

**IDENTIFICATION**

- Nomination** : White stone monuments of Vladimir-Suzdal, the City of Suzdal, and the Church of St Boris and St Gleb, Kideksha
- Location** : Vladimir Region
- State Party** : Russia
- Date** : 4 October 1991

**DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY****1. Vladimir**

The ancient city of Vladimir, founded in 1108 by the Kiev Prince Vladimir Monomach, contains an important group of religious and secular monuments.

The Cathedral of the Assumption (1158) was intended by Vladimir Monomach's son Andrei Bogolyubskii to be the religious centre of all Russia. It was built in the town Kremlin and is a single-domed structure constructed on six piers; the three naves are surmounted by a delicate drum and a helmet dome. It is 17.7 m wide by 22 m long and 32.3 m high overall. The facade is divided into five sections by embedded columns and is notable for its carved reliefs. The interior decoration is important in Russian art. Most of the 12th century frescoes were destroyed by Mongols in 1238, but new mural paintings were added in 1408 by the master painters Andrei Rublev and Daniil Chernii, in particular the famous "Last Judgment." The iconostasis is a fine Baroque example of 1774.

The Golden Gate (1164) forms part of the 12th century defences, now demolished. It is a cubic tower with a church dedicated to the Deposition of the Holy Robe on top.

The Princely Castle at Bogolyubovo (1165) contains the remains of the 12th century Royal Palace, in the form of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin and the Staircase Tower of Andrei Bogolyubskii. The cathedral is a 17th century building on the site of the original structure. There is a tent-roofed bell-tower of the 17th century.

The Church of the Intercession (1165) on the Nerl River is located at the point of the original river gate of Vladimir. It has a single dome supported on four piers with a helmet dome at the crossing and reliefs on the upper part of the exterior walls.

The Cathedral of St Demetrius (1194-97) is a Royal church, built to the order of Grand Prince Vsevolod III. It is cubic in form, with three internal naves and a helmet dome. The exterior is noteworthy for over

a thousand stone carvings on the general theme of King David. 12th century frescoes survive in the western part of the interior.

## **2. Suzdal**

Suzdal, which lies some 25 km north of Vladimir on the bank of the Kamenka River, was the site of a settlement in the 9th and 10th centuries AD which became a fortress in the 11th century. A civil settlement (posad) developed around it, housing craftsmen and shopkeepers, and monasteries were attracted to the area in the 13th and 14th centuries. Despite some regularization in 1788, the street pattern remains much as it was in the earlier period.

The Kremlin (fortress) is surrounded by earthen ramparts. Within, dominating the whole town, stands the Cathedral of the Nativity, built in the 13th century and reconstructed in the 16th century, with its five-domed top and 13th century Golden Doors.

Important monuments in the posad include several cubic churches of the 16th and 17th centuries with tent roofs, such as that of the Convent of the Deposition of the Holy Robe and the Refectory Church of the Assumption, a number of 18th century churches, often in pairs, such as those of the Convent of the Intercession, and several monasteries. The most important of the last-named is the Monastery of Our Saviour and St Euthymius, founded in 1352, with its Cathedral of the Transfiguration built in the 16th century but in the 12th century tradition of Vladimir.

## **3. Kideksha**

On the right bank of the Nerl River, at Kideksha, 5 km to the east of Suzdal, is the Church of St Boris and St Gleb. It is of great architectural importance, since it was the first church in Russia to be built in white limestone, the style that came to characterize above all else the 12th century architecture of Vladimir. It is small (15.5 m square) with three apses on its eastern side. It is plain, with little decoration, though remains of medieval frescoes were revealed in 1947.

## **AUTHENTICITY**

The buildings in Vladimir and Suzdal (especially the latter) have been the centre of a major cultural tourism effort for several decades and a good deal of restoration has been carried out. It is difficult to evaluate the quality and extent of this restoration from the dossiers, but personal observation shows that it has respected the traditional techniques and materials.

## **MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION**

The historic buildings in Vladimir are protected by successive Decrees and Orders between 1918 and 1960 and are currently managed by the Cultural Department of the Vladimir Regional Executive Council. The city of Suzdal has been on the List of Monuments of All-Union Importance

since 1947. In 1981 the General Plan for Suzdal was approved by the Regional Executive Council, whose Cultural Department is responsible for its management.

The first proposal to turn Suzdal into a museum town was made in 1922, but the main effort did not begin until 1965, followed by a tourist development programme in 1967. The late 1960s saw part of the Suzdal area converted into a Museum of Wooden Architecture, to which buildings were brought from all over Russia and reconstructed.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Quality**

The quality and importance of the white limestone ecclesiastical buildings of the Vladimir tradition in Vladimir and its surroundings are indisputable. This influential tradition saw its origins and achieved its highest expression at Kideksha, Vladimir, and Suzdal. The later churches and monasteries in Suzdal are also important historical documents relating to the history of Russian architecture.

