

Historic centres of Berat and Gjirokastra (Albania)

No 569 bis

Official name as proposed by the State Party:

The Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra (well-preserved southern Albanian towns bearing outstanding testimony to the Ottoman period in the Balkans)

Location:

District of Berat in the County of Berat (Central Albania)

Brief description:

The Historic Centre of Berat is located in the Osum river valley in Central Albania. The site has evidence of early occupation from the Neolithic period. A permanent fortified settlement developed here from the 4th century BC. The town then underwent continuous development embodying the Illyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Bulgarian, European medieval, Ottoman and Albanian cultures. It bears witness to the coexistence of various religious and cultural communities down the centuries.

The vernacular housing dates from the 18th and 19th centuries, representing an innovative and open version of the Balkan housing typology, adjusted to the needs of artisans and merchants.

The wall paintings of the medieval churches of Berat have won great renown, especially for the 16th century painting school established by Onufri.

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of two *groups of buildings*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2 February 2005) Annex 3 (14, ii), the property is two inhabited historic towns.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 11 October 1996

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination: 19 October 2007

Date received by the World Heritage Centre: 16 January 2006
29 January 2008

Background: The first nomination was submitted in 1991 to the 15th session of the Bureau of the World Heritage

Committee (Paris, June 1991). "The Bureau *deferred* the examination of these nominations, but approved the proposal of ICOMOS to organise a mission to the two sites in order to help the Albanian authorities to redefine the perimeters of protection of Berat and Gjirokastra and to identify the limits and the legal protection of buffer zones, essential for the safeguarding of the two sites."

A revised version of the nomination was submitted to the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee (Christchurch, 2007) which decided to refer the nomination back to the State Party, Albania, "so that it can draw up a serial nomination [with Gjirokastra], referring to the previous ICOMOS evaluations, including a common management plan for the two towns, for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008" (decision 31 COM 8B.48).

The nomination is being presented again in serial form, in association with the museum-town of Gjirokastra, already included in the List (2005, no 569 rev).

Consultations: ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committees on Historic Towns and Villages and on Vernacular Architecture.

Literature consulted (selection)

Ducellier, Alain, *La Façade Maritime de L'Albanie au Moyen-Âge*, Institut des études balkaniques, Thessalonica, 1981.

Kiel, Machiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania (1385-1912)*, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul, 1990.

Wilkes, John, *The Illyrians*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford UK/Cambridge USA, 1992.

Jacques, Edwin, *The Albanians: an ethnic history from prehistoric times to the present*, Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland, 1995.

Robert, Elsie, *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology and Folk Culture*, C. Hurst Publishers, London, 2001.

Winnifrith, T.J., *Badlands-Borderlands: A History of Southern Albania / Northern Epirus*, Duckworth (Pub), London, 2002.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 24-30 September 2006. As this is a referred nomination, no further mission has been undertaken.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: ICOMOS sent letters to the State Party on 20 December 2006 and on 30 January 2007 to have further information on the comparative analysis carried out for the nomination. The State Party provided further information on 17 January and on 26 February 2007.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 11 March 2008

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The small historic town of Berat is located in southern Central Albania, some 50 km from the Adriatic Sea. The

area has a typical Mediterranean climate. The town has a population of around 64,000 people. Berat is located on the Osum River, between the mountain of Tomorri in the east and the valley of Myzeqe in the west. The Osum River has cut a deep gorge through the limestone rock in the valley to form a natural promontory, around which the town was built on several river terraces on the slopes and on the other side of the valley.

The nominated core zone (58.9 ha) consists of three parts. The Castle of Berat (locally called Kala), built on a hill on the north bank of the river, is the oldest part of the town. The Mangalem quarter is located at the foot of the castle hill, and the houses are built on terraces that rise from the river. The fortress of Gorica and its quarter are located on the south bank of the river.

The hill on which the Castle of Berat stands has been continuously inhabited from the Neolithic era, in the 2nd or 3rd millennium B.C. The Castle has a triangular plan (ca. 200m x 100m) and is located on the top of the hill in a strategic position. Its origins go back to 4th century B.C., though it has been renovated or rebuilt several times during the Illyrian, Byzantine, feudal Albanian, Ottoman and Great Albanian Paschalik periods. The present structures, partly in ruins, date mainly from the 13th century. Most of Berat's inhabitants lived inside the surrounding fortification, that measured ca. 600m north-south, and 300m east-west. The current housing stock dates mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries.

