

# GEORGIA

## Historical Monuments of Mtskheta

### Brief description

The historic churches of Mtskheta, former capital of Georgia, are outstanding examples of medieval religious architecture in the Caucasus. They show the high artistic and cultural level attained by this ancient kingdom.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** **1994**

#### Agency responsible for site management

- World Heritage National Committee, Ministry of Culture  
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E-mail: [whd@gol.ge](mailto:whd@gol.ge)  
Website: [www.mc.gov.ge](http://www.mc.gov.ge)
- Mtskheta Museum-Reserve  
54, Agmashenebeli St., Mtskheta, Georgia  
Phone +995 93 35 18 14

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** **C (iii) (iv)**

#### Justification as provided by the State Party

City-museum, architectural reserve, Mtskheta is a multi-layered monument, testifying to the great scope of building activity and high culture of the country. Preserved architectural monuments and unearthed archaeological material testify to the high artistic value of building and minor arts in various epochs, beginning from the 2nd mill. B.C. up to our days.

Architectural monuments of Mtskheta, being stage-making in the development of Georgian architecture are at the same time extremely significant for the study of the medieval architecture of the whole Christendom. Besides they are striking examples of the unity of architecture with the surrounding landscape.

Of special value from the artistic and historical points of view are the monuments of monumental painting (mosaic floor in "Dionysius Maison" in Szalisa, 2nd c. A.D.) and metalwork (goldsmithery) discovered in Mtskheta. Special place in semitic epigraphics is occupied by Armagi inscriptions,

giving vast valuable data for the study of the written language in general and making it possible to deal with the origin of Georgian written language anew.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

The nomination dossier submitted by the Republic of Georgia was accompanied by a number of books and other documents. Most of these are written in Russian or Georgian, neither of which is a working language of the World Heritage Convention. The most useful book, *Georgien: Wehrbauten und Kirchen*, is in German, another non-working language. More importantly, the only map provided showing the "Protective Zones of Mtskheta", was a very small-scale photographic print of a much larger map; the barely decipherable legends were, in any case, all in Georgian. However, new maps showing the areas proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List, together with buffer zones, were supplied to the mission, together with a summary of the Georgian protection legislation, as required by the *Operational Guidelines*.

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

**Criterion iii:** The group of churches at Mtskheta bear testimony to the high level and art and culture of the vanished Kingdom of Georgia, which played an outstanding role in the medieval history of its region.

**Criterion iv:** The historic churches of Mtskheta are outstanding examples of medieval ecclesiastical architecture in the Caucasus region.

#### Committee Decision

Bureau (July 1994): The Bureau recommended the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List and suggested to the State Party to change the name to "Historic Churches of Mtskheta".

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- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required by State Party

#### Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Boundaries are not reflecting adequately site's significance. Only some of monuments of Mtskheta – which State Party considers are of outstanding universal value - are inscribed on the World Heritage List. Georgia intends the

subsequent extension aiming to include on the World Heritage List new components of the Greater Mtskheta

- The protection/buffer zones have been defined for the site, but still are not formally adopted as it is required according to the State Party national legislation. Adopted in October 2006

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained. There have not been significant changes in the authenticity of the site since inscription, except for two individual monuments: Six-Apse Church in Armaztsikhe (complete loss of authenticity) and Small Church in Jvari Monastery (use of inappropriate materials during the “restoration” works). Loss of some bas-reliefs on the façades of Mtskheta Jvari Church caused by stone demolition

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- In October 2002 the Constitutional Agreement (*Concordat*) between the State and the Georgian Orthodox Church has been signed. According to this Agreement all ecclesiastic properties located in the territory of Georgia have been handed to the Church
- The protection of the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta is based on the law “On the protection of cultural heritage”
- The protection arrangements are not effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Application of the adequate protective regime within the buffer zone
- Timeframe: Since 2007

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- Urban centre, religious use, free visitor attraction

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- By the end of 2006, Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia plans to set up the Steering Groups for some of Mtskheta’s Monuments, namely for Jvari Church and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national

- The current management system is not effective

Actions proposed:

- Establishment / implementation of the appropriate management plan based on the existing Heritage & Tourism Master Plan
- Reorganisation and capacity-building of the Mtskheta Museum-Reserve

### **5. Management Plan**

- State Party in collaboration with UNESCO and UNDP prepared *Mtskheta Heritage and Tourism Master Plan* which is under examination for formal approval by the Ministry of Culture. Management Plan will be completed in 2007
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia, Mtskheta Museum-Reserve

