



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
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pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

AMENDMENT

Item of the Agenda	8B
Amended Draft Decision	43 COM 8B.36 Historic Centre of Sheki with the Khan's Palace, Azerbaijan,
Amendment submitted by the Delegation of....	Kuwait, China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tunisia, Brazil (revised)
Date	06.07.2019

TEXT

Draft Decision: 43 COM 8B.36

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/19/43.COM/ 8B.Add and WHC/19/43.COM/INF.8B1.Add,

2. Recalling Decision 41 COM 8B.20 adopted at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017). ~~and noting that no new information related to the potential significance of the site has been submitted which would have allowed ICOMOS to reassess this aspect of the site,~~

3. ~~Decides not to~~ **Inscribes** the Historic Centre of Sheki with the Khan's Palace, Azerbaijan, on the World Heritage List **on the basis of criteria (II) and (V);**

4. Takes note of the following provisional Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief Synthesis

The historic town of Sheki, located in the northern part of modern Azerbaijan, has ancient origins as part of the Caucasian Albania, dating from the 6th century BCE. The current historic center results from the reconstruction, after a mud flood in 1772, on higher ground in a mountain valley east of the previous site. Due to the natural limitations of the valley, the historic area has retained its overall urban form, but has expanded within the original building lots, following traditional typological patterns. The traditional buildings with their typical high saddle roofs, deep verandas and gardens constitute the consistent and characteristic visual integrity of the historic urban landscape, within the spectacular setting of the protected mountain slopes.

Being in contact with important trade routes, the region of Sheki has been subject to a variety of cultural influences. Christianity was here introduced as early as the 1st century CE, and Islam in the 7th century. During its history it has been under various governments, including the Safavids and Qajars until the 18th century, followed by the Russian rule in the 19th century. These different cultures have also influenced the features of architecture, of which the Khan's Palace is an outstanding example, also reflected in many of the interiors of wealthy merchant houses e.g. fireplaces (bukharas), decorations, windows (shabaka) etc.

In 1743, Sheki was established as the first and the most powerful of a series of Khanates in Caucasus, representing a new administrative system in the region. As a trading center, in contact with Asia and Europe, the principal economy of Sheki, from the ancient times, has been based on silkworm breeding, trading of cocoons, and the development of various crafts, which still continue in the region. These activities were favored due its particularly suitable climatic conditions. At the same time, the morphology of the urban fabric and its growth patterns were a direct result of the topography of the site, and the economic developments and related activities.

The urban pattern of the city of Sheki is determined by the water harvesting and management. The city is located in the catchment area of the Kish river in a space drained by streams that have been intercepted and transformed into a network of channels over time. Added to this water supply are the waters from mountain glaciers and meteoric glaciers. The hydraulic network is diversified, distinguishing the fresh and less potable waters according to the different origins: spring, rainwater and torrent. An elaborate distribution system manages the water network up to the residential houses and productive gardens, structuring the urban plot and the division into neighbouring areas. The cultivated particles each with the house on one side are the distinctive and exceptional character of the city of Sheki.

The garden - residential houses together constitute a production system based on the series of operations related to the feeding and breeding of the silkworm and its processing. Thus a garden city was created in which the elements of aesthetic and symbolic value are perfectly integrated with functional and utilitarian characters. The model is known as the new urban conception of the green city or garden city that had been applied by Amir Lang (Tamerlane) in the reconstruction of Samarkand in 1370 CE and developed by his successors. It was used in the magnificent *char bagh* of Isfahan by the Safavids in 1600 CE.

Criterion (ii):

The Historic Center of Sheki exhibits an important interchange of multiple cultural influences, which have their origin in history over two millennia. The current urban form, which dates back to the new construction after the flood of 1772, continued earlier building traditions responding to the local climatic conditions, and the requirements of the traditional economy and crafts activities. These developed in close contact with the Silk Roads trading system, and particularly under the Safavid and Qajar influences, and the later impact of Russian rule. As the major cultural and commercial center in the region, Sheki in turn influenced a wider territory of Caucasus and beyond. The Historic Centre of Sheki bears exceptional testimony to the feudal system of the Caucasian khanates, which developed from 1743 to 1819, and was also expressed in the architecture of the Khan's palaces, interiors of wealthy merchant houses, and the fortification.

The Khan Palace has the same typological characteristics of the residential house and is a synthesis of the meaning of Sheki. Inside the decorations repeat the storytelling reiterated by the symbolism of the designs and colors and by the light filtered by the mosaic of the stained glass windows (shabaka). Through flowers, plants, vegetation and stylized or naturalistic animals, the Khan Palace reproduces within itself the image and meaning of the entire city: the integration of nature and culture, aesthetics and production, art and life.

Criterion (v):

Sheki has preserved intact the landscape developed organically in close interaction with the natural conditions and climate of the mountain valley. Sheki has kept in the history an extraordinary integration with the environment, the natural morphology and the urban typology. Completely realized according the ancient rules Sheki represents an extraordinary and unique example of a planned productive garden city. We find still intact these features in the water system, in the gardens, in the productive structures like sericulture and the peculiar organization of the house factory with the cultivated fields.

The type of hydraulic organization with water inlets on the rivers, irrigation and power channels for the mills, together with the gravitational system that defines the roads and the particles in the productive garden is typical of archaic urban systems, diffused by Mesopotamia, Iran and the central Eurasian area. Sheki shows in its urban morphology the origin in the life and production needs of the garden city model typical on the oases and the Islamic city based on the superficial irrigation cultivation and gravitational water system.

Integrity

The historic centre of Sheki has retained its overall integrity since its first construction due to constraints of the site in the mountain valley. It contains all the elements that justify its OUV. Together with its buffer zone, the settlement forms a coherent ensemble that has also retained its visual integrity intact. The boundaries of the property contain all the planned historical city with its productive garden houses, fortifications and monuments. The traditional Sheki house is an extraordinary constructive example of integration between production and architectural typology. The water system, repartition in neighborhoods (mehelle) and many traditional activities are still intact and efficient. These represent the complete range of the attributes of the property as unique testimony of a planned productive garden city capital of the Sheki Khanate. The fortress, the Khan Palace, the caravanserais, one of which is the greatest in the Azerbaijan, are completely intact and shows the important administrative and commercial role of the city.

Authenticity

The historic centre of Sheki has retained its overall historical authenticity. All the monumental complexes are intact and the restoration works, carried out and in progress, are of excellent quality and respond to local construction methods and international conservation principles. The residential houses of Sheki have been gradually built following traditional typological patterns of growth. Therefore, with few exceptions, most of the recent constructions also respect such traditional continuity. Of the 2755 residential houses of Sheki, 1255 (45%) maintain their complete authenticity, evolving over time according to functional transformations that do not affect the architectural typology. The rest have undergone transformations that will be corrected through the Conservation Strategy guided by the Restoration Manual. In the same way restoration and rehabilitation activities have been undertaken in that buildings that are in need of repair. This process must be carried out by involving private individuals and the population through incentives for the restoration carried out respecting the historical and architectural character of the place.

Protection and management requirements

The Historic Centre of Sheki is under strict protection within the general urban master plan of the city as a conservation area. Furthermore, The Historic Centre of Sheki is under the protection and management of the State Tourism Agency and its newly created Reserves Management Center, together with other relevant stakeholders. The Action Plan on Conservation and Rehabilitation of Historical Centre of Sheki and the Restoration Manual are both resource and guidance documents, which form the basis for the development of planning guidelines and stronger protection for individual buildings.

5. Recommends the State Party to give consideration to the following:

A. Revise and adopt the Management Plan;

B. Prepare and adopt the Conservation Master Plan;

C. Define the guidelines and the plan of instruments (Regeneration Urban Plan) to incentivize the private participation and monitoring of all the process.