This citadel area used to have 20 Byzantine churches, many dating from the 13th century. In architectural form the churches are fairly simple, often based on a nearly square plan. Several of them contain valuable wall paintings and icons, such as those in: St. Todri, Shën Triadha (St. Trinity), St. Mary Vllaherna, Shën Kolli (St. Nicholas), Shën Konstandini dhe Helena (St. Constantine and Helena) and the Cathedral of St. Mary, in the Castle quarter. A particularly significant artist was Onufri, who founded a school of painting in the 16th century. The treasures of Berat also include the Codex Beratinus, ancient manuscripts of the Gospels, dating from the 6th and 9th centuries. They are included in UNESCO's register of *Memory of the World* (inscribed in 2005).

After the Turkish occupation, in 1417, a majority of the population was converted to Islam, and several mosques were built in the town. Among the first mosques is Xhamia e Kuqe (The Red Mosque), built in the 15th century by Sultan Bayazit, today in ruins. The Leaden Mosque (Xhamia e Plumbit) was built in the 16th century by local feudal lords, the Skurajs. It is distinguished by its decorative cloisonné technique, representing a significant example in Berat. Berat also has houses for religious communities, used especially by Sufi brotherhoods, such as Teqeja Helvetive, which was built at the end of the 18th century and is one of the most important Islamic monuments of the town. It is built in finely carved stone and has rich interior decoration.

The existing housing of Berat dates mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the houses suffered from a serious earthquake in 1851, and their upper stories were destroyed. Before the earthquake the buildings were all built in stone. In the reconstruction, however, the upper

floors were built in timber, while maintaining the surviving stone structures of the ground floor. The houses are classified depending on their type: houses with *çardak* (with front gallery), closed houses, and buildings with special architectural solutions. The *çardak* houses belong to the period from the 17th to early 19th centuries.

On either side of the river, housing has developed in two separate quarters, Mangalem and Gorica, whose urban morphologies have been preserved over the centuries. The housing is of great architectural homogeneity, using numerous large and regularly spaced windows, which led to Berat being known as the "town of a thousand windows".

The monuments in Berat which the State Party considers have the most outstanding value are:

- the Castle of Berat (4th century B.C., 12th and 13th centuries),
- the Church of St. Mary Vllaherna (13th cent.),
- the Church of the Holy Trinity (13th-14th cent.),
- the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Annunciation (13th cent., restored in 1747),
- the Leaden Mosque (16th cent.)
- the Bachelors' Mosque (Mangalem, 1827)
- the Teqeja Helvetive Mosque (late 18th cent.)
- the ethnographic museum (18th cent.)
- the private houses, used for residential and commercial purposes, of the following families: Simsia, Haxhistasa, Kolovani, Vrohoriti, Xhymyrteka, Aguridhi (18th-19th cent.).

ICOMOS considers that the Gorica Bridge over the river Osum, which dates back to the late Ottoman period (18th century) should be inscribed on the town's list of remarkable properties.

History and development

The town of Berat is one of the oldest in Albania, with the earliest traces of settlement dating from 2600-1800 BC. There are also ceramics from the 7th or 6th century BC. The Berat people were first called Illyrians, then Arbër, and finally Albanians.

The castle area had stone fortifications by the middle of the 4th century. An Illyrian town developed under its protection.

In antiquity, Berat was known as Antipatreia, a fortified centre which succeeded in resisting the Roman legions for a time. The town is mentioned by Polybius and Livy, and in the list of fortifications of Emperor Justinian. During the Byzantine period, in 533, Berat is called Pulcheriopolis, after the 5th century Byzantine Empress Pulcheria. It developed at the summit of the hill. The castle and its fortifications were rebuilt.

In the middle ages, the town was under Bulgarian occupation (860-1018), and grew in importance. The name Berat is first mentioned in 1018. From the Crusader period onward (13th century), Berat had various

occupants, including the Angevins, the Serbs, and the Muzakaj Princedom. Much of the fortification system was rebuilt, in the 13th century, assuming its present-day general form, and many features of this period have been conserved.

During the 13th and 14th centuries three important churches were built: St. Mary Vllaherna, Holy Trinity, and St. Michael. At this time the town had a remarkable cistern system.

