

SPAIN

San Millán Yuso and Suso Monasteries

Brief Description

The monastic community founded by St Millán in the mid-6th century became a place of pilgrimage. A fine Romanesque church built in honour of the holy man still stands at the site of Suso. It was here that the first literature was produced in Castilian, from which one of the most widely spoken languages in the world today is derived. In the early 16th century the community was housed in the fine new monastery of Yuso, below the older complex; it is still a thriving community today.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1997

Agency responsible for site management

- Directorate-General of Culture of the Government of La Rioja
Mailing Address(es)
e-mail:
Website:

2. Statement of Significance

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

Justification provided by the State Party

Since the VIth Century foundation of the monastery by San Millán and his disciples, this setting has been a focus for culture, history and religion firstly for the north of Spain and later for the whole of the country. During the 10th and 11th centuries it was enthusiastically supported by the royal house of Navarre (even becoming the Royal Pantheon) and the Castilian Counts and Kings (Fernan Gonzalez named San Millán patron saint of Spain and the Seven Infantes de Lara were buried here). Monastic life has gone on uninterruptedly in these monasteries from the 6th century until our times.

San Millan's sepulture has been a place of pilgrimage since his death in the 6th century and, when the Way to Compostela became important, pilgrims made the detour to visit it.

From an artistic point of view, SUSO Monastery is a Mozarabic building on a Visigothic base with

Romanesque enlargements. The first Esapa ribbed vaults in Spain were built here in the 10th century.

YUSO Monastery is the fruit of two centuries' building activity and in it different styles are combined without disturbing each other. The building also houses numerous works of art, from the 11th Century ivories to the paintings of Rizzi, cast iron work, altarpieces, the library with more than 300 documents from the 11th to the 15th centuries, 4 codices from the 12th and 13th centuries, incunables, etc.

Its archives house the culture, history and daily life of the monastery and the monasteries and churches associated with it throughout a wide area of northern Spain from the early Middle Ages onwards.

But, above all, what makes the San Millan Monasteries' candidacy for recognition by UNESCO as Heritage for Humanity unquestionable is its incorporation of immaterial values. It is its importance in connection with heroic deeds, cultural events of special importance, fundamental spiritual references and its links with a place of immortal legends.

All of this is to be added to San Millan's important material heritage:

* The mentioned emergence of Spain's first stable monastic base.

* The incorporation in western mythology of a saint with a legendary life, San Millán de la Cogolla sharing roles and characteristics with Saint James (Santiago) himself.

* The first written expression of the Romance language which, in an evolved form, we now know as Castilian or Spanish, took place in the dark years of the 11th century, within the walls of San Millán Monastery.

* This tongue became an educated language and so, with the mark of universality, but without any need to change geographical area, the first lyric poet in the Castilian language was born in the valley of San Millán: Gonzalo de Berceo closed the long road to the maturity of the language.

Four historical details which lack tangible expression, but which, along with the Suso and Yuso complex' impressive material presence, help make it perfectly equipped to receive the deserved recognition as a Property of Cultural Interest for Heritage for Humanity.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Qualities: The Suso Monastery is of great cultural interest so far as the early development of monasticism in Europe is concerned, since it represents the transition from an eremitic to a cenobitic community vividly in material terms. The continued survival of the community to the present day in the Yuso Monastery gives a very full picture of the trajectory of European monasticism.

Of great universal associative importance is the fact that the Spanish language, one of the most common in the whole world today, was first written down here, first for didactic purposes and then as a medium of artistic expression.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

During the course of the ICOMOS expert mission in November 1996, a number of proposals were made to the responsible authorities for modifications and improvements to the nomination, designed to make it conform to the requirements of the World Heritage Committee. These included a revision of the buffer zone around the Suso Monastery and provision for receiving larger numbers of visitors (parking, toilets, information etc) in the event of the property being inscribed on the World Heritage List.