### **Additional comments**

The ICOMOS Bureau has seen the letter dated 13 March 1992 from the Permanent Delegation of the Russian Federation proposing that there should be two separate nominations. It cannot accede to this proposal, since it considers that the significance of this group lies principally in the individual monuments and not in the urban ensemble at Suzdal. They should therefore be redefined as "Historical monuments of Vladimir and Suzdal". The essential components should be the five monuments in the existing Vladimir nomination (Cathedral of the Assumption, Golden Gate, Princely Castle at Bogolyubovo, Church of the Intercession, and Cathedral of St Demetrius); the Kremlin, the Cathedral of the Nativity, and the Monastery of Our Saviour and St Euthymius at Suzdal; and the Church of St Boris and Gleb at Kideksha. The Bureau would be sympathetic to the inclusion of other historic buildings in Suzdal in the nomination. It may be, however, felt that this would extend the inscription too widely, beyond the indisputably important early group.

On the subject of conservation and protection, the ICOMOS Bureau is satisfied that the Suzdal monuments are adequately protected by the legislative machinery already in place for the whole town, which constitutes an effective buffer zone. It is, however, uneasy about the monuments in Vladimir, and would like to have assurances that the settings of the five monuments are not threatened by future development in their immediate vicinities. Evidence of management plans for the five monuments was supplied, but nothing relating to the overall management of the historic areas of the city.

Six members of the ICOMOS Bureau had personal knowledge of the sites.

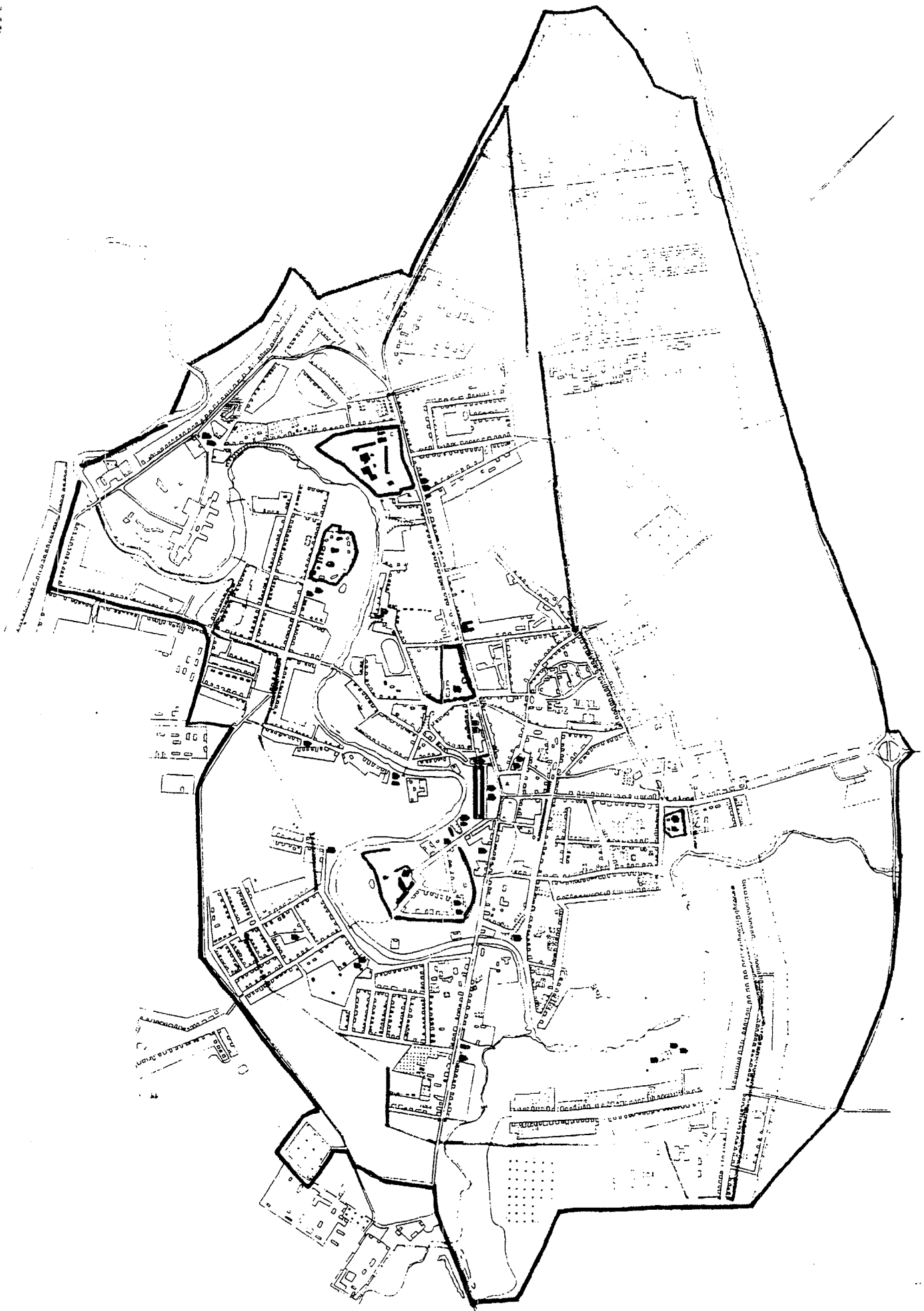
## **ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION**

That inclusion of this cultural property on the World Heritage List be deferred, the competent authorities being requested to reformulate the nomination.

ICOMOS, October 1992



Vladimir : plan



Souzdal / Suzdal : plan