At the start of the 15th century Berat was occupied by the Ottomans. Substantial alterations were made at this time; the fortifications were repaired and new towers were built to strengthen them. The town remained part of the Ottoman Empire for a long period, characterised by peace and prosperity. Situated as it was on a major communication route between the capital and the Adriatic, it spread beyond its fortifications. Its quarters took on their present-day form: Kala (the castle), and Mangalem and Gorica on the opposite bank. The communities of inhabitants built many mosques, several of which have outstanding architectural qualities (Leaden Mosque, Teqeja Helvetive mosque).

This period was notable for its remarkable religious tolerance, and the conservation of the Orthodox Christian heritage within a sizeable Muslim population. Christian arts such as illumination and iconography developed (School of Onufri, 16th century) and the Orthodox Cathedral was restored (18th century).

After the uprising against the Turks in 1834, the Castle of Berat was damaged, and lost its defensive function. Nevertheless, it has retained much of the historic fabric. Until 1961, the condition of Berat remained practically the same. The historic town was then recognised as an important heritage property by the Albanian government.

The first protective order by the Albanian government dates from 16 October 1948 (Academy of Sciences, decree no. 93), and consisted of a list of monuments of national value. For Berat, it included: the castle, the bridge over the river Osum, four churches and a mosque. In 1961, the order of 2 June (no. 172) declared that Berat was a national historic centre and museum-town. The list of category 1 monuments in the town was increased to 50 properties, including many private residential properties. Monuments and houses were later added to this list: two in 1963, and one each in 1973, 1977 and 1983.

In 1965, the creation of the Albanian Institute of Cultural Monuments led to the setting up of an annual programme for the maintenance and restoration of category 1 monuments. It is supervised by architects and based on compliance with the Venice Charter directives. Under this scheme, any monuments at Berat have been consolidated and restored, including the castle and the religious monuments, and frescoes have been conserved.

The preservation and conservation of the monuments in Berat was however greatly neglected during the 1990s, as a result of the political transition. A true heritage project for the town was not resumed until two or three years ago. A five-year plan has been set up for 2007-2011 by the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

Historic Centre of Berat values

The nominated property complements the outstanding universal value of the historic fortified town of Gjirokastra, in the Drinos valley, in southern Albania, already inscribed on the list (2005).

Berat is a complementary example of a historic fortified town in the Balkans, in a nearby region. It has been occupied over 25 centuries by many communities with different cultures and religions. It bears testimony to their cohabitation, and in particular to pacific cultural and religious coexistence between Christians and Muslims over a long historical period. The town in particular has Christian and Muslim monuments close to each other, which were constructed or restored between the 13th and 18th centuries.

The town of Berat also bears testimony to housing stock (from the 18th and 19th centuries) of great homogeneity, which embodies important innovations to traditional Balkan housing stock, complementing the outstanding urban housing ensemble of Gjirokastra.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity

The settlement represents 24 centuries of history. Since 1834, when the fortification lost its defence function, practically no changes have been made to the site. The most notable modification was the reconstruction in timber of the upper floors of the houses after the 1851 earthquake. However, the spatial qualities of the buildings were retained.

Generally, the integrity of the nominated property has been well preserved both as an urban ensemble, and in its different structural units: Kala, Mangalem and Gorica.

ICOMOS considers however that there are buildings which detract from the overall integrity of the urban architecture of the nominated property. They consist of a school, a theatre and some recent unauthorised private buildings.

The buffer zone has a significant number of unauthorised structures which are not in keeping with the nature of the historic ensemble.

ICOMOS considers that constructions which are not in keeping with the nominated property and its buffer zone detract from the expression of the value of the nominated property. However, this does not seem to be irreversible, and it seems that appropriate measures can be taken (see Management Plan).

Authenticity

All the conservation measures affecting the property since its protection in 1961 have respected the historic

material and form according to accepted international principles.

A very great majority of authentic built structures, and the morphology of the quarters and the citadel, have been preserved, portraying the various heritage features of the town:

- the fortification system,
- the architecture of the different religions, particularly the 16th century Orthodox churches and their wall paintings,
- the vernacular architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries,
- the homogeneous urban landscape of the two residential quarters.

The general planning concept of Berat has been well preserved, including green zones between the built areas.

ICOMOS considers that minor changes in construction materials have taken place in the historic buildings. Their authenticity may however be considered to be acceptable in the context of the living functions of the town.

ICOMOS considers that the urban fabric of the town of Berat is authentic as it has not undergone any major alterations down the centuries. However the vernacular housing dates essentially from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Comparative analysis

According to the State Party, the fact that Berat represents a continuous use over 24 centuries is considered unique in the Balkans. Several castles have residential quarters within them, but no others have developed into an urban ensemble like Berat and Gjirokastra.

Berat is comparable primarily with the museum-town of Gjirokastra, located in the same State Party of Albania, and already inscribed on the World Heritage List (2005). The historical and architectural character of Gjirokastra is however different. Gjirokastra is an imposing fortress in whose perimeter original fortified urban housing has developed, built by the main landowners of the surrounding area. It is made up of fortified houses constructed on the principle of tall buildings, or towers, which defy the classical rules of architecture and town planning. It is the image of a powerful military and administrative centre, at the apogee of the classical Ottoman period; Gjirokastra bears very certain and exceptionally well preserved testimony to the Balkan fortress-town of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Berat on the contrary is a centre which has been continually inhabited over a very long historical period, whose functions are primarily related to handicraft and commerce. Berat is above all a town given over to functional private housing. Its defensive constructions

are for the town and its inhabitants; it is not a military centre dependent on a central authority. The urban space remains open, and is interspersed with green zones. The houses are predominantly horizontal in layout; they make use of abundant daylight entering through large and regularly spaced windows. The ensemble has great architectural unity, and is perfectly adapted to the site's position on a hill, which lends the urban landscape its specific and elegant quality.

Berat illustrates, to a greater extent than Gjirokastra, the diversity of urban life, its different periods, and different cultures. Berat bears precious testimony to the coexistence of Christians and Muslims, that allowed the creation of specific and flourishing cultural elements, which are particular to each group, and are situated close to each other.

The two historic towns of Gjirokastra and Berat provide complementary illustrations of the diversity of urban development in the Balkans. The two towns reflect the full range of military and civil functions, the various types of housing adapted to the physical and social environment, and cultural and religious coexistence over a lengthy period, particularly during Ottoman times.

Several comparative studies with other historic urban centres in the region have been undertaken in relation to World Heritage List nominations, such as Budva, Kotor and Tivar (Montenegro), Ohrid (Macedonia), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Plovdiv (Bulgaria) and Ionina (Greece). Berat is presented as a significant example illustrating the urban history of the Balkans. In this region, specific cultural phenomena have existed over the long course of history, such as Roman provincial architecture, Orthodox monasteries, Muslim culture and vernacular architecture. In different parts of the region, specific conditions have produced great diversity. The vernacular architecture of Berat is a remarkable example of this. It is linked both to geological and geographical conditions, and to the development of a kind of town planning which is dominated by the local handicraft and merchant elites. Similarly, the wall paintings and the icons that have been preserved in Berat make a major contribution to the understanding of Balkan artistic heritage. Compared to other important centres in the region, such as Ohrid, Kotor and Plovdiv, Berat is considered by the State party as an original example for its vernacular architecture and as a historic example contributing to interethnic dialogue.

In Berat there is no specific feature of vernacular architecture which is characteristically Christian or Muslim. The housing is extremely homogeneous, which results in a very coherent urban landscape. The general morphology of the quarters has been preserved with great integrity. Berat is a remarkable example of housing in the inner Balkan countries.

ICOMOS considers that the town of Berat is an example of the specific architectural and urban values of the Balkans region, in a context of great historical continuity. It also has its own specific architectural value and overall aesthetic quality.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative study points to the outstanding universal value of the town of Berat, complementing that already established for Gjirokastra, to bear witness to the architectural diversity and values of town planning in the Balkans.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The State Party considers that the property is of Outstanding Universal Value for the following reasons:

