

# Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery State of Conservation Report

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia

January 2014

This Report on the State of Conservation of the the Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery (C 710, Georgia) has been prepared by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia for the World Heritage Centre so that the World Heritage Committee may examine the state of conservation of the property at its 38th session in Doha, Qatar in 2014.

## INTRODUCTION

State Party	Name of the Property	Date of Inscription	Criteria	Organization responsible for the preparation of the report	Date of Report
Georgia	Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery	1994	C (iv)	National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia	2014

### 1. SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF STATE PARTY

Merab Bochoidze  
Director General  
National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation



### 2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### 2.1 AS PROVIDED BY STATE PARTY IN THE NOMINATION DOSSIER

##### 2.1.1 Gelati Monastery

“Gelati ensemble is a well preserved historical ensemble. It is of special importance for its architecture, mosaics, wall paintings, enamel and metal work. Gelati was not only a monastery, but a scientific and educational centre as well. The academy established in the Monastery was one of the most important cultural centres of ancient Georgia. By virtue of its high architectural quality and the outstanding examples of artwork that it houses, Gelati Monastery is a unique treasure of Georgian culture, and a rare example of the world culture”.

##### 2.1.2 Bagrati Cathedral

“The outer appearance of the building is monumental and grand, varied and dynamic. Ornamental decoration contributes to the picturesqueness of the cathedral. The building amazes and fascinates the viewer by perfect proportions, free and perfect execution of the mouldings, ornaments, arches, light constructions. Bagrati cathedral ornamentation makes it possible to trace the evolution undergone by Georgian architectural ornament in less than half a century; this ornamentation is an excellent sample of the world architectural plastics. High artistic value of Bagrati cathedral goes far beyond the local significance. It is one of the best monuments of the medieval Christian architecture”.

## 2.2 AS PROVIDED IN ICOMOS EVALUATION

“The two monuments presented in this report belong to the period of flowering of middle age Georgian feudal monarchy. Due to the strategic location on the crossroad of Eastern and Western worlds, the country created its own stylistic idiom. Both of the monuments represent the brightest outbreaks of this idiom in the context of the royal capital of Georgian kingdom.

[...] Detailed maps showing the areas proposed for inscription and the buffer zones, which had been omitted from the nomination dossier, were supplied to the mission. [...]

*Recommendation:* That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion iv:

**Criterion iv.** Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery represent the highest flowering of the architecture of medieval Georgia”.

## 3. STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY/INTEGRITY

### 3.1 EVALUATION OF THE AUTHENTICITY AT THE TIME OF INSCRIPTION

“Bagrati Cathedral nowadays is a ruin and may be considered *ipso facto* completely authentic. Gelati Monastery has been in continuous use since its construction, so it inevitably contains certain elements introduced before the modern philosophy of conservation was formulated. Nevertheless, its authenticity and integrity is generally preserved”.

### 3.2 PRESENT EVALUATION OF THE AUTHENTICITY/INTEGRITY

#### 3.2.1 Bagrati Cathedral

As stated by the World Heritage Committee 37<sup>th</sup> session (37COM 7A.32, Phnom Penh, 2013) due to the inappropriate rehabilitation, the authenticity of Bagrati Cathedral has been irreversibly compromised and that it no longer contributes to the justification for the criterion for which the property was inscribed. Following the recommendation by the World Heritage Committee the State Party has submitted the major boundary modification for the property to allow Gelati Monastery to justify the criterion on its own.

#### 3.2.2 Gelati Monastery

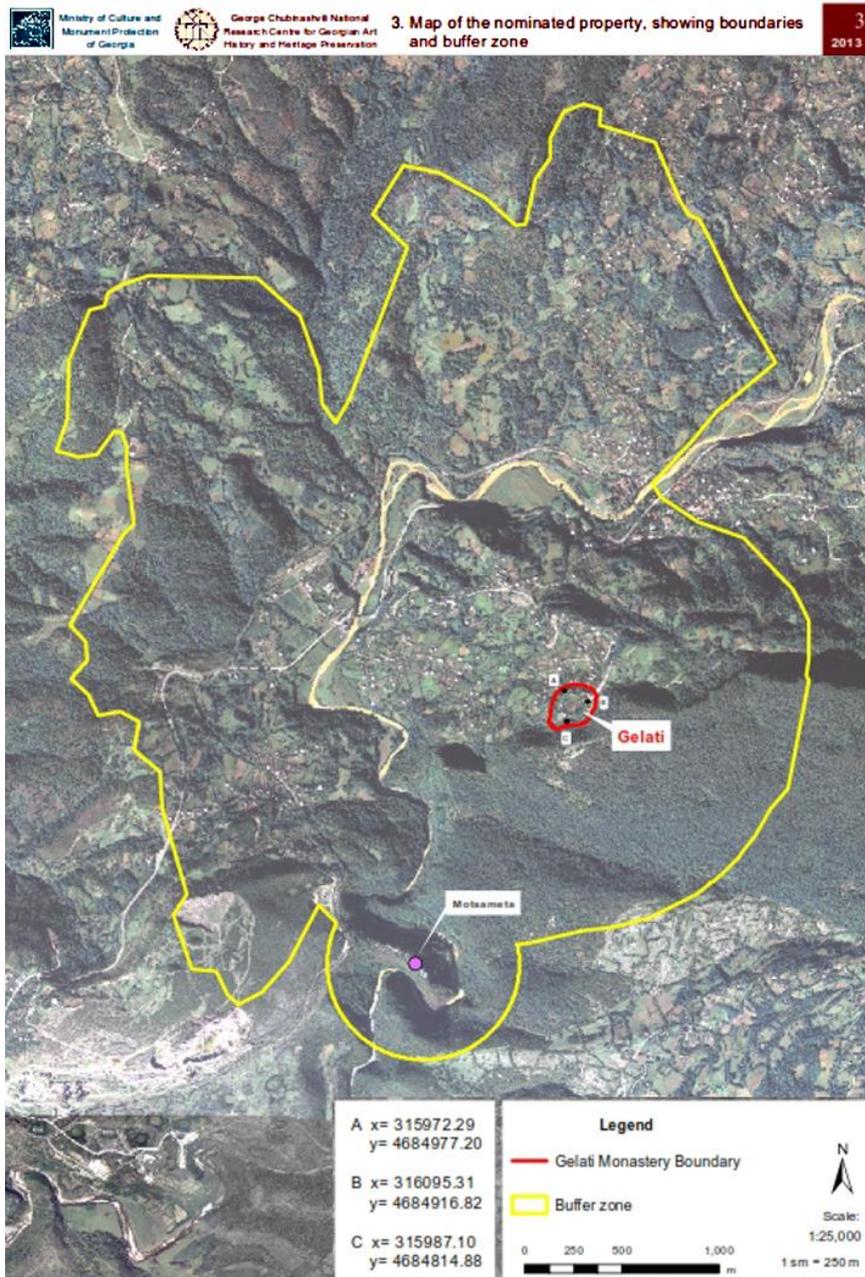
The authenticity of the Monastery is fully preserved. The Gelati Monastery Rehabilitation Project – commonly known as Conservation Master Plan, guides most important rehabilitation works since 2008. The Gelati Monastery Complex Rehabilitation Project has been the basis for the preservation of the authenticity of the monument, restoration and rehabilitation of all its components and the same time its presentation to visitors and its utilization by the clergy.

The Gelati Monastery Rehabilitation Project, and all following projects based on it were duly provided to the WHC for evaluation in 2009-2012.

## 4. MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- a. The legal framework regulating the issues related to Bagrati Cathedral WHS (the laws, the Concordat, the protection zones) is described in details in the SoC report of 2013, and is therefore omitted here.
- b. In 2013 the major step forward was the preparation and adoption of the extended the buffer zone of Gelati monastery WHS. The buffer zone was adopted by the decree of the Minister of Culture and Monuments Protection on 09.01.2014. The map of extended buffer zone was submitted together with the Boundary Modification document as shown in fig. 1 below.



