

Wartburg (Germany)

No 897

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Wartburg
<i>Location</i>	Eisenach, Free State of Thuringia
<i>State Party</i>	Germany
<i>Date</i>	25 June 1998

Justification by State Party

There is hardly a castle in all Germany as famous as Wartburg. Its situation, perched on a height of some 400m above delightful countryside south of the city of Eisenach in Thuringia, its varied aspect, and the sense of harmony it evokes are only two of its attractions for visitors. What makes Wartburg Castle such a magnet for memory, tradition, and pilgrimage is that it stands as a monument to the cultural history of Germany, Europe and beyond.

Lutherans the world over know of the castle as the very place where Martin Luther made his translation of the Bible. The veneration of Saint Elizabeth, which extends far beyond the frontiers of Germany, includes Wartburg Castle where she lived and worked.

The patronage of Hermann I, Landgrave of Thuringia, occupies an extraordinary place in the creation of a national literary tradition. In poetry as in legends, Wartburg Castle, the medieval Court of the Muses, bears an undying reputation through the names of Walther von der Vogelweide or Wolfram von Eschenbach.

While these represented the first steps in German literature, and Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament marked the creation of a written German language, unified and accessible to all, Wartburg Castle is also associated with the beginnings of a bourgeois and democratic nation, through the content and effects of the Wartburg festival of German students' associations.

From the very earliest days of its existence, this fortress of the Landgraves of Thuringia has repeatedly acted as a venue for and witness of historic events and more than deserves its renown as a monument of national and world history.

The artistic and architectural importance of the palace, built in the second half of the 12th century, is no less. In execution and ornamentation, it is unrivalled and represents one of the best-preserved secular constructions from the late Norman period to be found on German soil. Thanks to this broad range of religious content and historic data, and because of its significance in the history

of the arts, Wartburg Castle attracts around half a million visitors every year, from all over the world.

[**Note:** The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier as regards 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 property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Commission, this is a *monument*.

History and Description

History

The legendary creation of Wartburg Castle is attributed to Count Ludwig der Springer. The first steps in its construction were taken in 1067, following the troubles caused by the Investiture Contest, troubles which encouraged the birth of feudalism. The castle is mentioned for the first time in 1080 as a strategic base, one of the key points in the early years of Ludovician sovereignty. This sovereignty grew more firmly established during the first half of the 12th century. Raised to the dignity of landgraves, the Ludovicans supported the policies of the Stauffen emperors. The building of the palace in the second half of the 12th century illustrates their status as Princes of the Empire.

Towards the end of the 12th century, a literary court developed at Wartburg castle, attracted by Landgrave Hermann I, who surrounded himself with poets and musicians. The poetry of Walther von der Vogelweide describes the brilliant society life which gave rise to the episode of the singers' tourney at Wartburg Castle, a romanticized version of which inspired Richard Wagner's opera, *Tannhäuser*.

In 1221 Landgrave Ludwig IV, the son of Hermann, married Elizabeth of Hungary. Widowed in 1227, Elizabeth devoted herself to charitable works to which the Landgrave's family took exception. Driven out of Wartburg Castle with her three children, she founded a hospital in Marburg and lived her life by Franciscan principles. She was canonized in 1235, four years after her death.

Heinrich Raspe IV, the brother of Ludwig IV, succeeded him and, espousing the Pope's cause, was appointed King of Germany on the initiative of Innocent IV. His death in 1247 ended the Ludovician dynasty.

The Margrave of Wettin, Heinrich von Meissen, took possession of Wartburg Castle. Over the next century, the site was to receive a series of new buildings. The transfer of the seat of power to Gotha and subsequently to Weimar at the beginning of the 15th century marked the beginning of the castle's decline.

Under the protection of the Prince Elector of Saxony, Martin Luther stayed at Wartburg Castle in secret. Here he devoted himself to literature, producing a considerable body of work attested by his correspondence, from which many letters have survived. It was at Wartburg Castle that he made his translation of the New Testament into German. His exile came to an end in March 1522 and by

the end of the 16th century, the memory of Luther was already attracting large numbers of pilgrims.

From the 16th century onwards, the castle was kept more or less in a state of repair: though abandoned as a seat of power, its strategic importance was nonetheless highlighted several times. The events that had taken place there, and in particular the memory of St Elizabeth and of Luther, were also arguments for its preservation, but neglect gradually led to inevitable dilapidation, which was almost total by the end of the 18th century.