- Berat belongs to the same group of typical urban values of the Balkans region as Gjirokastra. The two towns are in Albania and close to each other. Their architectural and urban testimonies are different but complementary.
- The historic settlement of Berat has survived from the 4th century BC until today, while many other urban centres in the region have vanished. Since the 13th century Berat has developed into an open city, controlled by handicraft and merchant elites. It is closely linked to its geographical environment, and has a functional road system.
- The historic town of Berat today bears witness to all the constituent urban elements - military, religious and civil. This is particularly reflected in the system of fortifications, the Christian and Muslim religious architecture, the mural paintings and the Christian iconography, and the vernacular architecture of the handicraft and merchant elites.
- The churches and mosques are integrated into the urban fabric. They have been well preserved, particularly the Christian churches and their frescoes, and they bear witness to the peaceful coexistence over a long period of different religious communities inside the same town.
- While of relatively recent date (18th to 19th centuries), the vernacular buildings in terraced areas grouped together in clearly separate quarters bring a new and significant contribution to the understanding of Balkan urban vernacular architecture. It illustrates the Ottoman house, which is unusual in Berat because of its openness to light and its creativity of adaptation to the demands of the rocky terrain. The architectural and morphological unity of the town suggests there is no distinction between the housing of the Christians and of the Muslims.
- The Historic Centre of Berat bears an exceptional testimony to cultural traditions that have fundamentally formed the Albanian culture, from the Illyrian and Roman periods to the Byzantine, Medieval and Ottoman eras. These traditions have left their marks in the historical layers, still witnessed by the fortifications and historic buildings of the settlement.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria (iii) and (iv):

Criterion iii: Bear a unique testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.

Berat and Gjirokastra are fortified urban centres which have been continuously inhabited from ancient times to the present day. The two towns represent an outstanding and complementary architectural heritage, which reflects a lifestyle which has been influenced over a longer period by Islamic traditions during the Ottoman period.

Berat has furthermore absorbed a considerable diversity of influences over 24 centuries, particularly Illyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Orthodox Christian and Ottoman. It bears the imprint of specific cultural traditions which are reflected in the coexistence of the different communities and of architectural values which are linked to the population, primarily made up of handicraft workers and merchants. The urban housing bears witness to this lifestyle and to a strong stylistic unity.

ICOMOS considers that Berat is complementary to Gjirokastra in that it bears outstanding testimony to a longstanding urban society and lifestyle which have otherwise almost disappeared in the Balkans. Berat has been particularly marked by the peaceful coexistence of Ottoman Islam with a large Christian minority. The town bears witness to an autonomous urban development, and a specific lifestyle fulfilling handicraft and merchant functions.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

Criterion iv: Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

The two nearby towns Gjirokastra and Berat present two complementary and comprehensive aspects of urban architecture in the inner Balkans. They bear testimony more specifically to the development of various forms of military and religious monuments in the late Middle Ages and the Ottoman period. They constitute rare and well preserved examples of Ottoman town planning, and feature many houses with remarkable styles which are specifically associated with the two respective towns.

ICOMOS considers that the two associated towns of Gjirokastra and Berat bear outstanding testimony to the various types of monuments and urban housing during the classical Ottoman period, while expressing continuity with the various Medieval and Christian cultures which preceded them. The subsoil still bears previous traces of the various Balkan civilisations yet to be uncovered by archaeologists.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (iv) and that Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Number of inhabitants within property

There are 4,070 persons living in the core zone and 9,850 in the buffer zone. The population of the town reached 64,000 in 2005, and is growing relatively fast, but outside the core zone and buffer zone.

Development pressures

The area of the fortifications is well controlled, and is not subject to any development pressure, but there is development pressure on the residential quarters, in certain parts of the core zone of the nominated property and the surrounding buffer zone. This is reflected in applications for extensions to existing buildings and for the reconstruction of ruined structures. Some illegal works were undertaken by private individuals in the late 1990s. However, the historic heritage values of the town have been increasingly appreciated and respected over recent years, and this type of risk is now under control.

ICOMOS considers that the pressure of illegal constructions is a factor affecting the property. An inventory should be carried out of the illegal constructions carried out since 1997, and an impact study of the urban landscape should be carried out, so that modifications to the historic urban fabric can be strictly controlled.

Natural disasters and risk preparedness

Berat is included in a seismic hazard zone (potentially 7-8 on the Richter scale).

There are records of the river flooding, though only rarely.

ICOMOS considers that special attention needs to be given to the building monitoring and consolidation measures, depending on the degree of seismic risk.

Fire

Fire is the most important basic risk for the urban housing. Fire protection measures have been taken by both legal and regulatory means.

ICOMOS considers that the fire protection measures must be effectively implemented. The measures and the intervention equipment must be adapted to suit the specific urban characteristics of Berat. More effective preparation for firefighters who may be called on to intervene in a historic built environment should be considered.

Pollution and climate change

The State Party considers that at present there is problem of pollution, nor any perceptible climate change which could pose a threat to the property.

