STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT BY THE STATE PARTY (UZBEKISTAN)
“ITCHAN KALA” (ref. 543)

In response to the letter (ref. CLT/WHC/APA/FJ/NH/20/008) of 5 February 2020 by World Heritage Centre addressed to the Permanent Delegation of Uzbekistan to UNESCO

Introduction

In 1967, Itchan Kala, the historic inner-city of Khiva, was granted the legal status of the State Architectural and Historic Reserve (Resolution no. 61) of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR. Since 1969, Itchan Kala is a museum and reserve. In 1990, “Itchan Kala” has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, according to criteria (iii), (iv) and (v).

The Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property has been adopted in 2013. The boundaries of the property have been clarified in 2012, in response to the Retrospective Inventory. There is no buffer zone legally established for this property yet. A proposal for the creation of a buffer zone of 282 ha has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre for examination by the World Heritage Committee in 2016, but the proposal was referred back (Decision 40COM 8B.42) to allow the State Party to “clarify the management arrangements and measures in place within the buffer zone”, and “consider establishing specific management and protection policies and mechanisms that ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of this property is given primary importance in urban development approvals within the buffer zone.”

This State of Conservation report was required by the World Heritage Centre following correspondences since 2016 and recently (ref. CTL/WHC/APA/19/061 dated 25 April 2019, CLT/WHC/APA/19/255 dated 3 December 2019, and CLT/WHC/APA/FJ/NH/20/008 of 5 February 2020 and CLT/WHC/APA/FJ/NH/20/054 of 29 April 2020), which raised issues related mainly to the conversion of Madrassah Muhammad Rahim Khan II, located in the core zone of Itchan Kala, and the large-scale construction work said to be underway in Itchan Kala and Dishan Kala. The World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS considered that it would be appropriate that the World Heritage Committee examine the state of conservation of Itchan Kala at its 44th session. In particular, it was required to provide “specific references to the progress on the management framework, ongoing or planned infrastructure development, measures concerning tourism, as well as the recommendations of the ICOMOS advisory mission conducted in April 2018”.

Taking note of this request, the administration of Itchan Kala, together with the Department of Cultural Heritage of Khorezm Region, and the Department of UNESCO Affairs of the Ministry of Culture prepared the necessary information required in the above-mentioned letter and reports the following:

I. Executive Summary of the Report

1. Conversion of Madrassah Muhammad Rahim Khan II

For the reutilization of this monument, the Khorezm Regional Department of Cultural Heritage followed the 1964 Venice Charter, which states that the societal use of historic monuments is “desirable, but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building”.

The adaptive reuse projects currently under implementation in Muhammad Rahim Khan II madrasa concern: (1) the improvement of the existing museum in order to enhance the visitation experience, and (2) the adaptive reuse of the former students’ dormitories into a tourist accommodation
including a breakfast and refreshments area. These two project proposals followed the principles outlined in the international guidance mentioned above, in the sense that:
- A contemporary use has been found for a historic monument that has lost its original function.
- The interventions privileged the preservation of this important architectural ensemble, thus no change to the facades, layout or decoration has been made. The former learning and prayer hall was used as a museum in the last 25 years and it will continue to be a museum, while the area of the former students’ dormitories will be used as a tourism accommodation. The interventions are thus compatible with the original function, minimal and reversible.
- In the hotel area, the adaptive intervention did not require any change in the morphology of the building as they concerned only the interiors of the former students’ dormitories and the replacement of their old toilets of the XIXth century with modern bathrooms. The necessary sewage and water piping works were preceded by thorough archeological investigations and special precautions have been taken during implementation, including also emergency measures in case of unexpected discoveries.
- The internal facades of the students’ cells arranged around the main open courtyard, have been kept intact. The old carved doors are maintained in place, and no mechanical device is placed on façades in order to prevent a detrimental visual impact. The original brick paving of the courtyard and the green space have been maintained as such.
- Finally, the original structure and layout as well as the stone pavement of the prayer hall have been fully preserved.

The two reuse proposals have been presented to, discussed onsite and endorsed by UNESCO Tashkent Office. No objections have been made with respect to these projects.

2. Progress on the management framework

In 2015, the Principle Department on Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage Properties (now, Department of Cultural Heritage) with the support from UNESCO Tashkent Office and the World Heritage Centre, developed a GIS database of all buildings and structures of Itchan Kala based on background information, plot-by-plot surveys, and interviews. This information database enabled and facilitated the development of a Management Plan for the property. Conjointly, a series of training sessions on the conservation and management of World Heritage properties have been carried out for site managers and decision-makers.

The Management Plan for Itchan Kala World Heritage Property 2020-2025 has been developed over the last five years through a wide consultative process. The previous draft versions of this plan have been successively discussed, reviewed and completed and a final draft, agreed by the stakeholders and the concerned community, is now completed and will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS. After its acceptance by ICOMOS, the Management Plan will be submitted for approval by the Cabinet of Ministers and become a legal document.

The Khorezm Regional Department of Cultural Heritage is very active and ensures the management of the property in a satisfactory manner. In order to increase the management effectiveness, the team has been supplemented with an additional new staff: the post of Chief Specialist for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Zones has been created and filled, as a first step towards the creation of a special office, the “Itchan Kala World Heritage Management Unit”.

3. Ongoing or planned infrastructure development

In order to improve the railway services in Western Uzbekistan, the existing railway linking Bukhara to Khiva has been electrified. This allowed the extension of the high-speed rail line connecting Tashkent-Samarkand-Bukhara, up to Khiva, improving thereby the access to Khiva and its attractiveness as a tourism destination. Conjointly, a new train station has been built next to the tourist zone and its promenade outside Dishan Kala (the proposed buffer zone).
Regarding the road network, all plans for street widening and demolition of houses connected to it within Ichan Kala and Dishan Kala have been abandoned. Inside Itchan Kala, the surfacing of existing streets has been gradually upgraded using in majority natural stone and outdoor furniture has been provided in the vicinity of major monuments. Moreover, a number of public green spaces for the use of residents and visitors have been created, while upgrading of electricity, gas, sewage and water supply networks in residential areas is steadily progressing.

4. New development within Itchan Kala

Several traditional houses in Ichan Kala have collapsed because of severe termite infestation or have been demolished due to their dilapidated condition and safety concerns. They have been replaced with new buildings for residential or tourism purposes. These redeveloped properties respected the prevailing low height of traditional houses in Itchan Kala, of one or maximum two floors, and used earth as building material or finishing, wooden doors and window frames, as to better integrate the historic environment. There is no other new development activity taking currently place in Ichan Kala.

5. New development within Dishan Kala

In 2013, two large urban areas of Dishan Kala - Mevaston and Yangiturmush mahallas - have been demolished because of massive termite infestation. These areas remained unbuilt and any new development in these areas is halted until a new Project of Detailed Planning (PDP) is completed in accordance with the recommendations of the ICOMOS Advisory mission report of 2018.

Also, the construction works on the promenade linking Koy Darvaza and Palvan Darvaza have been halted. However, outside Dishan Kala, the promenade between the new train station and Koy Darvaza has been completed. This area dedicated to tourism and entertainment is situated within the wider setting of the property. Therefore, its architecture respects the low scale building heights of Dishan Kala and Itchan Kala and integrates elements from traditional vocabulary in a contemporary design.


6. Tourism Development

The local and regional authorities have taken a series of measures to control tourism development and protect the OUV of the World Heritage property including authenticity and integrity. Among them are the provision of specific and detailed guidance for the development of tourism-related project proposals and the requirement to prepare Heritage Impact Assessments for them.

Also, a Destination Management Plan for Khiva is currently under preparation. In February 2020, UNESCO Tashkent Office in partnership with Khiva municipality organized a workshop to develop a strategy for sustainable tourism in Khiva, in the framework of the joint UNESCO-EU project “Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran – Common Heritage along the Silk Roads and corridors to and from Europe”. This strategic document will guide the coordination and investment in priority actions needed to grow the tourism industry in a sustainable and inclusive manner and will strengthen the contribution of culture to sustainable development. A first draft version of this plan is already available.

7. Implementation of the 2018 ICOMOS Advisory Mission recommendations

In order to address the management deficiencies identified by the 2018 ICOMOS Advisory Mission, the State Party took a series of important measures for strengthening the cultural heritage protection, for improving the conservation and management systems, urban planning tools and capacity-building, as follows:
• **Enhancement of the legal framework in the field of protection and conservation of national and World Cultural Heritage**

Considerable efforts have been made by the State Party since 2018 to strengthen the national legislation, and harmonize the national laws, bylaws, and regulations with the provisions of the World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines. These include the following laws and decrees:

- Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 20, 2019 No. 1021 “On approval of the Regulation on licensing activities for the preservation of tangible cultural heritage”.
- Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 18, 2019 No. 881 “On approval of the Regulation on the procedure for the use of objects of tangible cultural heritage”.
- Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 30, 2019 No. 265 “On the organization of activities of the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the approval of certain regulatory legal acts on the protection and use of objects of material and cultural heritage”;
- Decree No.4068 dated December 19, 2018, issued by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in relation to strengthening the protection, management and expansion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 9, 2018 on the protection of the territory included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, which was given the status of “Territory under Special Protection” (No. 435).
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on measures to preserve the objects of cultural and archaeological heritage, adopted on January 16, 2018.

• **Improvement/reorganization of the national system of protection, conservation and management of cultural heritage**

As recommended by the 2018 ICOMOS Advisory Mission, a Cultural Heritage Committee under the Cabinet of Ministers has been established at national level, which is responsible for the protection, conservation and management of World Heritage properties within the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) are now mandatory for projects and programmes related to conservation, restoration, reconstruction, renovation, new construction, and urban and tourism development within World Heritage properties of Uzbekistan. The International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS), a UNESCO Category II Centre based in Samarkand, is the main independent expert body for preparing HIAs.

The re-establishment of the former national scientific-research Cultural Heritage Conservation Institute is under study for several years and a working group within the Ministry of Culture, involving also academia and conservation professionals meets regularly to define its future mission, structure, statutory requirements and budget.

The Scientific and Methodological Council of the Department of Cultural Heritage (former Board of Monuments) has been reinforced by including national heritage experts and a regular procedure of reviewing projects and programmes regarding conservation, new construction, and urban and tourism development within World Heritage properties has been established.

Some capacity building initiatives mainly focused on documentation and survey of monuments took place in Itchan Kala, organized by UNESCO Tashkent Office or IICAS. Specific training in building conservation for conservation professionals and in management of historic urban landscapes for site
managers is further necessary. The Ministry of Culture is preparing a training proposal on these topics to seek financial support from the World Heritage Centre.

Furthermore, an International Advisory Board on World Heritage properties consisting of international and national experts has been established in order to provide the central and local authorities comprehensive advice on protection, conservation and management, legislation issues, on projects and plans for historic cities.

- **Halting the implementation of the Project of Detailed Planning (PDP)**

  The further implementation of the construction and demolition works proposed by the PDP in Dishan Kala, in particular the segment of the pedestrianized alley between Koy Darvaza and Palvan Darvaza, has been halted until a new PDP is approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

  The preparation of a new PDP is in progress and a series of drafts have already been prepared and discussed. The new PDP will follow the detailed planning approach provided by the ICOMOS Advisory Mission and adopt the HUL Recommendation (UNESCO, 2011). An independent HIA of the revised project, once completed, will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies. The World Heritage Centre is assisting the State Party in this project.

- **Improving the management of the property**

  The Ministry of Culture is currently working on the establishment of World Heritage management offices within the Regional Departments for Cultural Heritage for all the World Heritage sites of Uzbekistan. The Itchan Kala Management Unit, to be set up by the end of 2020, will implement the Management Plan and provide on-site protection, conservation, and management of the property.

  Together with other ministries concerned, the Ministry of Culture is examining the modalities of amending the existing relevant laws as to include specific urban planning regulations for all the World Heritage cities of Uzbekistan - including Itchan Kala - and their buffer zones. Meanwhile, guidelines are being prepared for Itchan Kala and its proposed buffer zone, as a complementary document to the Management Plan.

  The progress in preparation, approval and operationalization of the Management Plan has been discussed in point 2 above. The integration of the Management Plan into the PDP and Master Plan of Khiva is conditioned by the review of these planning documents, currently in progress.

  As part of the management planning process, the boundaries of the property have been clarified and a buffer zone has been identified. The buffer zone proposal has been submitted for examination by the World Heritage Committee in 2016, but the proposal was referred back (Decision 40COM 8B.42). This proposal is now pending until the finalization and approval of the reviewed Project of Detailed Planning (PDP), which will clarify the management arrangements for the proposed buffer zone.

**Conclusion**

The 2018 ICOMOS Advisory Mission provided very valuable and detailed recommendations. The State Party implemented most of them and will further finalize the projects and activities that are in progress or planned in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and UNESCO Tashkent Office.

Therefore, the State Party of Uzbekistan considers that it is not necessary to examine the state of conservation of Itchan Kala at the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee, or to invite a Reactive Monitoring Mission to Khiva, as suggested by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS.