

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

Our Ref. GB/AS/1562/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 12 January 2018

H. E. Mr Lee Byong Hyun
Permanent Delegation of the Republic of
Korea to UNESCO
Tour Montparnasse (19th floor)
33, avenue du Maine
75015 Paris

World Heritage List 2018

Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea (Republic of Korea) – Interim report

Dear Sir,

As prescribed by the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2018. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to the “Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea” was carried out by Wang Lijun (China) from 10 to 17 September 2017. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 5 October 2017, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the selection of components, specificities of Korean Buddhism and other beliefs, development projects, concepts of ‘restoration’, local communities, heritage impact assessment processes and management. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 6 November 2017 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2017, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2018. The additional information, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2018.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Thursday 23 November 2017 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. During the final part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting that followed, the ICOMOS Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that the "Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea" might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points and provide Additional Information where necessary:

Distinctiveness of Korean expressions of Buddhism

The ICOMOS Panel considers that the distinctive expression of Korean Buddhism could be articulated for the purposes of the World Heritage List; however, the ICOMOS Panel does not consider that this has yet been clearly defined. ICOMOS does not find the State Party's arguments about the distinctiveness of the spatial layout and *madang* (rectangular yard) to be convincing because these are relatively common characteristics in Korea and elsewhere. Similarly, while the documentation of the incorporation of local beliefs into the temples is of interest, the ICOMOS Panel does not consider that this will be a sufficient basis for Outstanding Universal Value.

The ICOMOS Panel would therefore appreciate further advice about the possibility of focusing the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of this nomination on the ways in which the nominated components can demonstrate the distinctiveness of the intangible and historical aspects of Korean Buddhism, including its long time-depth, continuity and survival. The distinctive intangible aspects could focus on the specific characteristics of meditative practices and doctrinal studies of Korean Seon Buddhism, as well as distinctive aspects of temple management and education of monks. In responding to this request, the ICOMOS Panel requests that attention is given to clearly identifying the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Depending on the response to this request for Additional Information, the ICOMOS Panel notes that there could be further implications for the selection of the components and comparative analysis (see below). A concise clarification of these aspects would be appreciated.

Selection of Components

The selection of the seven components is a crucial issue for the ICOMOS Panel. The nomination dossier and Additional Information provided by the State Party have explained that the components were selected from 952 sites in the Republic of Korea (of which 785 are located in mountain settings). The ICOMOS Panel understands that the seven components were selected from a shorter list of 25 potential sites, based on several factors, including the authenticity and integrity of the sites, and the condition of their settings.

The ICOMOS Panel considers that the selection of the components is not justified at this stage; and seeks to better understand: the method for the selection of the series; how the components specifically contribute to the demonstration of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value; and, why each of the components has been included. In the reviews conducted by the ICOMOS Panel, there are questions about why some of the components have been included, but not others. For example, why have temples such as Hwaeomsa, Songgwangsa, Ssanggyesa, Bongamsa, Sudeoksa, Haeinsa and Bongamsa been omitted?; and, why did the selection include some, but not all of the so-called Korean 'Three-Jewel Monasteries' - Tongdosa, Haeinsa and Songgwangsa temples? In terms of their historical significance, some components seem relatively weakly justified (such as Bongjeongsa, Magoksa, and Seonamsa).

It is important to emphasise that, at this stage, ICOMOS has not reached a final view about these issues, and would welcome the further advice of the State Party. Additional Information is requested about the process by which 25 sites were selected from the 785 mountain monasteries; and how the seven

components were selected for the nomination. In addition to deepening our understanding of how these decisions were made, the ICOMOS Panel requests a concise explanation of how the selection process directly relates to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated series. It would be useful if this could be provided in the form of a table that shows the proposed criteria alongside the characteristics that determined the selection of the seven components.

Selection of 'Head' Temples

In the discussions with the ICOMOS Panel held in November 2017, representatives of the State Party explained that each of the seven components is a 'head' temple, and that this was one of the bases of their selection. However, this has not been clearly explained in the nomination dossier, and does not seem consistently applied. For example, the inclusion of Bongjeongsa can be questioned on this basis, as can the omission of Ssanggyesa, Hwaeomsa, Songgwangsa, Sudeoksa, and Haeinsa (amongst others). The ICOMOS Panel therefore has doubts about whether this is a useful basis for the selection of the nominated series given the complex history of Korean Buddhism.

Comparative Analysis

ICOMOS has received the Additional Information concerning further Buddhist properties on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists from Asian countries. This has improved the completeness of the comparative analysis. The ICOMOS Panel requests Additional Information about whether this could be further expanded to include Buddhist temples in other countries – for example, India or Myanmar? It is acknowledged that this will require the comparative analysis to go beyond the properties in the World Heritage List and/or Tentative Lists, but this could assist in clarifying the specific distinctiveness of the intangible and historical aspects and potential Outstanding Universal Value of Korean Buddhism.

Visitor Pressure and Carrying Capacity

The ICOMOS Panel appreciated the opportunity to discuss these issues with representatives of the State Party in November 2017, and the work done to quantify the carrying capacity for the nominated temples is noted. Because of the importance of the continuing spiritual practices at these sites, the ICOMOS Panel considers it important to ensure that visitor pressure is strongly managed. Additional information would be appreciated about whether the needs for these spaces to continue to support spiritual practices and rituals have been factored into the calculations of carrying capacity.

New Works

ICOMOS understands that as places of worship and every-day life, changes might occur within these temples, particularly in response to the wishes and needs of the monks themselves. Some Additional Information about this has already been provided, including the procedures for approval by the Cultural Heritage Committee. For the continuing work of the ICOMOS Panel, it would be appreciated if the decision-making approaches applied in such cases could be explained in further detail.

5-year Plans for Conservation and Management and Tourism Development Master Plan

The nomination dossier makes reference to these plans, made in consultation with provincial governments, dated 2012-2016. The ICOMOS Panel would appreciate updated information on these key mechanisms.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre with the above information by **28 February 2018 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the Operational Guidelines for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any

information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee.

It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we request to keep your response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Bourdin', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to Cultural Heritage Administration
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre