

## Haghpat/Sanahin (Armenia)

No 777bis

### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin (extension)
<i>Location</i>	Tumanian Region, Village of Sanahin
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of Armenia
<i>Date</i>	25 June 1999

### Justification by State Party

[No justification was put forward by the State Party. However, the inscription of the Haghpat Monastery in 1996 was on the basis of **criteria ii and iv**.]

### Category of property

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Sanahin monastery is a *group of buildings*.

### History and Description

#### History

Christianity played a crucial role in the development of Armenian art and architecture. The "classic" style developed in the 5th-7th centuries, but its further evolution came to an abrupt halt with the Arab occupation that began at the end of the 7th century. Armenia became independent again at the end of the 9th century and Armenian art was revived when the kingdom was consolidated and national identity re-established. The two monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin date from this period, during the prosperity of the Kiurikian dynasty and the Zakarian princes. They were important centres of learning, housing some 500 monks, and bear eloquent testimony to the highest achievement of Armenian architecture. Sanahin was renowned for its school of illuminators and calligraphers.

Such was the spiritual importance of Sanahin and Haghpat that the fortress of Kaian was built to protect them from invaders from the north. However, it was powerless to prevent the sacking of the two monasteries by Selçuk raiders at the beginning of the 12th century. When the Mongol "Golden Horde" swept into Armenia in the late 13th century, Sanahin was again ravaged. Nonetheless, monastic life continued and Sanahin maintained its leading

role in the production of illuminated codices. There was a period of extensive restoration in the 17th century.

#### Description

The Sanahin Monastery consists of a large group of buildings on the plateau above the Debet gorge and skilfully integrated into the impressive mountain landscape. The buildings are laid out on two rectangular axes, with their facades facing west.

The main church, built in the 10th century, is the Cathedral of the Redeemer (*Amenaprkich*). It is an example of the "domed hall," characteristic of 10th century Armenian architecture. The emphasis of the cross-shaped interior is on the central nucleus and the harmony between the square base and the circular dome. The central dome in this case is surrounded by four two-storey sacristies or chapels. The interior is simple and spacious and the external appearance is one of massive solidity.

To the west there is a four-columned *gavit* (a large narthex-type building used for meetings, teaching, and funerary rituals), built in 1181. Its plan is that of a cross inscribed in a square. Lighting is by means of an aperture in the centre of the dome. This is the earliest known example of this type of structure, which owes its origins to Armenian peasant dwellings consisting of square rooms with four free-standing pillars supporting the roof and a central hole to allow smoke to be dispersed.

The Church of the Mother of God (*Astvatatzin*), located to the north of the Cathedral and connected with it by means of an open-ended vaulted passage, is the oldest building in the complex, built in 934 by monks fleeing from Byzantium. This is also in the classic "domed hall" style, but much smaller than the Cathedral. A good deal of interesting decorative work survives, in the form of carved animal heads and fragments of the original wall paintings. An important feature is the church model located under the arch leading to the north, believed to be the earliest surviving example of this typical feature of Armenian churches.

The *gavit* of this church, dating from 1211, is a massive three-aisled hall, the central aisle being on the axis of the church. Inside the barrel vaulting is supported on heavy columns, in a basilican form that is unusual in Armenian architecture. The west façade is a loggia with twin arcades and triangular pediments.

All these structures are linked by a large porch with an open arcade to the west, the floor of which is paved with early grave slabs, and built in the 1280s. There is an earlier bell tower at its western end.

Projecting to the north-east is the large library (*scriptorium*), reached through an arcaded porch. Built in 1063, it is square in plan and vaulted. There are ten niches of varying sizes in which codices and books were stored. At the south-eastern corner of the library is to be found the small church dedicated to St Gregory the Illuminator. Dating from 1061, this church has a quadrilobate plan inscribed in a circle; the restricted interior space is extended by small porticoes. It is surmounted by a cylindrical drum and a pinnacle with crescent-shaped arches. The entrance door is heavily decorated with the pattern of a cross set in a square with stylized leaves, a motif which is repeated at the window openings.

The 11th century Academy of Gregory Magistros is located between the two main churches. Constructed in two stages, it consists of a single-aisled hall with a barrel vault supported on protruding central arches resting on pillars that run along the walls, alternating with barrel-vaulted niches. Pupils sat on the benches along the walls while the teacher walked among them. The deep niches along the walls and the abundance of light give this building an exceptional spatial quality.

The cemetery, located to the south-east of the main buildings, contains the late 12th century mausoleum of the Zakarian princes. There is also a number of other tombs and mausolea, notably that of the Kiurikian princes, on the perimeter of the complex.

In addition to the ruins of several other churches and chapels from the 10th to 13th centuries, mention must be made of the monumental single-span stone bridge (*Alaverdi*) linking the two sides of the Debet gorge, which preserves its original form dating back to the 13th century.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The nominated property is protected under the Armenian Monuments Law. All interventions must be authorized by the Commission for the Protection of Monuments of the Ministry of Culture.

### *Management*

The Sanahin monastery is in the ownership of the Armenian state, but it is in the custody of the Tumanian Regional Municipal Authority, which is responsible for its maintenance under the terms of a legal agreement dated 11 June 1992 with the Commission for the Protection of Monuments. Custodians employed by the Commission are always present on the site, which is open to visitors.

The nominated property, consisting of the 1.7ha monastery site and the Debet Bridge, is surrounded by an adequate buffer zone of 16ha in which no interventions are permitted. Beyond this is a substantial building regulation zone, which links the two elements of the nomination, where there are strict controls over any form of construction.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

A good deal of restoration and conservation work has been carried out on the monastic complex over the centuries since it was built, to restore the ravages of invaders, earthquakes, and deterioration. The Committee for the Preservation of Monuments of the Armenian SSR started restoration and conservation projects in 1939-40, and major projects took place between 1960 and 1980. As a result those ecclesiastical buildings that survive in any more than ruined form are currently in good condition.

### *Authenticity*

The monastery that is the subject of this nomination, like that of Haghpat, illustrates in its structure and current state the organic growth of monastic establishments over many

centuries, with successive additions and reconstructions necessitated by destruction and deterioration. The authenticity may therefore be considered to be high.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Sanahin (and also Haghpat Monastery, which formed part of the original nomination by the State Party) in June 1996. ICOMOS was advised on the cultural significance of the site by one of the leading specialists in Armenian religious architecture.

### *Qualities*

The Sanahin and Haghpat monastic complexes represent the highest flowering of Armenian religious architecture between the 10th and 13th centuries. This unique style developed from a blending of elements of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture and the traditional vernacular architecture of the Caucasian region.

### *Comparative analysis*

Other monastic ensembles of this kind survive in Armenia, notably those at Goshavank and Haghartsin. It is generally recognized, however, that the culturally most important and most completely preserved are those of Haghpat and Sanahin. In view of their geographical proximity and the fact that they were founded as part of the same movement of national regeneration, as well as the high cultural significance of both, it is logical to treat them as a single unit for inscription on the World Heritage List.

### *ICOMOS observations*

The original nomination to the World Heritage List in 1995 covered the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin. However, at that time no decision had been reached on the ownership of the Sanahin Monastery and considerable restoration work remained to be done there. The World Heritage Committee, at its 20th Session in December 1996 accepted the ICOMOS recommendation that Haghpat alone should be inscribed at that time. The Committee invited the State Party, at the suggestion of ICOMOS, "to consider the possible extension of the site to include the Sanahin Monastery when restoration works will be completed and a decision taken regarding the ownership of this site, to also include the Sanahin Bridge (*Alaverdi*) and the Kayanberd Fortress."

When the request for extension was received, it consisted only of a map covering the areas proposed for inscription and the protection zones. No information was supplied about ownership; however, this has now been clarified.

## **Recommendation**

That this extension be *approved*.

ICOMOS, September 2000