## **4.2 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Conservation Master Plan for Gelati Monastery provides guidance for the rehabilitation actions within the property boundaries since 2008. Despite not having a legal status, it provides a formal framework to implement conservation works on the site on a sustainable basis.

The management plan is under preparation by the State Party. The Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Monuments Protection was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection to prepare the Boundary Modification Document for the Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery and the Management Plan for the Gelati Monastery. An international expert - Mr. Christopher Young was hired by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection to assist the local working group in the process. As a result of this collaboration the draft management plan was submitted to the WHC for consideration together with the Major Boundary Modification Document by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2014.

The work on the management plan is in progress and is planned to be completed by the end of 2014. The possible co-funding of the activity by the World Bank is considered in scopes of the Imereti Regional Development Program run with the World Bank funding by the Georgian Government.

The detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of local and national government, the patriarchate of Georgia and local church community is given in the draft Management Plan as well as the Major Boundary Modification document.

## **4.3 NATIONAL INSTITUTION**

The management of the WH sites at the national level is entitled to the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation – the legal entity under the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection.

The UNESCO and International Relations Unit of the Agency, facilitates co-ordination of the processes at the national level related to the WH sites, elaborates annual programs and overall strategy related to WH sites as well as the issues related to the national tentative list.

The National Agency is responsible for monitoring and maintaining good state of conservation of the site, providing proper methodology for interventions and issuing permits, providing a general management framework as well as visitor facilities and information.

### Address of the institution:

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation  
N27a Atoneli str, 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia  
Director General: Merab Bochoidze

## **4.4 MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

The local management agency is the Kutaisi Historical Architectural Museum Reserve. It was established in 1981. Following the institutional reform in the field of cultural heritage in 2008, the Kutaisi Historical Architectural Museum-Reserve along with other museum-reserves in the country has become a structural division of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation.

### Address of the institution:

Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-Reserve  
Director: Mr. Roland Isakadze  
7, Nazarishvili St., Kutaisi, Georgia

The staff of the organization remains as described in the SoC report of 2013.

The manager of the museum-reserve and monitoring specialists are responsible to provide the periodical monitoring and reporting on the Gelati monastery as well as other sites within their territory to the relevant unit of the National Agency.

The day to day maintenance and operational activities, such are: basic tourist services, cleaning of the territory, etc. are carried out by the monks.

## **5. NATIONAL INVENTORY**

The Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery are registered as Listed Properties according to the Georgian Legislation. For more information see the SoC reports of 2013, 2012 etc.

## **6. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY**

Gelati village does not face intensive development pressures. The mining activities that are carried out in the area do not have a visual or other direct physical impact on the site. A stone quarry that is located particularly close impacts the site indirectly by circulation of heavy trucks and resulting noise and pollution. Different solutions are suggested in the master plan to solve this issue, such as re-routing the road to the quarry.

Gelati is located close to the urban-industrial hub, that is the city of Kutaisi, second largest city in Georgia with about 200 000 population. In such a context Gelati is subjected to air pollution that may bear threat to the interior paintings.

Gelati is one of the most visited site in Georgia. Since the collapse of the Soviet regime, the restored monastic function has also added to the site significant number of visitors from all over Georgia. The religious community, composed of about 20 monks resides on the territory of the site. The master plan provides special solution for this issue, by introducing the different zones for visitors and monks, providing clear signage and pathways for circulation of visitors.

The ingoing process of drafting the management plan for Gelati is seen as an opportunity to enhance co-operation and dialogue with the church and to work together on the necessary improvements. The church representatives, locals as well as from the Patriarchate have been involved in the management plan drafting from the early period.

Along the man made risks, the negative influence of natural conditions and climate change is one of the main problems. Moreover, as Georgia is located in a seismically active zone, thus planning and assessing rehabilitation measures of the property the need for sufficient structural stability has to be considered.

## **7. MONITORING**

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, through it structural unit - Kutaisi Historical Architectural Museum-Reserve, implements the periodic monitoring of the property.

