. The work is also assisted by a non-governmental organization, the Ateneo Cultural "Lic. Antonio Bravo Correoso" in Santiago de Cuba.

Conservation and restoration are carried out by the Provincial Technical Office for the Restoration and Conservation of Monuments (*Oficina Técnica Provincial de Restauración y Conservación de Monumentos*), based in Santiago de Cuba, which forms part of the Provincial Cultural Heritage Office.

The *Sierra Maestra National Park* has a management plan which takes account of the cultural properties that it contains, and also of the pressure of tourism. It is currently in its initial stages of implementation; it is anticipated that the final stage of this plan will not be reached until 2010.

In addition, a plan was prepared for the monument itself by the Provincial Technical Office for the Restoration and Conservation of Monuments and the Provincial Physical Planning Administration. This has now been approved by the municipality of Santiago de Cuba.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

In April 1945 the Pro Monuments Commission on the Historic and Artistic Sites of Santiago de Cuba proposed to the National Commission for Archaeology and Ethnology that the Castle of San Pedro de la Roca should be designated as a National Monument. However, no action was taken at that time.

In the 1960s restoration work began under the guidance of the Catalan-born architect Francisco Prat Puig. The initial stages of the restoration were concerned mainly with the removal of later accretions to the complex, and this was then extended to the restoration and, where necessary, reconstruction of the walls, stairs, and other features in stone and wood.

A number of conservation problems remain. The most serious relates to the wooden elements of the monument, where the choice of inappropriate timbers combined with pest attack have resulted in severe degradation. The eroded walls needed stabilization treatment, the vaults beneath the Santísimo Sacramento Platform require consolidation, and there is unsightly and potentially damaging vegetal growth in many of the walls, which should be removed.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the Castle of San Pedro de la Roca is high, since it underwent little change from the late 19th century, when it went out of use, until the 1960s, when restoration work began, according to the principles of the 1964 Venice Charter.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the property in February 1997.

Qualities

The Castle of San Pedro de la Roca is an outstanding example of the Spanish-American school of military architecture, adapting the principles of Renaissance theorists and Italian engineers to the specific needs of this region.

Comparative analysis

A number of fortified sites in the Caribbean are already on the World Heritage List, either as individual monuments or as part of larger properties. These include the Colonial City of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Portobelo-San Lorenzo (Panamá), La Citadelle (Haiti), and Old Havana (Cuba). However, it is accepted that the overall defensive system of the Bay of Santiago de Cuba, of which the Castle of San Pedro de la Roca is the central element, is the largest of these.

They formed the subject of an expert meeting held in Cartagena de Indias in August 1996. A preliminary list of properties worthy of consideration for inclusion on the World Heritage List was drawn up at that meeting, upon which San Pedro de la Roca figured.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

As a result of its expert mission, ICOMOS made the following recommendations:

1. The nominated area should be extended to include the other batteries that make up the defensive system.
2. This extended area should be declared a National Monument.
3. The protection area of the National Monument (and hence the nominated property) should be extended to include La Socapa and Cayo Gramma.

4. The parking area for the monument should be relocated farther away.
5. Another location should be found for the small restaurant now in the ruins of the old Chapel.
6. The road over the Estrella Battery should be removed and traffic redirected to the road leading to Ciudadamar.
7. Restoration work should be carried out on those outlying batteries that form part of the defensive system that are currently neglected.
8. An adequate public transport service should be provided from Santiago de Cuba to the monument.

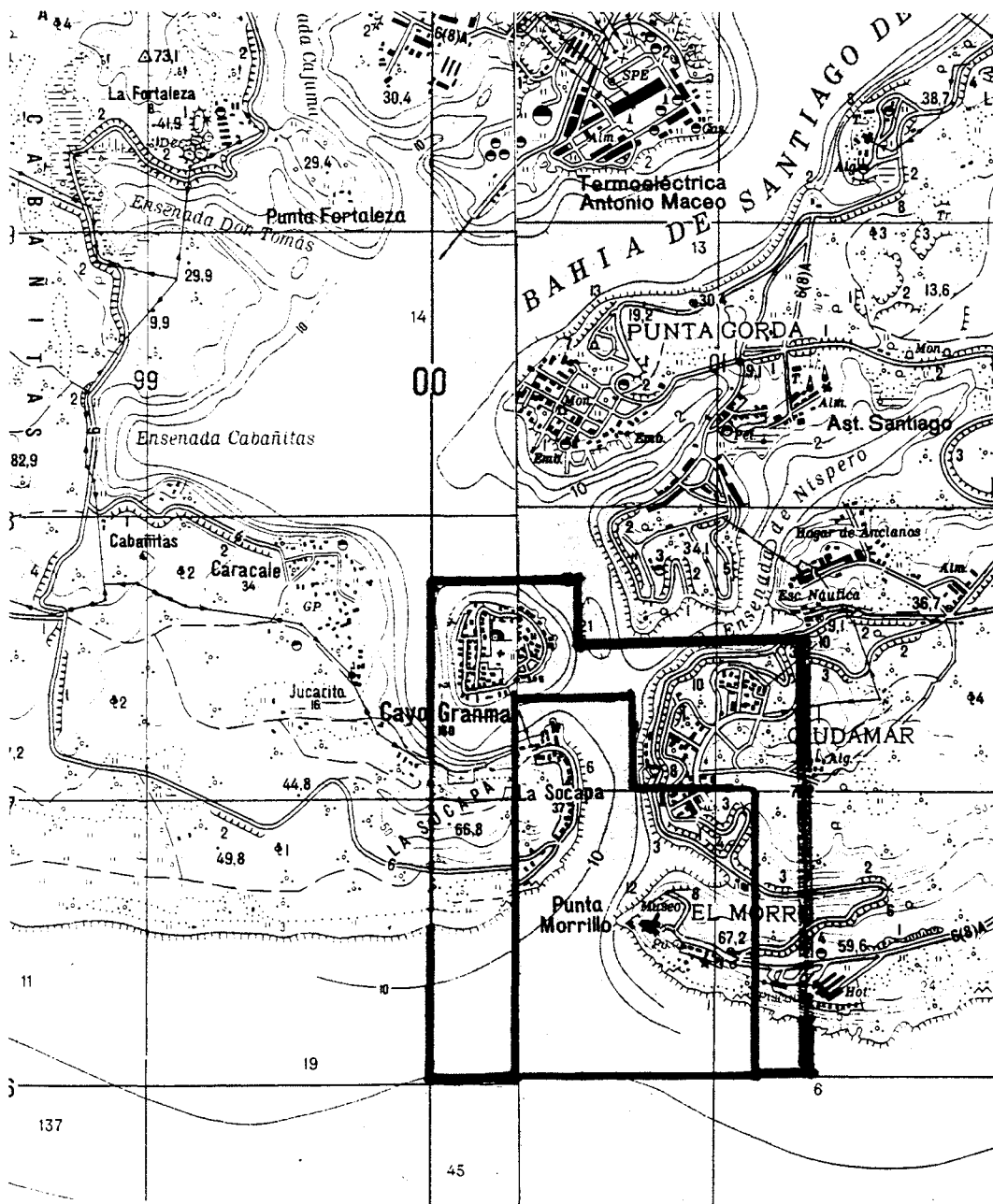
At its meeting in June 1997 the Bureau recommended that this nomination be referred back to the State Party to provide details of the management plan for the site (a revised map showing extension of the nominated site had been received shortly before the Bureau meeting and fulfilled all the ICOMOS requirements). At the time this evaluation was sent for printing (early September) the State Party had not submitted details of the management plan.

Recommendation

That, if details of the management plan have been received and evaluated favourably by ICOMOS before the Extraordinary Meeting of the Bureau in November 1997, this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iv and v*:

The Castle of San Pedro de la Roca and its associated defensive works are of exceptional value because they constitute the largest and most comprehensive example of the principles of Renaissance military engineering adapted to the requirements of European colonial powers in the Caribbean.

ICOMOS, September 1997



San Pedro de la Roca :
Carte indiquant la zone proposée pour inscription et la zone tampon /
Map showing nominated area and buffer zone