Goethe paid a visit in 1777 and made a drawing of the ruin which shows only the palace remaining partially intact. The poet suggested the creation of a museum, justified by the ever-growing numbers of pilgrims. After the Napoleonic wars, a national sentiment emerged which revelled in the image of ancient Germany as symbolized by Wartburg Castle.

In 1817, the students' associations organized an event which set the seal on this tendency, further confirmed by the revolution of March 1848. Wartburg Castle was to remain the headquarters of students' associations for the whole of Germany.

In the first half of the 19th century, on the initiative of the Grand Duke of Saxony, the entire site was completely renovated: the remains of the palace were raised from their ruins, the curtain wall restored, and the remainder of the buildings reconstructed under the supervision of architect Hugo von Ritgen. The large part necessarily played by assumptions in the reconstruction have rather more to do with the romantic imagination than with historical reality. The involvement of renowned artists such as Moritz von Schwind, particularly in his illustration of the life of St Elizabeth, underlines the symbolic nature of the site.

This allegorical monument was for a short time the object of attention from the Nazi regime, but no event of importance was held there over the period, apart from the subjection of the students' associations to the principles of the regime.

In 1945, the bombing of Eisenach spared Wartburg, although the castle was later pillaged by Soviet troops.

The German Democratic Republic made Wartburg Castle a national monument, major restoration work was carried out, and numerous commemorative ceremonies were held in connection with the religious connotations and symbolic value of the monument.

Since the reunification of Germany, restoration work has concentrated primarily on the interiors and on the problems of preserving the stonework on the palace facades.

Description

The castle occupies a rocky spur looking north and south, in the midst of the forest that looks down over the city of Eisenach. On the same site as the castle stands a hostelry built in the late 19th century by architect Bodo Ebbardt, but this does not form part of the nomination.

In archaeological terms, the layout of Wartburg Castle corresponds in essence to that of the original fortress, particularly the Palace, the ramparts, the South Tower, and the outworks which are now partially buried or in ruins.

In architectural terms, Wartburg Castle is essentially a romantic reconstruction subjected to many different projects before arriving at its current state. The rocky spur is reached from the northern end, occupied by a tower with drawbridge, followed by a number of outbuildings which form a sort of outer courtyard.

Next follows the lower courtyard, the main features of which (on the eastern side) are the keep and the Palace, on which the Knights' Baths back.

The South Tower marks the farther end of the spur. The centre of the lower courtyard is occupied by a cistern.

The fortress is made up of the following constructions:

- The *outworks* (redoubt, foundations of the *Fischerturm* (Fishermen's Tower), wall-walk, St Elizabeth's spring, etc)

The outworks have not been preserved as constructions. All that remain are archaeological traces, outlines of the foundations and ditch of the *Fischerturm*, the escarpments of the access ramp and the road, carved from the living rock, leading up to the fortress, as well as the spring of fresh water which flows halfway up the embankment on which the fortress stands.

- The *outer defences*, consisting of:

the postern gate and drawbridge; the knights' lodging and the commissary buildings; the Marguerite and St Elizabeth wall-walks, also containing exterior constructions, including a small cistern, the coping of the Wartburg Castle well, worked stone balustrades, stairs also of dressed stone, paved floors, and the surface of the courtyards of the outer wards (cut from the rock and sometimes levelled using crushed rock).

- The *castle (Hofburg)*, comprising the following buildings:

Bergfried (belfry); *Neue Kemenate* (new apartments with fireplace); *Neues Treppenhaus* (new monumental staircase); the Palace; *Ritterbad* (knights' baths); *Südturm* (South Tower); *Gadem*; *Dirnitz* and *Torhalle* with *Dirnitzlaube* (entrance to the commons, with arcade); west and south curtain walls; cistern; lower castle courtyard; commandant's garden.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Wartburg is covered by protective legislation at *Land* and municipal level. The listed monument encompasses the whole hill on which the castle is built.

The protected area of the Wartburg falls within the "blue line" of the planning zone of Eisenach, which restricts all forms of development around the monument. Much of the wooded hillside below the castle is designated as a natural protected area (NSG).

Management

The property is owned by the Wartburg Foundation of Eisenach, founded in 1992. The Foundation is a legal entity under civil law, with its headquarters in Eisenach.

The property is administered by the *Stiftungsrat der Wartburg-Stiftung* (Board of Directors of the Wartburg Foundation) in conjunction with the Thuringian Ministry of Science, Research and Culture (Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments of the State of Thuringia).

Funding is provided by the following sources: *Bundesministerium des Inneren* (Ministry of the Interior), *Thüringer Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur* (Thuringian Ministry of Science, Research and Culture), *Thüringisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege* (Office of the State of Thuringia for the preservation of historic monuments), and the Foundation's own funds.

