

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 544

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Kizhi Pogost

Location : Soviet Socialist Republic of Karelia

State Party : U.S.S.R.

Date : 17 October, 1989

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That this cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria I, IV and V.

C) JUSTIFICATION

Khizi Pogost is located in the heart of an unreal landscape where the sky, reflected in the limpid waters of Lake Onega, seems to hold suspended in the pristine air hundreds of small islands. In summer they seem to sparkle in the sun. Long used as a landmark by sailors navigating through the White Sea, it appears to visitors arriving nowadays via hydrofoil from Petrozavodsk, the capital of the Karelian Republic 68 km to the south, as a glistening three-faceted jewel.

The pogost, i.e. the enclosure, is on a narrow strip of land on the southern tip of the large island of Kizhi. It includes two 18th-century wooden churches and an octagonal bell tower, also of wood, which was built in 1862. These amazing structures, in which the science of carpentry created a bold visionary architecture, perpetuate a very ancient model of parish space that developed when the Orthodox church began to spread to the northernmost reaches of the Russian world where small villages were widely scattered over an immense area. It was therefore necessary that the church, the graveyard and the buildings needed for the far-flung communities' religious life be grouped together in one place. The Kizhi pogost dates from the Middle Ages. Chronicles from the 16th century are the first to explicitly mention the existence of two wooden churches there. Destroyed by lightning in 1693, they were rebuilt on the same site.

Within the wooden polygonal enclosure, standing on either side of the rudimentary bell tower built by the carpenter Sysoj Osipov, are the two churches, the larger of the two, the summer church, is on the north; the winter church is on the south.

The Church of the Transfiguration was used during the summer, when the faithful journeyed from the outermost regions of the parish to attend services. A dendrochronological study of the materials sets its construction date after 1713-14. The octagon which defines the composition of the cruciform church is extended by oblong bays facing the four cardinal points. The nave, flanked with side aisles, is preceded on the west by a projecting narthex reached via two staircases.

The height of the Church of the Transfiguration, whose central cupola culminates at 37 meters, is a masterpiece of a multi-storey, multi-cupola, single-block structure, such as had already appeared in the High Middle Ages at Saint Sophia of Novgorod. Here, over a central volume covered with three octagonal frames, the architect placed bochkas (roofs whose peak is shaped like a horizontal cylinder with the upper side surface extended into a pointed ridge) topped with 22 bulbous cupolas. Inside, under the so-called "heaven"- a superb vault shaped like a truncated pyramid- is a gilded wood iconostasis holding 102 icons from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Church of the Intercession, or the Winter Church, is a more simple structure. Built in 1764, it is of the "octagonal prism on a cube" type. The crown of eight cupolas encircling the 27 meter-high central onion dome, and which covers the central pallellelepipiped space, gives it a more static appearance. On the east a five-sided apsidiole contains the altar. On the west is a long nave accessible by a single stairway.

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the Kizhi Pogost ensemble on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria I, IV and V.

- **Criterion I.** Considered by Karelians as "the true eighth wonder of the world", Kizhi Pogost is indeed a unique artistic achievement. Not only does it combine two multi-cupola churches and a bell tower within the same enclosure, but these unusually designed, perfectly proportioned wooden structures are in perfect harmony with the surrounding landscape.
- **Criterion IV.** Among the five surviving pogosts in the extreme northwestern Soviet territory, Kizhi Pogost offers an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble typical of medieval and post-medieval orthodox settlements in sparsely populated regions where evangelists had to cope with far-flung Christian communities and a harsh climate. Accessible by land or sea, the pogost grouped together religious buildings which could also be used for other occasional purposes; for example the narthex or nave served also as refectory and meeting hall. Another similar structure inspired by the same principles is the Scandinavian stavkirke.
- **Criterion V.** The pogost and the buildings that had been grouped together to form the site museum on the southern part of Kizhi are exceptional examples of the traditional wooden architecture of Karelia and more generally of that of northern Russia and the Finnish-Scandinavian region.

Russian carpenters, whose fame goes back to the Middle Ages to Novgorod, had carried the art of joinery to its apogee. Irreversible changes have caused this traditional skill to disappear. Hence, it is absolutely essential that ensembles like that of Kizhi Pogost be preserved for their illustrative value in the history of ancient techniques and for what they teach us of former ways of life.

ICOMOS observations

ICOMOS, aware of the exceptional beauty of the architectural landscape of Kizhi Pogost, recommends that the authorities responsible for the open air museum of history and architecture at Kizhi, which currently receives 135,000 visitors a year, maintain the present balance between nature and the constructions. Adding homes or wooden churches to the southern end of the island of Kizhi would alter the historical and visual characteristics of the site.

ICOMOS, which followed with interest the previous restorations of Kizhi Pogost (reconstruction of the iconostasis of the Church of the Intercession during the 1950s; reconstruction by the architect Opolovnikov of the fortified enclosure in 1959), notes that in-depth studies are being conducted on the current restoration of the Church of the Transfiguration, whose interior was shored up and iconostasis dismantled in 1988, and that radically different projects have been proposed.

The members of the International ICOMOS Committee for the Conservation of Wood were recently invited to visit Kizhi; they subsequently drafted recommendations aimed at safeguarding to the greatest possible extent the structure's authentic elements: the posts, the planks, and the shingles regionally known as "lemekh". The current restoration of Kizhi Pogost, which has also called on the expertise of Norwegian specialists, will soon be the subject of articles in ICOMOS Information.

ICOMOS, April 1990

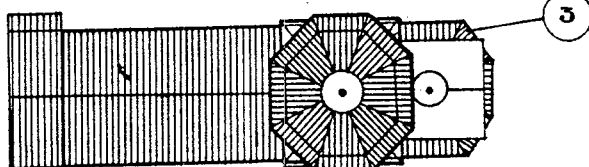
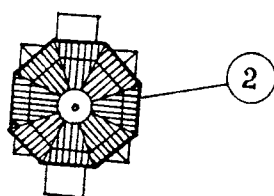
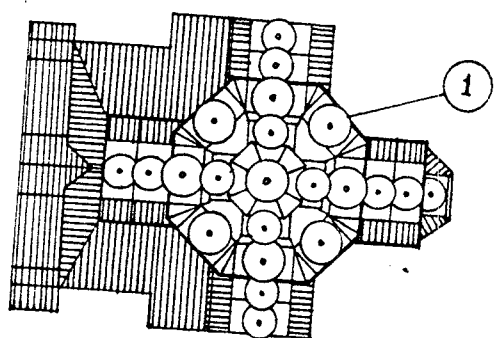
EXPLICATION:

1 - *The Church of the Transfiguration*

2 - *The Belltower*

3 - *The Church of the Intercession*

4 - *The Fence*



Plan de Kizhi Pogost /

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