

# GERMANY

## Aachen Cathedral

### Brief description

Construction of this palatine chapel, with its octagonal basilica and cupola, began c. 790–800 under the Emperor Charlemagne. Originally inspired by the churches of the Eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire, it was splendidly enlarged in the Middle Ages.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** **1978**

#### Agencies responsible for site management

- Dombauverwaltung Aachen – Dombaumeister  
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D-52062 Aachen  
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website: [www.aachendom.de](http://www.aachendom.de)
- Rheinsh Office for the Conservation of  
Monuments (Rheinisches Amt für  
Denkmalpflege)  
PF 2140  
50250 Pulheim  
e-mail: [info.denkmalpflegeamt@lvr.de](mailto:info.denkmalpflegeamt@lvr.de)  
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### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** **C (i), (ii), (iv), (vi)**

#### Justification provided by the State Party

The inclusion of the Palace Chapel in the World Heritage List is justified on all six counts:

- I) From the very beginning the Palace Chapel represented a unique artistic achievement and had a decisive influence on the development of a new, flourishing culture in post-Classical Europe. The affinity to certain prototypes (Constantinople, Ravenna) stemmed from a clearly defined spiritual conception and led to a creative new departure in architecture and to the construction of the key edifice of the "Carolingian Renaissance".
- II) Until well into the Middle Ages, Aachen's Palace Chapel was a shining example and the prototype of imperial architecture. The buildings which were subsequently erected along these lines,

form part of the most valuable architectural heritage of Europe.

III) As historical sources confirm, the Palace Chapel stood out as the most important edifice even among the buildings of the Carolingian era. Without the Chapel, that era would be incomprehensible and lose much of its splendour.

IV) and V) After several centuries of cultural decay, the construction of the Palace Chapel is also synonymous with a revival and further development of the technical achievements of Classical times. This is true of the massive stone construction of this church in general and of the vaulting and cupola technique in particular. For another 400 years, i.e. until the classical cathedrals of the late Romantic period and the early Gothic period were erected, the Palace Chapel was to remain the highest vaulted building north of the Alps. Large bronze casting, of which the doors and the railings provide an example, which was also reintroduced at Aachen, was part of this revival of Classical techniques, these works continue to be among the most valuable treasures of Aachen Cathedral.

VI) More than any other site or building, the Palace Chapel at Aachen reflects the conception of spiritual and political renovation and unifications with Charlemagne translated into practice. It is here in the Court schools that he left his mark on the culture of his time. It is here that he was buried in 814, initially in the still existing classical Proserpina sarcophagus. Today his relics which rest in Charlemagne's Shrine, completed in 1215, continue to be an object of veneration. Aachen Cathedral's treasure vault is the most important in Central Europe and contains a great variety of authentic objects reflecting his time and the high esteem in which he has been held over the centuries. It is in the church of Charlemagne that his legacy is understood and cultivated as a commitment to European Union.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS bases its recommendation for inclusion on the World Heritage List on criteria I, II, IV and VI.

I. With its columns of Greek and Italian marble, its bronze doors, the largest mosaic of its dome (now destroyed), the palatine chapel of Aix, from its inception, has been perceived as an exceptional artistic creation. It was the first vaulted structure north of the Alps since Antiquity.

II. Bearing the strong imprint of both classic and byzantine tradition: this chapel remained, during the Carolingian renaissance and even at the beginning of the medieval period one of the prototypes of

religious architecture which incited copies or imitations (Metz, Nijmegen, Essen, Ottmarsheim).

IV. The palatine chapel of Charlemagne is an excellent and distinctive example of the family of aulian chapels based on a central plan with tribunes.

VI. The construction of the chapel of the emperor at Aix symbolised the unification of the West and its spiritual-and political revival under the aegis of Charlemagne. In 814, Charlemagne was buried here, and throughout the Middle Age until 1531, the Germanic emperors continued to be crowned at Aix. The collection of the treasury of the cathedral is of inestimable archaeological, aesthetic and historic interest.

#### Committee Decision

Bureau (1978):

15. In addition, the following two properties were found to meet (in the opinion of ICOMOS) the criteria for cultural properties but lacked the required cartographic and photographic information.

F.R.G.: Aachen Cathedral  
Senegal : Island of Gorée

- No change required by State Party
- More information on the site could be provided in the UNESCO official website

#### Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined
- The site is surrounded by protected monuments which guarantee sufficient protection

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- Evaluation of the authenticity and/or integrity was not carried out by ICOMOS
- It has not been re-assessed since inscription
- No significant changes to the authenticity and/or integrity of the site have been recorded since inscription World Heritage site

### 3. Protection

#### Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- North Rhine-Westphalian Law on the Protection of Monuments
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective

### 4. Management

#### Use of site/property

- Religious use, free of charge visitor attraction

#### Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: coordination of conservation in line with monuments protection regulations, construction budget, authorisation and monitoring of construction programme
- Management system: management under protective legislation
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: regional; local; Rheinsh Office for the Conservation of Monuments
- The current management system is highly effective

### 5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: January 1986
- Management plan is considered very effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Cathedral Construction Administration (Dombauleitung); Cathedral Construction Commission

### 6. Financial Resources

#### Financial situation

- Diocese of Aachen; State budget; Federal budget; City Aachen; other associations, foundations, donations and sponsoring
- Funding has been drawn through World Heritage status
- Donations from businesses; Getty Foundation; Federal Environment Foundation, European Union
- Funding is adequate and sufficient

### 7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 51

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion
- Good: interpretation, education, visitor management

### **8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques**

- Cathedral workshops; numerous study courses within Germany; training and restoration workshops within the Rheinisch Office for Conservation of Monuments

### **9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics not provided
- Visitor facilities: tour of Cathedral, Cathedral treasury, visitor centre and shops
- Tour guides specially trained by Cathedral Construction Administration

### **10. Scientific Studies**

- Risk assessment; studies related to the value of the site; Monitoring exercises; condition survey; archaeological surveys; visitor management; radar examination, motion measures and earthquake resistance studies
- Scientific studies form basis of the restoration works

### **11. Education, Information and Awareness Building**

- Adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage on the following levels: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Specialised events: exhibitions, celebration of 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of inscription on World Heritage List
- Aachen Cathedral part of teaching and research project "UNESCO World Heritage sites as a way of communicating culture" in the Art Faculty of Paderborn University

### **12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)**

#### **Reactive monitoring reports**

- N/A

#### **Conservation interventions**

- Restoration of chapels, the Carolingian Wall, roof structures, Shrine of Our Lady, the Charlemagne Shrine and Barbarossa chandelier

- Overall state of conservation: good

#### **Threats and Risks to site**

- Environmental: natural disasters
- Threats of earthquakes
- Risk assessment carried out: relative safety due to the static of the Cathedral

### **13. Monitoring**

- Formal monitoring programme
- Regular reviews and maintenance of fire and lightning protection, alarm systems
- Key indicators: N/A

### **14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, economic
- Strengths: level of conservation improved, scientific research has resulted in new findings, visitor facilities have been improved, business and tourism has benefited from positive image
- Future actions: not provided