Tourism

Tourism is at present essentially national and relatively limited. Tourism is not creating any pressure at the moment. The development of tourism may be considered. It should be possible to develop access to the interior of religious sites through guided visits.

ICOMOS considers that particular attention should be paid to illegal constructions in the core zone and in the buffer zone.

ICOMOS also recommends improving the fire protection measures.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

Compared to the 1991 nomination, the boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone have been extended.

The core zone (58.9 ha) includes the three historic quarters of Kala, Mangalem and Gorica (See 2 - Description) as well as the green areas in between and the bridge over the Osum River.

The buffer zone has been enlarged from the first nomination (1991), and consists of four sub-zones with a combined total surface area of 136.2 ha. It surrounds the core zone on all sides by *circa* 100m, except in the urban area to the east, where it extends to ca. 800m.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the core and buffer zones are adequate.

Protection

Legal Protection

The historic areas of Berat are legally protected under the following laws:

- decree by the Council of Ministers, no. 172 of 2 June 1961;
- the law on cultural heritage, No. 9048 of 7 April 2003;
- Regulations for the management of the Museum-Town of Berat: decree of the Council of Ministers of 30 December 2005. This decree sums up and extends the previous legal protection measures.

According to the 2005 decree, Berat today includes 64 category 1 monuments and 38 category 2 monuments (the figures for Gjirokastra are 56 and 560 respectively). The protection of the historic urban ensemble is also ensured.

The laws concerning town planning and building permits are:

- the law on the organisation and operation of the local governments, no. 8652 of 30 July 2000;
- town planning laws no. 8405 of 17 September 1998 and no. 8991 of 23 January 2003, completed by the governmental resolution no. 722 of 19 September 1998;
- laws on the control of constructions and the police enforcing this control, no. 8402 and 8408 of the 10 and 25 September 1998;
- laws on the organisation and operation of the local police, no. 8224 of 15 May 1997 and no. 8335 of 23 April 1998.

Buffer zone: Protection is provided by the legal regulations governing housing and land use, for which the local authorities are responsible. However, its application in the museum-town context (decree of 2005) requires closer collaboration between the Ministry of tourism, culture, youth and sport, and the local authorities, for the historic urban ensembles of Berat and Gjirokastra, and their surrounding areas. This cooperation has led to a recent *Guide to Urban Control*, which forms part of the management plan. Generally speaking, the consideration and comprehension of the historic value of the two towns by their inhabitants have significantly increased over recent years.

ICOMOS considers that the development of cooperation between the ministerial bodies in charge of heritage and the local authorities must be continued and encouraged, particularly for the management of real estate pressure on the property and its buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the legal framework is adequate for the needs of the historic town of Berat.

Effectiveness of protection measures

Illegal and unauthorised constructions took place in the post-Communist period (late 1990s), in the immediate proximity of some historic sites and monuments of the nominated property. Today, this damaging phenomenon has been practically stopped and is under control. It is important for the State Party that these unauthorised constructions should be identified, and penalties imposed, and that a return to this type of practice is made impossible.

A map identifying the constructions concerned has been announced, and tighter monitoring ensuring that future actions of this type are prevented.

ICOMOS considers that it is indeed essential to precisely identify the illegal constructions through an inventory and plans, and to absolutely prevent the return to such practices, which took place at a particular period of Albanian history.

ICOMOS also considers that it is necessary to draw up a long-term plan to get rid of the illegal constructions, in order to improve the expression of the property's universal values.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

The *General Directorate of State Archives*, the *National Centre for the Inventory of Cultural Properties*, and the *Academy of Sciences* are the main depositories of archives about Berat, its history and its heritage.

There is substantial documentation about the state of the monuments, their surveying and all the works carried out since the late 1960s on the monuments of Berat. The documentation has been kept up continuously by the *Institute of Cultural Monuments of Albania*.

The documentation contains many plans, photographic documents, and reports by archaeologists, architects and historians. Photographic surveys were carried out during the works, enabled detailed monitoring of the initial state, the works performed and the results of the works.

A document providing an overview of this documentation is provided as an annex to the dossier, to illustrate the stages of maintenance and restoration for each of the important monuments of the town of Berat (*Works of conservation and restoration, 1966-2006*, 96 p.)

There are also the icon collections of the *Onufri Museum* in St. Mary's cathedral, and the collections of the *Ethnographic Museum*.

