

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Poland)

No 905

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist architectural and park landscape complex and pilgrimage park
<i>Location</i>	Vojevodship of Bielsko-Biała, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska District
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of Poland
<i>Date</i>	29 June 1998

Justification by State Party

In general terms, the cultural property of the Mannerist Calvary Park in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is a unique and exceptional example of a group of 44 buildings located in an extensive and attractive area, situated according to a carefully determined system in terms of its content, function, and form. This system dominated the natural environment, creating the unrepeatable historical designed landscape (**criterion ii**). Representative of its type, it is also the most superb example in the rich range of Calvary landscapes (**criterion iv**). It contains symbolic messages concerning important ideas and content, translated into the language of traditional religious theatre, set in the scenery of the landscape.. The complex embodies a combination of formal effects and architectural values with the symbolism and ideological content (**criterion vi**).

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 *site*. It is also a *cultural landscape* as defined in paragraph 39 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

History and Description

History

Work on building the Calvary was begun in 1600 by Mikołaj Zebrzydowski, the Voivode of Cracow, who built the Chapel of the Crucifixion on the slopes of Żar Mountain. Together with a small hermitage, this was used by him for personal meditation.

However, Zebrzydowski was persuaded by the Bernardine (Cistercian) monks Tomasz Bucki and Ludwik Boguski to

enlarge his original concept to cover an extensive landscape complex with many chapels, linked in form and theme to those in Jerusalem. It was conceived as being for the use not only of the local inhabitants but also of believers from elsewhere in Poland and in neighbouring countries.

The layout was the work of the distinguished mathematician, astronomer, and surveyor Feliks Żebrowski. He based it on the landscape of Jerusalem at the time of Christ, using a system of measurement that he developed to enable the urban landscape of Jerusalem to be reproduced symbolically on the natural landscape. This makes use of the natural topography, the Lackarańska Mountain representing the Mount of Olives and the Żar Mountain Golgotha, for example.

The sites chosen for the chapels that represented the stages in the taking of Christ and the Stations of the Cross were linked by tracks cut through the natural woodland and were marked first by a simple cross. These were replaced by chapels, nearly all of which were built between 1605 and 1632. The architect of the chapels was a Belgian, Paul Baudarth, and the influence of the Mannerist architecture of The Netherlands is very marked. In 1632 a wall was built (now no longer extant) which symbolized the urban limits of the Holy City, and also a system of routes that linked ten chapels associated with the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Only four further chapels were added – those dedicated to the Third Fall of Christ (1754), the Weeping Women (1782), St John Nepomucen (1824), and the Angel (1836). The original Bridge of the Angels was replaced by a new structure in 1907.

The Church of the Our Lady of the Angels and the Bernardine monastery were designed by the Italian architect Giovanni Maria Bernardoni. However, he did not complete the project, which was finished by Baudarth in 1609. The monastery was considerably enlarged in 1654-56, and took on the appearance of a Baroque castle.. A pilgrim chapel in developed Baroque style was added to the church in 1658-67, to house a miraculous picture of the Virgin. The church achieved its present form at the end of the 17th century, whilst the monastery was enlarged once again at the beginning of the 19th century.

When the monastery was founded in 1617 the inhabitants of the town of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska that had sprung up were allowed to rent part of its lands within the Calvary park. They began to clear the woodland for pastures, and in the mid 18th century they were allowed to build houses on their plots. A process of reforestation began at the beginning of the 19th century.

At the beginning of the 18th century the Czartoryski family, the owners of the park, built a palatial residence near the pilgrim church, but this was largely destroyed in the 19th century. At the end of World War II the plot on which the palace had stood, together with some surviving outbuildings, passed into the ownership of the state, which used it for the construction of a theological college.

Historical archives show that Kalwaria Zebrzydowska had many distinguished royal and noble visitors as well as countless pious pilgrims. Many were attracted by religious performances and ritual that were staged there. As early as 1613 Mikołaj Zebrzydowski had received permission to found a religious fraternity to organize religious ceremonies of this kind. Local people joined the

Bernardine monks at Easter to take part in dramatic enactments of Christ's Passion. These religious performances were discouraged during the Austrian occupation of this region, but they were revived after 1947. In addition to the Passion procession at Easter, there is a similar event at the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in August.