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- State Budget: for the Mtskheta Museum-Reserve: EUR 7488 (staff costs and administrative charges). Examination of the state of conservation: EUR 1300 (from the Ministry of Culture)
- WHF: USD 18000 (Mtskheta Master Plan), USD 19000 (Implementation of Master Plan, Mtskheta), USD 35000 (Study and development of Mtskheta Master Plan), USD 75000 (with UNDP, Study and development of Mtskheta Master Plan)
- UNESCO Participation Programme: USD 15000 (Conservation project for Jvari Monastery)
- Georgia-ICCROM joint project of the Study and Conservation of Jvari Monastery
- Funding is insufficient

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 27

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

- Good: interpretation, education
- Average: conservation, promotion
- Very bad: management, visitor management

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

- Scientific institutes of the Georgian Academy of Sciences
- Conservation Laboratories of the Centre of Archaeology and National Museum; Conservation Chair of the Academy of Fine Arts
- No management training opportunities

## 9. Visitor Management

- No visitor statistics
- Visitor facilities: No visitor facilities exists at the site, excluding shops selling the objects for religious use (souvenirs, icons, prayer books, candelas etc)
- There is a need of skilled guides, promotional (printed, audiovisual and multimedia) products and of the development of tourist infrastructure

## 10. Scientific Studies

- Engineering and geological study of the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (Georgian Engineering Academy, 2003), ICOMOS Mission (2003), Monitoring Missions of the Ministry of Culture (2003, 2004, 2005), Archaeological surveys of the majority of Mtskheta's components regularly conducted by the Mtskheta Archaeological Expedition and the Mtskheta Museum-Reserve

## 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- No signs referring to World Heritage site. The State Party added during the datasheet revision process that they will be arranged by the end of 2006
- World Heritage Convention Emblem is not used on publications
- Awareness of World Heritage among visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities is not adequate
- There is a need of subsequent awareness-raising efforts through organization of seminars, exhibitions, lectures, dissemination of educational and promotional publications on the World Heritage sites and World Heritage Convention
- Mtskheta European Heritage Festival has been established within the framework of the European Heritage Days
- Web site: <http://heritage.gol.ge/worldhertit.htm>

## 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

### Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 23<sup>rd</sup> (1999); 25<sup>th</sup> (2001); 26<sup>th</sup> (2002); 27<sup>th</sup> (2003); 28<sup>th</sup> (2004); 29<sup>th</sup> (2005)

### Conservation interventions

- Conservation/restoration works:

#### Jvari Monastery:

2001-2002 – Restoration works on Small Church (intervention has been halted as erroneous)

2005 - Joint Stone conservation/training project of the Ministry of Culture and ICCROM

#### Svetitskhoveli Cathedral:

2002-2003 – Removal of the earth layer in the courtyard (inappropriate intervention)

2003 – Restoration and consolidation of the Gates of the Melchisedec Catholicos Palace

2002-2003 – “Reconstruction” of the Anthon Catholicos Palace (inappropriate intervention)

2003-2005 – Restoration/reconstruction of the Bell-Tower

2004 – Cleaning works of the part of mural painting in the interior

#### Armaztsikhe-Bagineti:

1998 – Conservation of the Roman-type bathes

2001 – Reconstruction of the Six-Apse Church (inappropriate intervention resulted by complete loss of authenticity of the monument)

#### Samtavro Nunnery:

2001-2004 – Archaeological survey and restoration/conservation works in the interior of the Transfiguration Church

- Present state of conservation: Bad

### Threats and Risks to site

- Stone demolition caused by acid rains
- Specific issues:
  - the State subsidies for the protection and conservation of the monuments of Mtskheta does not respond the practical needs
  - Some cases of unwarranted, erroneous interventions of the churchmen
  - Inappropriate interventions conducted on some monuments of Mtskheta
  - Inexistence of the effective management system
  - The disorganized infrastructure of Mtskheta
- Emergency measures taken:
  - Joint Georgia-ICCROM project aimed to respond on the main conservation issues regarding Jvari Monastery

- Definition and legalisation of the protection/buffer zones for all World Heritage properties

### **13. Monitoring**

- Formal monitoring programme: Ministry of Culture, established the regular monitoring exercise for all World Heritage properties. Monitoring missions are regularly visiting all properties and are producing summary State of Conservation report every year
- Measures planned: State of Conservation reports will produce the framework for the establishment of conservation plans
- Key indicators: Stone demolition process, destabilisation of architectural structures

### **14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: political
- Weaknesses: Ineffective management system, overall lack of capacities and policies for protection and conservation, lack of cooperation between stakeholders

#### **Future actions:**

- Institutional reforming and capacity-building of institutions and professionals involved in the study, conservation, management and preservation of the site
- Implementation of the project, aimed to respond the main conservation issues regarding Jvari Monastery
- Special project on the monitoring, documentation and conservation of the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral
- Establishment of the appropriate Management Plan for Mtskheta
- Application of the protection regime within the boundaries of the protection/buffer zones; extension of the property on the World Heritage List

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund is needed for the implementation of these activities.