A scientific study plan was launched in June 2005, linked to the creation of a *Centre for Icon and Fresco Conservation and Restoration* with the support of international collaboration agreements.

Present state of conservation

Conservation work on the historic urban centre and its main monuments began in 1966, and has continued on an irregular basis up to the present time. The work has been carried out in a spirit of authentic conservation, by limited interventions of cleaning, reinforcement and restoration with traditional materials. Some rather hypothetical reconstruction work did however take place in the 1970s.

The property has survived fairly well since the 19th century, maintaining its architectural qualities, and the main properties (Category 1) are in a relatively good condition. However, the monuments in Category 2 are sometimes in poor state of conservation. By law, this category is less strictly controlled.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated site is acceptable overall, but substantial maintenance and restoration works will need to be envisaged in the near future, particularly for Category 2 monuments and for the historic urban ensemble, in order to better express the outstanding values of Berat.

Active conservation measures

Generally speaking, conservation has been the sole responsibility of the Institute of Cultural Monuments. However, there have not been enough qualified conservators to undertake all the works. Moreover, due to scarce resources, the rhythm of the works is not always sufficient to meet the requirements caused by weathering and decay processes.

The Institute of Cultural Monuments has just set up a Five-year plan (2007-2011) for the conservation of the monuments and historic urban centre of Berat. The plan should in particular step up human resources, which are still insufficient, and financial resources. It includes aid and recommendations for the renovation of private buildings.

ICOMOS approves of the 5-year conservation plan and considers that the stepping up of human and material resources which has just begun is important, and that it needs to be continued.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is in charge of the management system, and the implementation is in the hands of the Institute of Cultural Monuments. In addition, other organisations are involved: Institute of Archaeology, the General Direction of State Archives, The National Centre of Inventory of Cultural Property, the Academy of Sciences.

The 2005 decree improves the management system through the establishment of a Consultative Committee for the Historic Centre at the Municipality of Berat. This committee is closely involved in the management of the historic centre through its various plans and programmes.

The Onufri icon museum and the ethnographic museum are participating in the process of enhancing the values of Berat. In June 2005 a Centre of Icon and Fresco Conservation and Restoration was created, with the support of UNESCO and international cooperation (Italy, France), proposing in particular courses in an art college.

The creation of an Agency for the Historic Zone of Berat in charge of supervising the protection and development of the historic centre and the buffer zone has also been announced.

ICOMOS considers that the management system, which was initially extremely centralised, has benefited since the application of the 2005 Decree of permanent local presence, through the Berat regional unit of the Institute of Cultural Monuments and the growing involvement of the Berat municipality.

ICOMOS considers that the entity announced to be in charge of coordination of the management plan for the two towns, in accordance with §114 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage

Convention, must be stipulated, and particularly the respective roles of the new institutions, if they are separate from the Agency for the Historic Zone of Berat and the Consultative Committee for the Historic Centre.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The recently proposed management plan (2008) contains the legacy of earlier plans and studies about the overall heritage management of the town.

The first one was the general control plan of Berat (1983), which defined the principles of restoration and management of Berat as a museum-town.

For the nomination of the property, a management was prepared by an external consultant in 2005, and was based on a study of the urban centre and several detailed studies of the site and monuments.

ICOMOS considered at the time that this management plan had made a substantial contribution to the definition of the nominated property, and its buffer zone, and to the establishment of the strategic objectives of management, but without really establishing the practical instruments needed for this purpose or the coordination.

Compared with what was proposed in 2006, the current management plan provides the following new elements:

- A 5-year plan for the management of the restoration and enhancement of the main monuments and of the urban ensemble of Berat, under the responsibility of the *Institute of Cultural Monuments*;
- The creation of the *Agency for the Historic Zone of Berat*, responsible for supervising protection and development.
- A *Municipal Plan for the Regulation of Constructions*, together with a guide to good practices in building restoration.
- A traffic plan for the historic centre involving pedestrian areas.
- An artistic development plan in keeping with the property and its values.
- A hotel development and tourist facility plan.
- A project for the construction of a new bridge at the edge of the historic zone to reduce traffic on the single existing historic bridge and to prevent congestion in the urban centre.

ICOMOS considers that the announcement management measures form a credible whole, constituting a true management plan for the historic town of Berat. In particular it involves the *Institute of Cultural Monuments*, which is in charge of building restoration, and the municipality. However, the announced coordination strategy must be confirmed, and its implementation timetable stipulated.