Description

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska lies between the valleys of the Skawa and Raba tributaries of the Vistula, and is defined by the massifs of the Żar and Lanckorońska mountains. The area is now largely forested, the result of 18th century planting. The ruins of two medieval castles are located at either end of the landscape, on the slopes of the two mountains.

The landscape makes skilful use of natural features to complement and set off man-made structures. The disposition of buildings in the landscape makes this an outstanding example of a Mannerist park: characteristics of Italian Renaissance and French Baroque garden and park design are blended with Mannerist freedom and irregularity. The overall layout is in the form of an ellipse, covering some 400ha. The main structures are around the perimeter of this area, and are linked by paths and roads that symbolize the routes within ancient Jerusalem and which were used by pilgrims in their passage from one episode in the Passion to the next.

A characteristic Mannerist feature is the many visual axes between the different structural features. There is also a series of magnificent panoramas, not only over the Park itself, but also towards the Tatra Mountains, for example, and the city of Cracow.

The chapels and churches complete the composition of the Park. They are seen to emerge unexpectedly from dense woodland cover or as dramatic features at the end of long avenues. The chapels exhibit a high degree of originality of form and composition, along with scrupulous attention to detail. However, their most striking feature is their diversity, arising in some cases from their symbolic purpose (as, for example, the Chapel of the Heart of the Virgin Mary, which is heart-shaped in plan). Ground plans range from simple ellipses (the House of Caiphas) or triangle (the House of Annas) to more complex forms such as a triangle linked with semi-circles (the House of Our Lady), a Greek cross (the House of Pilate), a rectangle with semi-circular apses (the Holy Sepulchre), an octagon containing a square (the Ascension), an elongated rectangle (the Last Supper), and a square with corner pilasters (the East Gate of Jerusalem).

The elevations are equally varied and imaginative. A variety of materials and techniques have been used – unrendered stone and brick, dressed stone, and rendered and plastered brick; roofs of copper or zinc sheets or ceramic tiles. The way in which details are applied to the elevations clearly derives from The Netherlands. Dados and wide entablatures are used for horizontal division, and half-columns or pilasters for vertical divisions. Elements of Tuscan, Ionic, and Composite orders are used, enlivened by rusticated faces and surrounds to windows and doors. The small windows take various forms, often circular or oval. Among other features are strapwork ornament, blind arcades, and corn or acorn pendants. A number of the chapels have pulpits in stone, brick, or wood protruding from their facades. There is

also skilful use of colour resulting from the variety of materials used and tinted rendering. Several of them have domes with rich stucco decoration.

The interiors are, by contrast, plain in their furnishings and decorations. Many of them contain blocks with the inscription *Terra Santa*, indicating that they contain soil from Jerusalem.

There are two large churches in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. The Church of the Grave of the Virgin, which has strong Baroque affinities, is in broken stone with stone blocks for detailing and the strong podium on which it is built. It is rectangular in plan with an apsidal east end and an entrance porch or narthex at the west. It is built on two levels, the lower part representing the Grave itself and the upper the Ascension. It has a saddleback roof with a slender central spire.

The Church of the Crucifixion has an elongated rectangular plan with a bipartite interior with compound vaulting and a saddleback roof with a spire. The tripartite façade has three entrances and four projections; double Tuscan pilasters support a wide entablature decorated with friezes depicting symbolic subjects.

The dominant feature of the landscape is the Church of Our Lady of the Angels and the Bernardine Monastery, located high on the slopes of the Żar Mountain. The church has an unaisled nave with an elongated presbytery closed by the main altar. There are three separate chapels with domed roofs on the south side. The two-storey façade is surmounted by two towers with Baroque roofs, separated by a triangular pediment. The richly decorated interior is in Baroque style, with some outstanding carved choir stalls.

