

Portugal

Convent of Christ in Tomar

Brief description

Originally designed as a monument symbolizing the Reconquest, the Convent of the Knights Templar of Tomar (transferred in 1344 to the Knights of the Order of Christ) came to symbolize just the opposite during the Manueline period - the opening up of Portugal to other civilizations.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1983

Agencies responsible for site management

- Comissão Nacional da UNESCO
Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (i) (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

Les raisons sur lesquelles est fondée la prétention du Couvent du Christ à la citoyenneté artistique mondiale sont multiples et d'éminente qualité.

L'existence de « l'Oratoire des Templiers » ou de l'éblouissante « Fenêtre ouest » de la nef manuéline suffirait à justifier entièrement la légitimité de cette candidature.

Le premier parce que, en plus d'être un des meilleurs parmi les rares exemplaires de sa typologie, il symbolise le monde médiéval européen des croisades et de la lutte pour la défense de la foi chrétienne contre l'invasion musulmane. La seconde « la Fenêtre manuéline » parce qu'elle constitue dans la grammaire décorative la première synthèse des arts européen et oriental (M. Tafuri). Mais, en plus de « l'Oratoire » et de « la Fenêtre », il y a le complexe monastique, un des plus grands d'Europe qui, allié à l'admirable encadrement paysagiste, nous pousse à la tentation de la classer comme une « cité interdite » de Pékin, plus petite dans l'échelle des valeurs matérielles mais incommensurable dans le rayonnement transcendant et chrétien.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS recommends the inscription of the Convent of Tomar on the World Heritage List based on two criteria :

- criterion (I) (represent a unique artistic achievement). This criterion applies to both the primitive church of the Templars and to the constructions of the Renaissance,
- criterion (VI) (be directly and tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance). In effect, the Convent of Tomar, originally conceived as a symbolic monument of the Reconquest, became, from the Manueline period, an inverse symbol: that of the opening of Portugal to exterior civilizations.

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the statement of significance

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- No need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the boundaries
- Considering that the convent of Christ is a monastic group, the convent's walls and the convent's aqueduct, are found outside the actual boundaries of the convent. The aqueduct

is an important work of hydraulic genius built during the reign of the Philips of Spain, whose significant difference in the organization of the convent can be observed within the convent's interior. In addition, the chapel of Our Lady of the Conception cannot be left out of the convent's assemblage, although it is found outside the convent's walls. Its integration within a region enriched by the Italian renaissance (Tuscany) certainly inspired its establishment at Tomar.

- Buffer zone has been defined, but is being reassessed; No need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the buffer zone

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Regulation of the Municipal Director Plan with certain chapters specifically concerning the historic center of the town of Tomar, as well as the classified heritage ; regulation published by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 100/94, of 8 October; Basic law for Cultural Heritage, most notably controlling any changes introduced to the classified monuments, as well as any archaeological excavations when necessary ; Law n.º 107/2001, of 8 September ; Protected zones of architectural heritage DG 265, 2.^a, of 14 November 1946 (J.O. 265, of 14 November 1946)
- Protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed

- Redefinition of the Special Zone of Protection, supported by the cartographic drawings realized, proceeding in the redefinition of the special zone of protection, and studying the possibility of including the chapel of Our Lady of the Conception and the Woods of the Seven Mounts. Timeframe: 2006-2008

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, religious use. Controlled transfer of some of the areas of the convent for cultural, educational, scientific, and social programs

Management/Administrative Body

- No steering group

- Site manager/coordinator on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan, but will be prepared

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Funding provided by the State Budget; Funding programs through the European Union
- Funding is sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 25

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

- Average : conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

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

- Collaboration with the Portuguese Institute of Conservation and Restoration in the restoration of the retable of "charola" (abside)

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 153,497 in 2004 (computer generated)
- Visitor facilities: The platform of the castle of the Templars ; the walls ; the convent of Christ ; the entry through the main gate ; the cloister of the cemetery as well as the ablutions cloister ; the sacristy of the Philippes ; the "charola" (abside) and the manuélina church; the high and low choirs; the convent itself (the principal and small cloisters, and those of the hotel, the crows, the "Micha" (small bread), the "Necessarias" with their various artistic aspects, the great dormitory and the noviciate. Since May 2003, the area of the convent of Christ which can be visited, has increased because the conservation works done on the southern facade were finished.

- Visitor needs: The main door and the exit of the monument must be improved, as well as the bathrooms. It is also imperative that there be handicap access, although the integrity of the convent must be maintained.

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk Assessment; studies related to the value of the site; monitoring exercises; visitor management
- Studies are used for conservation and restoration of the site as well as visitors' guidance

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage site among visitors, local communities, businesses and local authorities
- Special events concerning World Heritage status: exhibits, commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the convent's inscription on the World Heritage list.
- Web site available
- Involvement of local population: The convent of Christ has developed many cultural initiatives in collaboration with local and municipal institutions, organizations, and the population in general. In 2004 the "Friends of the Convent of Christ" was created which actively collaborates with the director of the monument to carry out various actions, always keeping within the ethical code of ICOM. Many of this group's meetings are held at the convent of Chris, a symbolic place which welcomes them willingly.

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 14th (1990)

Conservation interventions

- Restoration of parietal surfaces of the charola (abside) and of the building's roof (1988-1990). Conservation and restoration of the mural painting of the charola's (abside) arch (1989-1995); conservation and restoration of several spaces between the supports of the charola's (abside) interior, integrated into a construction

program which is not yet finished (1995-2005 and continuing); restoration of the roofs and parietal surfaces of « cloister of ablutions » and of the « cloister of the cemetery », finished in May 2003; restoration of the chapel of Our Lady of the Conception whose inauguration was held in 2002; restoration and conservation of the south façade of the convent, which was finished in May 2003; restoration of the pavement of the sacristy of the Philippian kings and of several mosaic panels of the adjacent rooms; restoration and placement of Christ on the charola (abside), in 2004; restoration of the convent's notary office (2005); enlargement of the convent's visitor area (May 2003-June 2004); archaeological excavations at Paço do Infante (Palace of the Infant), carried out between 1987 and 1996.

- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure; environmental pressure; natural disaster; visitor/tourism pressure
- Fire danger because of the closeness to the forest "Mata dos Sete Montes", whose state of maintenance has been insufficient these past years. Heavy vehicle traffic near the north and west façades which have already damaged the interior of the buildings of the convent. Measures proposed/taken
- Vigilance et fire drills;

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management, culture development and scientific innovation through the study of many fields
- Strength: Creation of an organization with adequate personnel called IPPAR- an advantage concerning the preservation, conservation, and maintenance of the monument, which greatly benefited its public image during the last ten years..Other advantages resulting from this coordination between cultural and economic objectives, which are supported by the cultural organization of the monument, its exterior projection, and its development of "educational services" which bring about the propagation of cultural heritage

- Weaknesses of management: The concept of conservation of the convent of Christ needs to undergo an evaluation, because the monumentality of the site, its varied aspects of heritage, the different artistic periods found, the diversity of the materials and the systems of construction, the multiplicity of its decorative aspects and the cultural means which are not on exhibit, give rise to continual interventions and programs. However, the integration of the monument as well as its architectural value, if interpreted more clearly, would bring greater advantages concerning the visitors' pleasure.