The above bodies are also responsible for the maintenance and preservation of the property, in conjunction with the *Bauhütte der Wartburg* team.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Apart from the outworks, which are still no more than archaeological remains, major restoration-reconstruction programmes were carried out throughout the 19th century.

Research is under way to remedy the problem of flaking affecting the stones of the palace.

In 1978, work began on the restoration of the historic decorative paintings of the Singers' and the Landgraves' halls, and the restoration of the Palace great hall, which was also equipped with underfloor heating and a woodblock floor.

In addition, between 1979 and 1981 a layer of reinforced concrete was inserted between the first and second floors. The weakened beams and joists, which dendrochronology dates at around 1160-1170, have been preserved and left in place, although other structures now perform their former load-bearing function. The knights' room and the dining hall have been returned to their medieval appearance, based on archaeological evidence, with grooved pointing and painted frames. The canopies of the fireplaces have also been reconstructed.

In 1989, the neo-Roman knights' baths were restored and opened to the public. During the 1990s, maintenance work has been carried out on the belfry, the wall-walk, the defensive passages, and the drawbridge.

Ongoing efforts to preserve the frescoes by Moritz von Schwindt have been intensified since 1990, thanks to an exhaustive and generous project funded by the German foundation for the preservation of historic monuments, and work was temporarily completed in 1995.

The main preservation project currently under way is to preserve the stonework of the palace's medieval facades, much of which is still in the original sandstone. The main tasks involved here are the demineralization of the dressed stone, the careful replacement of surfaces worn away by the elements, and the restoration of the original appearance of the pointing. Just as the methods used and the results achieved on the programme to preserve the Moritz von Schwindt frescoes will prove invaluable for other, similar projects, the preservation of the stonework

is a pilot scheme which, once it is realized, will find applications in the preservation of other buildings.

Authenticity

The stone-built Palace is, in its lower sections at least, an important example of civilian architecture of the Norman period. The same can be said of the masonry sections of the rampart, and of the South Tower.

The remainder of the site is a reconstruction undertaken under the influence of romantic ideas coupled, in this particular case, with an attempt to resurrect forms which might bear witness to the presence of the great historical personages who once inhabited this place (St Elizabeth, Luther, etc) and offer an illustration of a political idea in search of national unity.

The criterion of authenticity may be defined here in the light of two principles:

1. archaeological authenticity, which is not predominant here except for, in the main, the Palace and the fortifications;
2. symbolic authenticity, where the form matters less than the idea it represents. This is not a setting but an architecture, and one of great quality, expressive of a true ideal.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in January 1999. A distinguished British specialist in medieval fortifications was consulted about the cultural significance of the property.

Qualities

The property is a castle occupying a crest which was once a strategic stronghold.

Having lost its military significance, the castle gradually fell into ruin until a major programme of restoration was launched early in the 19th century. This renewal of interest was justified by the symbolic nature of the German people and today continues to be a symbol of the nation's past and present.

Comparative analysis

The romantic reconstitution, although remarkable, is not an exceptional case: there are several other examples in Europe of civilian buildings thus restored. The palace, however, is an exceptional building, since few civilian residences of this period have survived. It is comparable to the palaces of Goslar and Gelnhausen, but the greater scope of the restoration-reconstitution work carried out on Wartburg Castle gives a more complete reading, however archaeologically confused, of the palace of a great prince in the Norman period.

Remarks by ICOMOS

The state of repair of the castle buildings varies from acceptable to mediocre. The great age of the site is to some extent responsible for a certain tardiness in maintenance.

The archaeological interest of the property is not its strongest feature, but is compensated for by a fervent

historical reconstitution which, while it may have invented some forms, was scrupulous in respecting authentic vestiges of the past.

From the standpoint of history and the spread of ideas, Wartburg Castle is without doubt one of the great centres of world history.

Brief description

Wartburg Castle blends superbly into its forest surroundings and is, in many ways "the ideal castle." Although it contains some sections of great antiquity, the outline it acquired in the course of 19th century reconstitutions is a splendid evocation of what this fortress might have been at the peak of its military and seigneurial power.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii and vi* :

Criterion iii The Castle of Wartburg is an outstanding monument of the feudal period in central Europe.

Criterion vi The Castle of Wartburg is rich in cultural associations, most notably its role as the place of exile of Martin Luther, who composed his German translation of the New Testament there. It is also a powerful symbol of German integration and unity.

ICOMOS, September 1999