
Sviyazhsk (Russian Federation) No 1525

Official name as proposed by the State Party

The Assumption Cathedral of the town-island of Sviyazhsk

Location

Zelenodolsk district
Republic of Tatarstan
Russian Federation

Brief description

The Assumption Cathedral is located in the town-island of Sviyazhsk and is part of the homonymous monastery. Situated at the confluence of the Volga, the Sviyaga and the Shchuka Rivers, at the crossroads of the Silk and Volga routes, Sviyazhsk was founded by Ivan the Terrible in 1551 as the outpost from which to initiate the conquest of the Kazan Khanate. The Assumption Monastery was to function as both missionary and administrative centre for the conquered region. The Cathedral, with its extensive cycles of mural paintings, realised in a relatively short period of time, reflects the ambitious cultural and political programme of the Russian State in the recently conquered Islamic Kazan Khanate, and illustrates new trends in Christian Orthodox art in Russia and Europe.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

31 August 1998

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

25 January 2016

Background

In January 2012, a nomination was submitted to the World Heritage Centre for the Island of Sviyazhsk as a mixed site. The cultural component of the nomination focused on the island as a cultural landscape that reflected its role as a fort constructed to support the successful campaign of Ivan the Terrible at Kazan, its subsequent role as a prosperous mercantile settlement and its decline after the arrival of the railway, its use as a

Gulag, and its demise as a result of reservoir construction in the 1960's. In its evaluation, ICOMOS concluded that the island as a whole could not be said to reflect in an outstanding way the role it played in the defeat of the Kazan Khanate in 1552, as too little remains from that time. Nor did ICOMOS consider that the standing remains of mercantile, monastic, institutional and domestic buildings, combined with archaeological evidence for the layout of the town, could be seen as exceptional. Thus, ICOMOS concluded that the overall cultural landscape could not be seen to manifest Outstanding Universal Value.

As a result of this evaluation, the State Party withdrew the nomination and the evaluation was not presented to the World Heritage Committee.

An ICOMOS Advisory Mission to Sviyazhsk Island was carried out from 6 to 9 August 2014. The specific purposes of the mission were to consider the reasons why the nomination for the island of Sviyazhsk submitted in 2012 was unsuccessful and to explore whether there could be other potential options for the whole or for parts of the island.

The mission concluded that the most promising focus could be on certain Orthodox monuments, and in particular the Cathedral of the Assumption Monastery with its cycles of mural paintings, on the way they "might be seen to reflect important geo-political changes in the late 16th century resulting from the conquest of Kazan and the subsequent defeat of Astrakhan, which transformed Muscovy into the multinational, multi-faith state of Russia."

The mission also provided several recommendations on aspects to be considered in any future revised nomination.

On 25 January 2016, the State Party submitted a substantially re-scoped nomination that is the object of the present evaluation.

Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 22 to 26 August 2016.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 19 October 2016 requesting additional information on the following points: factors affecting the properties, projects under implementation at the nominated property and in its buffer zone, protective measures and zoning of the buffer zone, amendments to planning provisions, and state of approval of the management plan.

The State Party responded on 14 November 2016 and the information has been integrated into the relevant sections of this report.

Following the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, held in November 2016, an Interim Report was sent to the State Party on 20 December 2016, requesting further information on the following: confirmation that the entire Monastery complex is being nominated along with the Assumption Cathedral; clarification about the ownership of the Monastery and of the Cathedral; assurance that no beautification of the Island will be pursued and no buildings will be reconstructed for tourism purposes; timeframe for the implementation of the zoning of the buffer zone and the integration of their regulations into the scheme of territorial planning of the Republic of Tatarstan; further explanation of the mechanisms of the Interdepartmental Commission; information on the state of approval of the Management Plan; information on any study on carrying capacity for tourism; and sustainability of the strategy for the museums.

The State Party responded on 17 February 2017 and the additional information has been integrated into the relevant sections of this report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2017

2 The property

Description

The Assumption Cathedral rises up in the upper part of the ancient town of Sviyazhsk, today an island-settlement at the confluence of the Volga, Sviyaga and Shchuka Rivers, 30km west of Kazan. It is part of the homonymous Monastery.

The layout of the Assumption Cathedral is an inscribed cross in a square-domed naos. It is erected on a basement, of rather moderate size, with its central nucleus - the square inscribing the dome - of only 4.2m and its total surface measuring 15x18m. The cross arms are covered by semi cylindrical domes in two scalloped tiers. The dome rests upon a high cylindrical drum supported by four quadrangular piers and it's topped with a bud-shaped cupola (originally pear-shaped).

Externally the cathedral looks like a white cube with a single central dome and three apses at the eastern end. Two of them have a tall semi-cylindrical shape, while the southern one, built later, has a rectangular form. The other façades have a tripartite scheme with arcades on tall shallow pilasters. The tripartite external scheme of the façades reveals the internal synthesis of the quincunx Byzantine type and its vaulted structure.

The interior spaces of the Church are all vaulted; the drum rests on four stepped arches. The Cathedral interiors are illuminated by means of rounded, and later 18th-century

rectangular, windows, opening in the perimeter walls and in the drum.

The entrance opens into the western side of the Church and is protected by a covered porch.

The volume and layout of the Cathedral are said to express elements that are typical of Pskov architecture, although it features several small differences that would result in a peculiar monumentality.

During the 18th century, the exterior of the Cathedral was given a baroque appearance by the creation of a pear-shaped external cupola, decorative façade elements typical of the Ukrainian Baroque, and rectangular decorated windows.

The mural painting cycles

The interior of the Cathedral is almost entirely covered by mural paintings depicting episodes from the Old and New Testaments and drawing also from apocryphal texts. The painted cycles are said to exhibit novelties both in the themes, and in their representation and distribution.

The murals respond to an iconographic programme encompassing the following cycles: The Genesis cycle, the Proto-evangelic and the Assumption (Life of the Virgin) cycles, the Evangelic cycle, and the Synaxis of the Mother of God. Figures of saints and stylites complete the programme.

The Genesis cycle

This cycle consists of two subjects – the Creation and History of Adam and Eve – organised in 22 compositions. The Creation cycle occupies the upper part of the main space. The first six days of the Creation are depicted in the dome and related structures.

Depicting stories from Genesis on the dome is said to be a completely new phenomenon in Russian monumental painting and different from the Byzantine church decoration system, which focused on the representation of Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Saviour of the world, as the centre of the universe. This new composition left behind the traditional circular liturgical principle and introduced the historical narrative principle.

Proto-evangelical and Assumption (Life of the Virgin) cycles

The illustration of these topics is given the main attention, in line with the dedication of the Cathedral. The two cycles occupy the altar vault, whilst images of saints and hierarchs complete the bottom part.

The Life of the Virgin cycle includes 14 scenes and follows the Old Testament cycle; it comprises also motifs from apocryphal texts. The cycle exhibits compositional features typical of Byzantine and Russian art; however, it also shows remarkable differences, e.g., in the presentation of the Virgin Mary, which combines western and eastern European iconography. The construction of the cycle sequence is such that the Nativity of Christ

appears beneath the Burial of Adam, thus conveying the crucial catechetical message of the renewal of humankind in the New Adam.

The Assumption scene is located in the eastern lunette and vault, in a position similar to the one chosen for the same subject in the Moscow Assumption Cathedral. Whilst scenes related to the Assumption were widespread in Byzantine and Orthodox icon art, their use in wall paintings only began in the 16th century.

Some scenes have suffered major losses, due to 18th century reconfiguration of the exteriors; these however do not prevent the reading of their features.

The Evangelical cycle

Apocryphal and canonical sources imbued the depiction of the Nativity of Christ on the north and south walls of the Church. Other evangelical episodes are depicted on the lower part of the northern wall from west to east. Only the episodes where the Virgin has a role are depicted.

Serious losses have also affected this cycle in its lower part.

The Synaxis of the Virgin

This cycle occupies the entire west wall, usually dedicated to the Doomsday. It extends across the whole central part of the wall, freely arranged with no tiers or registers. It includes iconographic elements of the Nativity and of the Adoration of the Magi, following the iconography based on the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom which was included into the December Menaion (the liturgical book used in the Eastern Orthodox Church) of Metropolitan Makariy, the closest adviser to Ivan the Terrible.

This mural cycle is the culmination of the whole painting programme, representing the glorification of the Virgin Mary. It is regarded as the completion of the picture of the history of the universe as well as the convergence of the historical narratives of the Old and New Testaments and the narrative of the proto-evangelic and Assumption cycles to the atemporal, liturgical programme of the Metropolitan Macariy. Apparently, the specific iconography was not borrowed from previous examples, nor was it repeated afterwards.

Warrior Saints

Paintings of saints in the Assumption Cathedral reveal peculiarities of iconographic programmes in terms of choice and location, as they are found on the surfaces of the pillars. Depicted images include great martyrs and lesser known warrior saints, some of them depicted on walls for the first time in Russian art or even remain as unique occurrences (Sts. Theophilus and Nicholas).

Their representation is charged with didactic and missionary messages.

The Great Entrance (altar area)

The liturgical composition of The Great Entrance occupies the arches and the vault of the altar, central

apse. Traditional elements of the iconography of this theme are presented in the Cathedral: the Lamb of God, the Lord of Sabaoth in celestial glory, the hosts of heaven. However, the composition also greatly differs from all known depictions of this theme, because in the Sviyazhsk paintings the Mass is celebrated by churchmen instead of Christ, angels or saints, with people standing in front of them; the tsar with his escort, the hierarch, the monks. The construction of the iconography gives a strong eschatological character to the represented liturgy. The presence of the tsar and of real people establishes a connection between the historical and the liturgical time.

The Order of Panagia (Prothesis)

The representation of the Incarnation (the Virgin Mary of the Sign) is depicted on the altar conch, while the Worshipping of the Sacrifice (or the Rite of the Panagia Assumption) is on the apse walls. The compositions depicted under this theme are based on rites performed in monasteries in Russia and, in Sviyazhsk, its presence can be explained by the dedication of the church.

The Council of the Twelve Apostles (the vestry)

This composition occupies the west wall of the vestry and is organised in different registers; in the upper part the Saviour, the Virgin and St. John the Baptist; below three rows of half figures of Apostles.

Iconostasis

The iconostasis, carved and gilded, is part of the baroque renovation of the cathedral in the 18th century. Now exhibited in the collection of the State Fine Arts Museum of Tatarstan, the icons of the iconostasis are rare examples of religious art dating from the 15th – 16th until the mid-19th centuries.

The Assumption Monastery

The Assumption Cathedral is an integral part of the homonymous Monastery. The main buildings of the complex consist of stone-built constructions: the St. Nicholas refectory church with its frescoes and bell tower; the Archimandrite building; the building of the monastery school; the Brethren's building; the wall; and the Ascension church-above-the-gates, on the territory of the Assumption Monastery. They were built at different time periods during the 16th – 19th centuries, some of which were restored in the late 20th century; on the other hand, the Stables were reconstructed in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Saint Nicholas Refectory Church

Saint Nicholas Refectory Church is the most important attribute after the Assumption Cathedral. Built between 1555 and 1556, the Church is located on the south-west side of the Cathedral square. It has two floors and a four-tiered bell-tower, integrated in the eastern side of the building. The first floor houses a chapel, the room under the refectory and another chamber, all covered by intersecting vaults. On the second floor, are two square chapel rooms joined by three-apse altars, and the dining room, the vaulted ceiling of which is supported by one

single pillar. Two tiers of the bell-tower are built in white limestone, whilst the upper part with the drum and the octagon are in brick.

Archimandrite building (Abbot's quarters)

This building dates from the mid-17th century. It is built in brick over two floors in the Russian tower-chamber style, completed by a two-storey porch supported on stone columns.

Monastery School Building and Brethren's Building

The Brethren's Building was built at the end of the 17th and the early 18th centuries and rebuilt in a similar style in the late 18th century. The long block is partly two and partly three storeys in height. The complex was badly damaged in the Soviet period and only the outer walls survived. It has been reconstructed with modern materials in the interior.

History and development

Founded in 1551, the town of Sviyazhsk was intended to be more than merely a military installation, and monasteries were established to serve as a missionary post for spreading Christianity in the region and at the same time, along with Kazan, to develop as an important Christian cultural centre, in order to consolidate Russian rule within the local communities of Muslim culture of the former Kazan khanate.

The Assumption Cathedral is the main church of the homonymous monastery complex with a history stretching from the 16th to the 19th centuries over several constructional phases. The monastery was given important privileges and the cathedral was built between 1556-1560 on the instigation of Ivan the Terrible during the priesthood of the archimandrite named German, of Tatar origin. The dating of the murals is still under debate, although the time range could be between 1567 and 1613, carried out in several working stages, based on close observations during the conservation works.

The original roof of the Assumption Cathedral was replaced in the middle of the 18th century with spherical constructions upon the elevated corners of the cube by brick additions. The original three arcades were crowned by brick aedicula-like composite gables with volutes under small saddle roofs, the central one higher, in an accentuated three-stepped composition. At this same time the dome acquired an octagonal brick top to accommodate a new bud-shaped external cupola, and rectangular windows were inserted with western decorative elements, the single lobed original ones only in a few instances being left in the façades.

The monastery and the church continued to play their missionary role throughout the 19th century and the early 20th century. However, in the 1920's, the monastery was converted into a corrective labour colony. Conditions in the colony were terrible and several thousand prisoners are reported to have died there. During this period, several churches in Sviyazhsk were dismantled to reuse the construction materials.

First studies of the surviving monuments began in 1953, when plans for the creation of the Kuybyshev reservoir were initiated and Sviyazhsk was included in the territories to be flooded. In 1960 the town and individual monuments were declared regional historical monuments.

The first conservation works of the Assumption Cathedral were carried out during the 1960's and intermittently throughout the 1990's, due to the presence of a psychiatric hospital housed in the monastery since 1953.

The first plans and projects for the revitalisation of the image of Sviyazhsk were developed from the 1990's through to the early 2000's, but it was only in 2010 that the large-scale conservation and reconstruction works began.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been carried out by examining properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and located in the territory of the Russian Federation: the White Monuments of Vladimir and Suzdal, (1992, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)); the Church of the Ascension in Kolomenskoye, (1994, criterion (ii)); the churches of Historic Monuments of Novgorod and Surroundings, (1992, criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi)); the churches of Historical Centre of the City of Yaroslavl, (2005, criteria (ii) and (iv)); of the Cultural and Historic Ensemble of the Solovetsky Islands, (1992, criterion (iv)); and of the Kremlin and Red Square, Moscow (1990, criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi)); of the Ensemble of the Ferapontov Monastery (2000, criteria (i) and (iv)); the Cathedral in the Ensemble of Novodevichy Convent (2004, criteria (i), (iv) and (vi)); and the Cathedral of the Historic and Architectural Complex of the Kazan Kremlin (2000, criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv)).

The State Party concludes that the Assumption Cathedral of Sviyazhsk is the only existing monument outside Moscow dating to the period of Ivan the Terrible and which preserves a complete 16th-century cycle of murals bearing symbolic meaning, reflecting the development of geopolitical and philosophical-religious processes of the late medieval period expressed in architecture and a programme of wall-paintings.

The comparison continues by examining properties outside the territory of the Russian Federation and inscribed on the World Heritage List, which include The Assumption Cathedral of the property Kiev: Saint-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Ukraine, (1990, 2005, criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)); the Boyana Church (Bulgaria, 1979, criteria (ii) and (iii)), the monasteries of Meteora (Greece, 1988, criteria (i), (ii), (iv), (v) and (vii)), the Monastic Island of Reichenau (Germany, 2000, criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi)),

Mont-Saint-Michel and its bay (France, 1979, criteria (i), (iii) and (vi)), the Rila Monastery (Bulgaria, 1983, criterion (vi)), and the monasteries on Mount Athos (Greece, 1988, criteria (i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii)), reaching the conclusion that only limited analogies can be drawn with these examples, due to the unique geopolitical and historical conditions of Sviyazhsk, the role of the monastery, and the artistic achievements of the Cathedral.

Following confirmation by the State Party that the Monastery is part of the nominated property, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis is solidly grounded, the arguments presented are relevant, and the selection of the comparators is appropriate in relation to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Assumption Cathedral is related to Ivan the Terrible, the first tsar of all the Russias, who re-conquered the lost lands from the Tatars; and Peter the Great, who modernised Russia, opening a “Window to the West”. Both saw the strategic potential of Sviyazhsk as a missionary post for Christianisation of the Muslim peoples of the Volga region.
- The architectural form of the Cathedral Complex was influenced directly by Ivan, who used didactic iconography to convey his royal power and the power of Orthodoxy to the Tatars, via an understandable/acceptable religious glossary (Old Testament and Virgin Mary cycles); and indirectly by Peter the Great, who brought from the Western Christian World the new baroque architectural and artistic trends, which were to be used for the renovation of the monastery and of the exterior of the church.
- The Sviyazhsk Assumption Cathedral is a foundation marking key historical events in the life of Russia and Orthodox Christianity. It illustrates a type of architecture and mural decoration, according to the Byzantine-Russian tradition although modified by integrating western Christian iconography. They derived directly from important Rus centres and most probably Moscow but were realised thanks to northwestern cultural and technical strengths to help the newly acquired territories to step into line with Christian culture.

ICOMOS considers that the revised nomination presents significant new research in the archives, which shows clearly the way the Sviyazhsk monastery was created as a result of patronage at the highest national level, that its

builders from Pskov were linked to buildings at Kazan, that the size, material and elaboration of the Sviyazhsk monastic buildings reflect their significance as part of a cultural programme directed from Moscow, particularly through the distinctive style of the architecture that reflects distinct modification of the Pskov style of its builders. The new research on the murals sheds light on the exceptional significance of specific aspects of their symbolism. The clarity and harmony of the frescoes overall and of their narrative reflect the way a team of painters worked together to cover the whole of the church's interior as a unified task. The Assumption Cathedral and its monastery possess important attributes, which reflect crucial aspects, important for understanding its history and function as a unique Orthodox Christian temple with a balanced selection of the iconographic topics common to the Christian and the Muslim religions, and aiming at the glorification of Tsar Ivan IV and the transition to a concrete Christian missionary policy.

Following confirmation by the State Party that the Monastery is included in the nominated property, ICOMOS considers the proposed justification to be appropriate.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the Assumption Cathedral is expressed by the completeness of its unique iconographic programme, from the architectural layout, volume, spatial organisation and its mural paintings, integrated into the architectural space, the retained character and features of the monastery complex, and the retention of almost all the icons which were contemporary with the murals.

Despite some losses to the mural paintings, most of the attributes that are necessary to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value are comprised within the boundaries of the nominated property.

Now that the State Party has confirmed that the Monastery is included within the boundaries of the nominated property, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries are adequate to illustrate the proposed justification for inscription.

Measures to ensure the retention of visual integrity have been put in place and the delimitation of the buffer zone has been based on visual studies aimed at protecting the views towards the Cathedral.

The murals are the most fragile part of the property. However, a conservation strategy is being carried out and measures to ensure the control of the micro-environment of the wall paintings are in place.

Authenticity

The attributes of the nominated property, namely the layout, volume and spatial organisation of the Church and

of the Monastery as conceived in the 16th century, and then given a baroque appearance in the 18th century, the decorative programme expressed by the mural paintings and the scenes, themes and subjects depicted as well as their location in the church, the craftsmanship expressed by the construction and the decoration, bear credible witness to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. The collection of icons and archival documents contribute to supporting the claims for the nominated property and the same holds true for its geographic location and its setting.