The monastic complex, built round two internal cloisters, is on the north side of the church. It has a three-storey façade with five projections and crowned by lunette cornices.

There is a number of secular residential buildings within the Park. They are detached houses and are mostly to be found lining the avenues. The earlier ones, from the 18th and 19th centuries, are wooden structures in a distinct local style. They are usually single-storey, with an attic and verandahs in front; the roofs are saddleback in a variety of materials.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The entire complex is a protected monument since it is on the register of scheduled monuments of the Vojevodship of Bielsko-Biała. The protection afforded in this way is laid down in the Polish Act of the Protection of Cultural Property of 1962, as subsequently amended, and the Code of Administrative Procedure.

It is the subject of special policies in the Local General Plan of Spatial Development of the Town and District of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, approved in 1982. Part of it is covered in the corresponding plan for the District of Lanckorońska.

Management

The cultural landscape of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska with the routes of the avenues in the Park, the chapels, and the meadows and woods in the north-eastern part are owned by the Bernardine monastery. The woods on the Żar Mountain

are owned partly by the monastery and partly by the state, whilst the forest of Lanckorona is in multiple private ownership. There is also a number of small residential and agricultural lots within the area that are in private ownership.

As a national historical monument, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska comes within the purview of the State Service for the Protection of Monuments, and funds are made available for conservation from the Ministry of Culture and Arts through the offices of the General Coordinator of Monuments and the Regional Conservator of Monuments.

Local management is coordinated by the owner, the Bernardine Monastery, working with the State Service, which is represented by the District Conservator. The latter specialist is employed by the Council of the Town and District of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and works in collaboration with the Town Architect. The Monastery has a scientific advisory council which includes distinguished architects, landscape architects, monument conservators, historic garden specialists, art historians, etc. This body is responsible for overseeing the work of the officials directly involved and advising them on policies for conservation and management.

There is no overall management plan for the Park. However, there is a rolling programme of conservation and restoration projects agreed between those responsible for its management and approved by the scientific council. Currently, projects are in progress or planned for major renovation and consolidation of the churches and chapels, conservation of their internal fittings, assessment and resurfacing of the routes within the Park, management of the vegetation, and control over development of houses within the boundaries.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Since it was established, the Calvary has been under the control and management of the Bernardine Monastery. Several campaigns of restoration have been initiated and carried out by successive Guardians (Superiors) of the Kalwaria Zebrzydowska community. These took place in the mid 18th century, on three occasions during the 19th century, and in the early decades of the 20th century. Most of the work, which involved consolidation of the foundations of the chapels, replacement of roof coverings and structures, and conservation of the interiors, was carried out by the monks themselves, though specialists were brought in for tasks such as paintings conservation and restoration.

At the end of World War II the land was nationalized and became part of state forests and state-owned farms. Efforts were also made to curb the use of the area for pilgrimage. Registration of the Calvary as a protected monument in 1981 placed it on a different footing, but this coincided with an increase in new private housing in the area and the creation of new access roads. This gave rise to a series of legal interventions by the Regional Conservator of Monuments. In 1986 the post of Park Architect was created, to be replaced in 1992 by the post of Conservator of Monuments by the Council of the Town and District of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

Work began on a study for the restitution of the system of routes and avenues, which resulted in regulations for the movement of motor vehicles, rehabilitation of the vegetation, and the design and location of new buildings. A large part of the area of the avenues was subsequently returned by the state to the Bernardine Monastery. The 1994 development plan put the avenues under strict control as a conservation zone of the landscape park and at the same time buffer zones were established for the entire complex.

Currently the construction of new housing within the protected area is prohibited and there are controls over building in the buffer zone. There is still intensive exploitation of the woodland cover for the local carpentry industry, but this is now being controlled.

Authenticity

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska has retained its overall authenticity as a designed cultural landscape: the 1604 plan survives almost completely intact, with the topographical and symbolic relationship between its man-made structures and its natural environment fully preserved.

So far as individual structures are concerned, they have been conserved solicitously by the Bernardine community over the centuries and preserve their form and setting unchanged. Conservation interventions have been made with care and with respect for the authenticity of materials and techniques.