On the basis of the short periodical reports submitted from Kutaisi Museum Reserve as well as other structural subdivisions of the National Agency, the annual report on state of conservation of the property is compiled by the UNESCO and International Relations Unit at the Agency and submitted to the WHC.

## **PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

### **7.1 PROTECTION ZONES**

Gelati Monastery and Bagrati Cathedral are protected by the individual protection zones defined by the Law on Cultural Heritage.

In 2012 in the scope of the Major Boundary Modification the state took an initiative to study in depth the need for a buffer zone for Gelati Monastery. As a result the proposal for extension of the boundary of the visual protection area of Gelati Monastery was prepared and submitted to the Minister of Culture and Monuments Protection for consideration and approval. It was approved on January 9, 2014, after consultations with the Georgian Orthodox Church (see fig. 1)

### **7.2 CONSERVATION WORKS CARRIED OUT IN 2013**

#### **Gelaty Monastery**

The Gelaty monastery Conservation Master Plan, presented to the WHC in 2010, remains the guiding document for implementing and planning the long term rehabilitation and conservation of the property.

Based on these preparatory works the conservation of the Main Church was planned and funding secured from different international donors. In 2013 funding was confirmed by the US Ambassador Global foundation for conservation and restoration of the Main Church with a total 600 000 USD. The project is based on the Conservation Master Plan as agreed with the WHC and will be implemented jointly by the State Academy of Fine Arts and the Georgian Arts and Culture Centre. The works include: the restoration of the cupola of the main church, stone conservation and the roofing of the dome and the arms. The project duration is 3 years and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.

Since 2012 the restoration of the Main Church also became the focus of the World Bank within the scope of the Imereti Regional Development Program. Within this program the budget is secured for: (a) the further restoration and conservation of the Main Church and (b) construction of the visitor centre outside the Monastery as agreed with the WHC and advisory bodies in 2012. Assistance to further elaboration of the detailed management plan and specific plans (Risk Preparedness, Visitors etc.) is also being discussed. The details of the procurement and the content are being finalized at the moment.

#### **Bagrati Cathedral**

The design of Bagrati Cathedral floor was elaborated in 2013 and approved by the Cultural Heritage Council of the National Agency. The physical arrangement of the floor shall be launched in 2014.

## 8. PREVIOUS WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

### 8.1 DECISION

#### Decision: 37 COM 7A.32

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-13/37.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decisions **34 COM 7B.88** , **35 COM 7A.29** , **36 COM 7A.30** , adopted at its 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 35th (UNESCO, 2011) and 36th (Saint-Petersburg, 2012) sessions respectively,
3. Welcomes the progress in the implementation of the conservation programme plan for Gelati Monastery and encourages the State Party to continue to implement all relevant conservation measures regarding Gelati Monastery, including elaboration of a management plan;
4. Expresses its deep regret that despite previous decisions the re-building of Bagrati Cathedral has been completed and considers that the Bagrati Cathedral has been altered to such an extent that its authenticity has been irreversibly compromised and that it no longer contributes to the justification for the criterion for which the property was inscribed;
5. Requests the State Party to submit, by **1 February 2014** , a request for a major boundary modification for the property to allow Gelati Monastery to justify the criterion on its own;
6. Also encourages the State Party to seek the advice of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in developing the boundary modification and submit the draft to the World Heritage Centre for comments by the Advisory Bodies, by **30 September 2013** ;
7. **Decides to retain Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery (Georgia) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

### 8.2 IMPLEMENTATION BY STATE PARTY

The State Party elaborated the documentation for the Major Boundary Modification of the property upon the request of the World Heritage Centre and submitted first the draft to the World Heritage Centre in September, 2013 for the comments by the Advisory Bodies and the final document in January, 2014.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions presented below are aimed at contributing to the analysis which will facilitate to the Advisory Body and the Secretariat the preparation of the Committee draft decision.

### **Strengths**

The Major Boundary Modification for the property is finalized

Funds are allocated from international donors as well as the State Party for the conservation and rehabilitation works of Gelati Monastery.

The Management Plan preparation is in progress;

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of capacity of the Kutaisi Museum Reserve in World Heritage management.

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