ICOMOS considers that Albania is opening up to international tourism, which will mean setting up initiatives to develop new tourist facility and service structures, which will involve the inhabitants of the historic urban sites. The town of Berat seems to have a

large potential to facilitate this process and provide hotel accommodation possibilities. However, the proposed improvements in services and visitor facilities should be strictly assessed within the framework of the management plan.

Involvement of local communities

The 2005 decree provides for establishment of a Consultative Committee for the Municipality of Berat, which will guarantee the participation of representatives of the local inhabitants in the bodies which manage the property.

The municipal development programme is divided into three parts.

Part 2 comprises tourism development based on the historic heritage of the museum-town.

Part 3 comprises control of urban development and the environment by:

- The construction regulation plan
- The traffic plan for the historic centre
- The green spaces plan.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

In the past all expenses were covered by the State. At the moment Albania is in a transition period into democracy, where the participation of the building owners is expected to grow. Public aid for private buildings should be set at 30% of restoration costs, subject to compliance with a guide to good practices. In fact, the public financial resources are limited (82,000 euros in 2006). However, there was an increase in the participation of the private sector, although it remains very modest (9,000 euros in 2006).

The Architecture College at Tirana University has started a university-level course focusing on the development process. In 2005, the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO also signed an agreement for the creation of a Centre of Fresco and Icon Restoration in Albania. This will offer two-year courses for restorers, especially in painting and icon restoration, which are important for Berat.

The regional division of the Institute of Cultural Monuments has 34 employees at Berat, including 8 professional staff (architects, archaeologists, historians and managers), 9 technicians and 17 other staff.

The three museums in Berat (Onufri, Ethnographic and Historic) have 13 permanent employees, of whom 4 are professional staff.

ICOMOS considers that Berat has made much progress in the establishment of an appropriate management structure, involving national and local bodies, and has produced a management plan which is conducive to the expression of the outstanding universal value of the historic town of Berat, which is complementary to that, already recognised, of Gjirokastra.

ICOMOS considers however that it is necessary to stipulate the coordination structure and the timetable for implementation.

ICOMOS considers that a plan for the removal of the illegal constructions carried out in the late 1990s is necessary.

6. MONITORING

The Institute of Cultural Monuments at Berat is responsible for monitoring the restoration and maintenance of the historic monuments.

- 16 Category 1 monuments are considered to be currently in danger and require rapid intervention
- 33 require restoration, but this is not urgent.
- 52 Category 2 monuments require urgent intervention.

The monitoring of the buildings in the historic town is carried out through the Constructions Regulation Plan of the municipality of Berat. A detailed plan, quarter by quarter, including the description of the illegal constructions, is then drawn up.

The monitoring and regulation of traffic in the historic town is the responsibility of the municipality of Berat.

The implementation of the various plans is carried out over 1 year, 2 years or 3 years at most.

ICOMOS considers that the definition of precise monitoring indicators, including the intervals at which they must be revised, has not yet been carried out.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The two historic towns of Gjirokastra and Berat are complementary in their illustration of the diversity of urban development in the Balkans. Berat reinforces the outstanding universal value of Gjirokastra, which is already inscribed on the List (2005).

These two towns bear witness to fortified urban forms in different historic and social contexts. Berat has been continuously occupied over 25 centuries by numerous communities with different cultures and religions. Berat bears witness in particular to peaceful cultural and religious coexistence between Christians and Muslims during the Ottoman period.

The town of Berat also contains a homogeneous set of vernacular constructions, linked to handicraft and commerce, which bear witness to significant innovations made to traditional Balkan housing.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra (well-preserved southern Albanian towns bearing outstanding testimony to the Ottoman period in the Balkans) should be ***referred back*** to the State Party of Albania, to allow it to:

- Provide details of the structure for the coordination of the management plan for the two towns, in accordance with §114 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, and provide guarantees about its setting up and its competencies.

ICOMOS also recommends that:

- An inventory should be provided of the illegal constructions dating from the late 1990s, together with a plan for the removal of these illegal constructions in a medium-term perspective.
- Specific monitoring indicators should be defined, together with the intervals of their updating.
- A programme of archaeological excavations should be proposed, in accordance with the international standards in force.
- The firefighting arrangements in the historic urban zone should be improved.
- The medium-term plan for the development of tourist facility capacities should be set out in detail.