

BULGARIA

Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo

Brief description

In the valley of the Roussenski Lom river in north-east Bulgaria, a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells developed in the vicinity of the village of Ivanovo. This is where the first hermits had dug out their cells and churches during the 12th century. The 14th-century murals testify to the exceptional skill of the artists belonging to the Tarnovo school of painting.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1979

Agency responsible for site management

- National Institute for Cultural Monuments
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- Ministry of Culture
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (ii), (iii)

Statement of Significance

Justification provided by State Party

The "Church" frescoes reveal an exceptional artistry and a remarkable artistic sensitivity for 14th century painting and Bulgarian medieval art; they are an important achievement in Bulgarian art and in the Christian art of South-Eastern Europe. Posterior to the Khora manastir mosaics (Karia Djami) of 1303-1310, these frescoes, by their very expressiveness, surpass any other historical monuments discovered, characteristic of the Paleologues style. Neo-classical in spirit and in elements of their subjects, the frescoes represent a departure from the canons of Byzantine iconography. They show close ties with expressive Hellenistic art and a clear preference for the nude, the landscape, an architectural background in a

composition, drama, an emotional atmosphere -- qualities which combine to make an exceptional masterpiece of the Tarnovo School of painting and of monumental art.

The five historical monuments in this group (chapels, churches, etc.), dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, serve as examples that pave the way for the distinctive character, development and mastery in the art of the Second Bulgarian State (1187-1396). The richness, the variety of the cells, chapels, monastery complexes, the original architectural solutions -- all of that set in a magnificent natural environment, confirms the value of this extraordinary historical grouping.

Advisory Body recommendation

ICOMOS: (Second year of inscription) "A celebrated and original group of buildings well-worth attention".

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement

- No Statement of Significance has been required for adoption by the World Heritage Committee at the time of inscription
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party
- Additional change proposed by State Party: would like to add Justification for Inscription to the web description

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

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Law: law on Cultural Monuments and Museums (1969)
- Ordinance 17 of the President of the Committee for Culture on Definition of Boundaries and Regimes of Use and Protection of Immoveable Cultural Monuments Outside Populated Areas (1979)
- Act: The Protected Areas Act (1998)
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Elaboration of Management Plan

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, national park

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group: no plans exist at this time to set up a Steering Group
- No coordinator has been appointed at this time
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; local
- The current management system is not sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Amendment to existing legislation concerning site management

5. Management Plan

- No Management Plan is being implemented, however one does exist for the wider natural park, of which the World Heritage site is one part. Future plans to create a management plan exist
- Current management situation: adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the Management Plan and monitoring its effectiveness: National Institute for Cultural Monuments and in the future to be locally implemented by local authorities

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Budget sources: main source is the state budget, in particular for monitoring and maintenance equipment
- WHF: for International Roundtable on Conservation (1993)
- Bi-lateral: World Monuments Fund, PHARE, Samuel Kress Foundation, Headley Trust
- Insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- number of staff: no number given

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

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

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

- Museum conservation facilities: National Academy of Fine Arts, National Institute for Cultural Monuments
- Training on site management: The Russe University - Master Programme "Cultural-historical heritage and tour-guiding" in cooperation with the Rousse museum of History - training of guides, cultural tourism, promotion of the site

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 4,891, counted with aid of tour operators and visitor books (2004)
- Trend: doubled in comparison to 2002 & 2003
- Visitor facilities: visitor contact point, pavilion with WC and parking
- Visitor needs: development and management of visitor traffic, further interpretive material

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; Studies related to the Value of the site; Condition surveys; Impact of World Heritage designation; Archaeological surveys; Visitor Management
- Studies used for: control of public access. Risk Assessment material dealing with microclimatic changes has been used in recommendations for site management

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 among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Events: in 2004, a 25th anniversary celebration of the site's inscription
- Web site available: through www.bulgariatravel.org
- Local participation: participation in tourism traffic management

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 18th (1994)

Conservation interventions

- Conservation: Restoration and conservation of murals. A programme for stabilisation of the rock massif near the Village of Ivanovo on which the rock-hewn churches are located is being developed under a World Heritage Fund programme. A project on the most significant unit, the Church of the Holy Virgin, is due to be completed shortly
- Present state of conservation: adequate

Threats and Risks to site

- Environmental; natural disaster; agricultural and forestry activity
- Specific issues: stabilization of the rock massif and condensation and humidity control
- Emergency measures planned: acting on results of the 2003 International Roundtable on protection of the site

13. Monitoring

- A formal monitoring programme exists
- Measures taken: condition surveys of the site, climatic profile

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, economic, site promotion
- Strengths of management: (1) Full documentation of all units of the site, spatial-development schemes, exposition designs, spatial-development projects related to cultural tourism
(2) Promotion of the site as an important part of cultural tourism route as well as a part of the entire network of cultural itineraries;
(3) Scientific, technological, and research projects and design development related to stabilisation of the rock massif on which the churches are located
- (4) The murals have been fully documented, their emergency conservation has been completed, and they have been partly restored.
- Weaknesses of management: No specific management plan worked out; no concrete site coordinator

Future actions:

- Elaboration of a site management plan, with assistance from international experts