[...] Subsequent to the mission, a detailed supplementary dossier was received, with a larger buffer zone including both monuments (approved by the Council for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports of La Rioja on 30 December 1996) which satisfied the reservations expressed by the ICOMOS mission. A resolution of the Government Council of La Rioja on 5 December 1996 was also provided; this contains a number of directives to specialized Councils (Industry, Tourism, Environment, Urban Planning, and Culture) which dealt with other points raised by the ICOMOS mission, including the provision of tourist facilities and the burying of electrical supply lines and removal of pylons.

Recommendation: That this property will be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv), and (vi):

The monasteries of Suso and Yuso at San Millán de la Cogolla are exceptional testimony to the introduction and continuous survival of Christian monasticism, from the 6th century to the present day. The property is also of outstanding associative significance as the birthplace of the modern written and spoken Spanish language.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1997): After having taken note of the evaluation of ICOMOS, the bureau recommended that the Committee inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi), considering that the Monasteries of Suso and Yuso at San Millán de la Cogolla are an exceptional testimony to the introduction and continuous survival of Christian monasticism, from the 6th century to the present day. The property is also of outstanding associative significance as the birthplace of the modern written and spoken Spanish language.

Session (1997): The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi), considering that the Monasteries of Suso and Yuso at San Millán de la Cogolla are exceptional testimony to the introduction and continuous survival of Christian monasticism, from the 6th century to the present day. The property is also of outstanding associative significance as the birthplace of the modern written and spoken Spanish language.

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

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

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

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Decree 12/99 Cultural Interest Sites
- Agreement 2000 of the Government Council of La Rioja approving the ad hoc Plan for the Protection of the
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Visitor attraction, religious use, rural landscape

Management /Administrative Body

- Legal steering group, El Patronato since 1998
- Site coordinator on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site:

national, regional, local, and international authorities

- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 10/1998
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Any issue affecting the property is handled by the Board of Trustees of the San Millán Foundation, an umbrella organisation of all the groups involved in the conservation of the site (UNESCO, ICOMOS, the Spanish Government, the Government of La Rioja and the Augustinian Friars)

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Government of La Rioja, Government of Spain
- Financial institutions and private companies
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 8

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

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

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

- Not provided

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics available (not provided), data furnished by the Tourist Office
- Visitor facilities; parking, shuttle service, guided visits, handicap access, exhibits, Visitor Information Centre, accommodation and restaurants, paths
- Tourism visitor management plan: www.frsanmillan.org

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, impact of World Heritage Designation, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation studies
- Geo-technical and geophysical studies, structural analysis, monitorisation of the Monasteries

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Creation of an International Spanish Language Research Centre, implementation of the "Spirituality classroom" of the Augustinian Recollect Friars, guided tours for school students; museum exhibits; limited visitor groups into the Monastery
- Web site available: The San Millán de la Cogolla Foundation.
Address: Monasterio de Yuso.
26226 San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja)
Tfno.: 941 287685
Fax : 941 220940
Website: fundación@fsanmillán.org
email: www.fsanmillán.org

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Restoration and rehabilitation works, archaeological and geophysical prospecting, hazard resolution
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures, environmental, natural disasters
- The fragility of the Monastery of Suso, due to its geophysical enclave and the morphology of the terrain; urban pressure, deterioration of some buildings, deterioration of stone inside the Monastery

- Emergency measures taken: geophysical and geo-technical terrain studies and the building is being monitored; urban planning regulations; restoration works to alleviate dampness and stone deterioration problems

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken / planned: construction, aesthetic conditions and uses permitted in the different areas. Monitoring is undertaken by the Consejo Superior de Patrimonio Cultural, Histórico y Artístico (High Council for Cultural, Historical and Artistic Heritage) of La Rioja and by the Territorial and Urban Planning Commission of the Government of La Rioja according to the ad hoc Plan

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic, management
- Strengths of management: ongoing restoration of the Monasteries, social awareness increase; creation of the Spirituality Centre; increase in the number of visitors; creation of the San Millán Foundation; creation of an International Spanish Language Research Centre; approval of the ad hoc Plan