The authenticity of functions also survives untouched, since the Calvary is still a centre for pilgrims to see this landscape that symbolizes the Passion of Christ and the Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in January 1999. The views of its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Sites were also made available.

Qualities

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an outstanding implantation in a natural landscape of central Europe of a symbolic representation of those elements of the urban landscape of Jerusalem at the time of the Passion of Jesus Christ which has survived intact as a centre of pilgrimage for four centuries.

Comparative analysis

The concept of the Calvary, a group of chapels arranged in a layout that symbolizes the stages that led up to Christ's crucifixion in an urban or open landscape (*Sacri Monti*), has a long ancestry. However, it intensified at the time of the Counter-Reformation at the end of the 16th century, and was aided by the publication of a re-creation by Androchomius in 1584 of an accurate plan of Jerusalem at the time of Christ.

Many were constructed, in Italy, the Iberian peninsula, the Low Countries, and central Europe in particular, in the 17th century, and they took many varied forms. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is among the small group of so-called "Great Calvaries," which were vast projects that spread over large areas of open countryside with significant topographical features and adopted an approach derived from Baroque park

design. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is of especial significance because of the way in which the routes and avenues between the chapels were laid out, giving an added dimension to their symbolic significance.

In Italy a number of these have been preserved as components of national natural parks; several *Sacri Monti* of this type are now preserved and protected in Piedmont, for example. The basis of their preservation is conceived almost entirely in terms of their historical value; the religious element is subordinated and pilgrimage is not seen as central to their management and presentation. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, by contrast, still has a predominant spiritual role in the life of the Polish people and is still in the care of the monastic community that have been its guardians since the beginning of the 17th century.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

ICOMOS is concerned about the project to create a Neo-Baroque garden in the new seminary building on the site of the Czartoryski palace. This would be highly inappropriate in what will be a modern structure. Consideration should be given to replacing this with a simpler design that makes use of the remaining fruit trees at this place in creating a garden more in keeping with the buildings that surround it.

The modern metal masts that surround the pilgrimage area are surmounted during the tourist season by loudspeakers, flags, and other appurtenances. These are wholly incongruous in this context and should be replaced by more discreet equipment.

There is a group of picturesque old residential buildings close to the basilica. They are not owned by the Bernardine Monastery and so their development has not been controlled, and as a result some have been “modernized” using inappropriate materials and techniques; some also have large parabolic television aerials on their facades. Action should be taken to improve their appearance and to prevent further disfigurements of this kind.

In view of the above, the State Party might wish to give serious consideration to restoring full property rights over the entire nominated area to the Bernardine Monastery, which has shown itself to be suited in every way to its management and conservation.

There is no management plan in the sense required by the World Heritage Committee (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraph 24.b.i) for the Kalwaria Zebrzydowska Park, although there is clearly a number of elements of such a plan already in place. The State Party should without delay work with the different institutions involved to prepare such a plan and submit it to the Committee for assessment.

Brief description

The Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is a virtually unchanged example of the natural landscape in which a linked series of symbolic places of worship relating to the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Life of the Virgin Mary was laid out at the beginning of the 17th century. It is still today a place of pilgrimage.

Recommendation

That this nomination be *referred back* to the State Party, requesting that a draft management plan for the property be prepared for evaluation before the December 1999 meeting of the World Heritage Committee. This information had not been received when this evaluation was prepared for printing. In the event that this is supplied and favourably evaluated, ICOMOS recommends that the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*

Criterion ii Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an exceptional cultural monument in which the natural landscape was used as the setting for a symbolic representation in the form of chapels and avenues of the events of the Passion of Christ. The result is a cultural landscape of great beauty and spiritual quality in which natural and man-made elements combine in a harmonious manner.

Criterion iv The Counter Reformation in the late 16th century led to a flowering in the creation of Calvaries in Europe. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an outstanding example of this type of large-scale landscape design, which incorporates natural beauty with spiritual objectives and the principles of Baroque park design.

ICOMOS, September 1999