

GERMANY

Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch

Brief description

The abbey, together with its monumental entrance, the famous 'Torhall', are rare architectural vestiges of the Carolingian era. The sculptures and paintings from this period are still in remarkably good condition.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1991

Agency responsible for site management

- Hesse Ministry of Science and Arts
Rheinstrasse 23-25
D - 65185 Wiesbaden
website: www.hmwk.hessen.de
website: www.kloster-lorsch.de

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (iii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

The former Benedictine monastery at Lorsch, especially in view of its Carolingian gatehouse, meets the requirements for being included in the World Heritage List:

Apart from the Gothic roof, the gatehouse is the only largely unchanged extant document of this building style from the Carolingian era in Europe.

Against the background of the abandoned extensive monastery complex, which was largely destroyed during the Thirty Years' War but whose outlines are still visible today, this Carolingian entrance to the monastery, which is over 1200 years old and in excellent condition, is particularly valuable.

Architecture, sculpture and painting influenced by the Carolingian court school are impressively preserved in this monument.

Furthermore, the collection of Carolingian and Romanesque finds, which will be presented together in the envisaged Lorsch museum centre, is an impressive, educational adjunct to the preserved buildings.

Altenmünster monastery is the cradle of Lorsch Abbey. If the latter is accepted for inclusion in the World Heritage List, we feel it is necessary to include its predecessor, too, since these two properties form an historical whole.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

In April 1989 ICOMOS recommended deferral of examination of this property in order to permit Germany to provide details concerning proposals for the 1991 enhancement of the property. In February 1990 ICOMOS again recommended deferral because the boundaries of the property proposed for inclusion were not well defined and because the proposed management plan for the site failed to address adequately the approach to be taken in regard to preserving the buildings and the site's archaeological interest. In June 1990, the World Heritage Bureau agreed to accept this recommendation. Germany's 10 April 1991 proposal for the nomination of the Altenmunster Monastery as an annex of the Lorsch Monastery clarifies proposals for the treatment of the property and for its boundaries. During the World Heritage Bureau meeting of June 1991, ICOMOS, while maintaining its interest in inscription, noted that a plan linking the two sites had not yet been provided. The World Heritage Bureau recommended inscription, subject to receipt of a satisfactory plan. The German authorities provided such a plan on October 1, 1991 and ICOMOS is pleased to recommend inscription, without reservation. ICOMOS is now prepared to propose the property for inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria III and IV.

Criterion III. The religious complex represented by the former Lorsch Abbey with its 1200 year old gatehouse which is unique and in excellent condition, comprises a rare architectural document of the Carolingian era with impressively preserved sculpture and painting of that period.

Criterion IV. The Lorsch Abbey with its Carolingian gatehouse give architectural evidence of the awakening of the West to the spirit of the Early and High Middle Ages under the first King and Emperor, Charlemagne.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1989): the Bureau recommended that the examination of this nomination be deferred, to enable the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany to extend the perimeter of the area nominated to the old outer walls of the monastery, and to provide complementary information on the

protection measures of this complex, on the state of the excavations, on the development works and, in particular, on the installation of a site museum.

Bureau (1990): the Bureau noted the progress made in examining this file as a result of the latest information provided by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, it wished to obtain additional information on the protection extended to the area situated to the north of the Nibelungenstrasse, and confirmation of the exact boundaries of the site nominated to the World Heritage List, with accompanying maps. The Bureau thus recommended that the examination of this nomination be deferred.

Bureau (1991): the Bureau recommended the inscription of this property, but asked the German authorities to submit a plan clearly showing the existing relationship between the Abbey and the Altenmünster. The nomination could then be examined at the special meeting of the Bureau in December 1991.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined
- The Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch were inscribed without a buffer zone. As a general standard today, measure should be taken to define the boundary/ies

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained/have not been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Agricultural Development Plan (Agrarentwicklungsplan); Town development plan (Stadtentwicklungsplan); Land Use Plan (Flächennutzungsplan); Construction plan no. 43 (Bebauungsplan Nr. 43 – "Kulturachse vom Lorsch zum Kloster Altenmünster" (draft); all these plans are the basis for the overall development of the site and town which concerns the planning and zoning requirements
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Paid visitor attraction (for the museum), generally accessible during fixed opening times

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: set up January 1998; Municipal Administration, Lorsch History and Culture Society (Lorscher Heimat- und Kulturverein), Land Hesse Office for the Conservation of Monuments (Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen), Administration of the State Castles and Gardens in Hesse (Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Hessen), Board of Trustees for the Abbey of Lorsch (Kuratorium Weltkulturdenkmal Kloster Lorsch e.V.)
- Overall 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
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget; Land Hesse; private sponsorship
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 3

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

- Very good: conservation, promotion
- Good: management, education, visitor management
- Average: interpretation
- Not adequate staff resources to maintain the site

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

- Training programmes
- Training by UNESCO concerning the World Heritage Convention, information and as well as general management of World Heritage sites needed

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 40,000 number (ticket sales). Trend: increasing
- Visitor facilities: museum centre for schools and scientists on request (with pedagogical functions); conference room; visitor centre; technical library of the monastery historical department; microfilm archive of the medieval monastery library; special exhibitions in the historical city hall
- Visitor needs: hotel or dormitories and gastronomy

10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the values of the site, archaeological surveys, transportation studies
- The archaeological studies are part of the main work and research being done at the site, but there is no real account on the management aspect

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- No adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses
- Adequate awareness: local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: there should have been a management plan and one specific programme should be focused on the marketing strategy, information dissemination and communication

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Not mentioned
- Present state of conservation: good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures, visitor/tourism pressure
- Specific issues if mentioned: promoters of major events are keen on staging spectacles within the site

- The use of the area tends to damage the soft ground and the archaeological remains it contains. Heavy machinery and equipment compact the surface ground and damage the underlying layer
- Emergency measures taken: development of a management plan

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures planned: management plan has to be developed

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; social; pedagogy; public awareness
- Strength: WH site-management (scientists, full-time) since 1995; museum (as a first step to achieve a complete presentation of the history) since 1995; pedagogical work on a solid basis (full-time, 30 voluntary staff) since 1994; active membership in various UNESCO-based associations; archaeological research in progress since 1998; exhibitions of medieval manuscripts every two years since 1999; scientific congresses since 1999; first international partnership with Armenian World Heritage site of Geghard monastery in 2002
- Weaknesses of management: the monastery has only very few "relics"; there are too many people involved in decision-making processes; there is no political priority in favour of WH sites in Hesse; too much dependency on political decisions (no long-term planning possible); no support for fulfilment of UNESCO goals neither by the national commission nor by WHC or governmental institutions

Future actions:

- Developing modern ways to present vanished architecture in different ways; management plan; making it clear that it is not only necessary to protect WH sites but also to develop them as centres for dissemination of knowledge about UNESCO goals; long-term organizational structures instead of changes every two years, binding standing orders; active support (not only financial) by WHC and governmental institutions