

GEORGIA

Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery

Brief description

The construction of Bagrati Cathedral, named after Bagrat III, the first king of united Georgia, started at the end of the 10th century and was completed in the early years of the 11th century. Although partly destroyed by the Turks in 1691, its ruins still lie in the centre of Kutaisi. The Gelati Monastery, whose main buildings were erected between the 12th and 17th centuries, is a well-preserved complex, with wonderful mosaics and wall paintings. The cathedral and monastery represent the flowering of medieval architecture in Georgia.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1994

Agency responsible for site management

- World Heritage National Committee, Ministry of Culture
4, Sanapiros St., 0105 Tbilisi, Georgia
e-mail: whd@gol.ge
website: www.mc.gov.ge
- Gelati Museum-Reserve**
7, Nazarishvili St., Kutaisi, Georgia

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (iv)

Justification as provided by the State Party

Gelati Monastery

Gelati ensemble is a set of well preserved historical monuments. It is especially valuable for the preserved monuments of architecture, mosaic, mural painting, metalwork and enamel. Gelati was not only a monastery, but a centre of science and education, while the Academy, founded in the monastery, was one of the most significant centres of culture in the ancient Georgia. High skill of execution and expressiveness of the mosaic preserved in Gelati Monastery place it among the outstanding artistic monuments of the worldwide significance. Mural painting, chronological range of which comprises 12th-17th c., is a peculiar significant museum of Georgian monumental

painting. Up to recently, the unique samples of Georgian metalwork were kept in Gelati; some of them are adorned with enamels, for instance 12th c. magnificent Khakhuli triptych 12-17th cc. icons are distinguished by lavish ornamentation and masterly execution. Illuminated manuscripts kept in Gelati are also the unique samples of Georgian culture.

Thus, Gelati monastery due to its architectural merits and magnificent samples of Georgian culture kept in it, is the unique treasury of culture. Such a collection of excellent monuments of high artistic value, gathered in a single ensemble, is a rare case in the history of the world culture.

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.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

[...] 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. [...]

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.

Committee Decision

Bureau (July 1994): The Bureau recommended the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List and recommended the ICOMOS mission evaluation report to be transmitted to the State Party.

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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

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- The buffer zone has been defined, but still is not formally adopted as it is required according to the State Party national legislation
- Special programme aiming to re-define and legalise the buffer zones for Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery is launched by the Georgian Ministry of Culture

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained. There have not been any significant changes in the authenticity and/or integrity of the site since inscription

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 site is based on the law "On the protection of cultural heritage"
- The protection arrangements are not effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Establishment of the adequate protective regime within the buffer zone
- Timeframe: 2006-07. The State Party, during the revision process for the datasheets, indicated that the timeframe had changed to 2007-08

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Religious, urban centre, free visitor attraction

Management /Administrative Body

- No Steering Group established. The possibility of the establishment of the Steering Group is under examination in the Ministry of Culture. This group may be formed involving already existing coordinators, NGOs, representatives of Church and national/local authorities as well as the local community
- The property is managed jointly by the Georgian Orthodox Church and the State (Ministry of Culture and the Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-Reserve) 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 sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Establishment / implementation of the appropriate management plan
- Reorganisation and capacity-building of the Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-Reserve

5. Management Plan

- No management plan has been established
- Responsibility for the establishment and overseeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia, Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-Reserve

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Ministry of Culture: Subsidies for the Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-Reserve; Examination of the state of conservation; Awareness-raising activities
- WHF: Establishment of the concept of scientific protection of Bagrati Cathedral (2003)
- Bi-lateral: For the Gelati Monastery: Cultural Heritage Protection Fund of the US Ambassador to Georgia (implemented in 2003-04 by the Georgian Fund of Art and Culture)
- Funding is insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 13

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

- Geological, engineering-construction, historical-bibliographic, archive, epigraphic researches and archaeological surveys
- Study of the state of conservation of the Gelati frescoes, study of the humidity in Gelati, chemical and biological analysis of the building stones and the pigments of the wall painting in Gelati Monastery
- Assessment of the overall state of conservation

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- No signs referring to World Heritage site. The State Party, during the datasheet revision process, stated that signs 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

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee session: 28th (2004); 29th (2005)

Conservation interventions

- Conservation/restoration works: 1999 – Conservation of the chancels of Bagrati Cathedral (Georgian Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre); 2003 – Conservation of murals and hydro-isolation of the walls in the

interior of the St. Nicholas Church, Gelati Monastery

- Present state of conservation: Average

Threats and Risks to site

- The negative influence of natural conditions and climatic changes
- The weakness and ineffectiveness of the existing management system and absence of management plan; no buffer zones legalised; the State is still not providing sufficient subsidies for the protection and care of Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery; wilful interventions of the local clergy

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: Condition of architectural structures; regarding frescoes: soluble salts, reproduction of micro-organisms

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: political pressure
- 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
- Establishment and implementation of the appropriate Management and Conservation Plans for the property
- Re-definition and legalisation of the buffer zones and protective regime

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