ICOMOS however recommends that the outpost character of the Island, which is crucial to making intelligible the role played historically by the nominated property and by the town of Svyazhsk, is respected in the management and that no beautification of existing buildings or completion of the settlement via reconstruction will be pursued.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity are met. The fragile condition of the paintings is known and under control. ICOMOS recommends that the outpost character of Svyazhsk be respected and that no beautification of existing buildings or complete reconstruction of the settlement will be pursued.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii) and (iv).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that The Assumption Monastery and its Cathedral are outstanding evidence of the strategic development of Sviyazhsk as an outpost for the successful conquest of the Kazan Khanate by Ivan the Terrible and for the ambitious program of acquiring lands to be under Rus control, based on strengthened relations between the Christian Orthodoxy and the imperial expansion. They also attest to the emergence of a new Orthodox paradigm, resulting from specific historical and cultural conditions: the Assumption Cathedral and the Monastery were given a mission to spread Christianity in the region, which was under Islamic influence.

The Assumption Cathedral architecture and interior painted decoration are rare evidence of Orthodox civilization and also illustrate the new stage of development of Russian culture, the trend of Russian art which embodied achievements of Byzantine classical heritage, Greek Orthodox art, the Novgorod and Moscow schools of monumental painting and architecture, the influence of the Western European Christian tradition, and methods and principles of European art. Dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, especially worshipped in

Russia, the Cathedral respects the Orthodox tradition but also reveals an outstanding evidence of connection with the Muslim tradition of worshipping Mariam ana (Mary).

In its additional information provided in February 2017, the State Party has further justified the role of the Monastery, explaining that the historical, liturgical and spiritual values of the Cathedral cannot be understood and fully expressed without the Monastery, which played a key role as a missionary post. The Assumption Monastery is an integral part of the political and missionary programme carried out by Ivan the Terrible and the Assumption Cathedral, the key element of the present nomination, cannot be understood without the Monastery.

ICOMOS concurs with the augmented justification provided by the State Party.

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;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Cathedral exhibits novel characteristics of the state architecture of the Moscow tsardom and local traditions formed in the boundaries of the Tatar-Mongol Khanate which were introduced into the Pskov monumental architectural tradition. The architectural ensemble with its complete cycle of frescoes reflects a new trend in Russian art and a remarkable reflection of the ambitious cultural and civilizational ideology initiated by the Russian state in the 16th – 17th centuries. The ideological program, hierarchy, monumentality, and superb artistic skills of realisation and style of the wall paintings are an example of a special trend of development of Christian art of Russia and Europe. The frescoes are unique as they are the graphic reflection of the Stoglav Council of 1551 and of later Councils in 1553-1555, which are historically important not only for Russia but for the whole of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the history of icon painting.

Following confirmation by the State Party of the inclusion of the Monastery within the nominated property, ICOMOS concurs with the State Party's justification and considers that the Monastery is an integral part of the programme that made possible the construction of the Cathedral and the conception of the mural paintings.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (ii) and (iv) and that conditions of authenticity and integrity have been met.

Description of the attributes

The Assumption Monastery in its location, setting, layout and the architectural composition of its buildings contributes to illustrating its political, military and missionary role in the 16th century. The Cathedral is the most outstanding part of the Assumption Monastery Complex: its architecture reflects the prevailing Rus tradition of religious architecture from Moscow, Novgorod, Vladimir and Pskov, shaped upon Byzantine classical heritage as expressed by local craftsmanship and materials. The 18th century renovation of the building with baroque decoration illustrates new trends in art and architecture transposed from Western Europe by Peter the Great into the Russian empire as reference models. The architectural image of the Cathedral with its 16th century cycle of wall paintings with scenes from the Old and New Testaments express Ivan's political and religious program to convey his royal power and the power of Orthodoxy to the Tatars, via a comprehensible/acceptable religious vocabulary based on the Old Testament and on the Virgin Mary. St. Nicholas Refectory Church with its bell tower, the Archimandrite building, the monastery school building, the Brethren's building, and the walls with the Ascension church above the gate, supplement and enhance the values of the Assumption Cathedral, illustrating the religious and daily life of Orthodox monasteries in the past. The location and architectural bulk and configuration of the Assumption complex within the town-island of Sviyazhsk made it a prominent complex visible in the distance when approaching the town and express its role as a territorial and religious reference. The cultural layers and archaeological strata preserved in the grounds of the monastery complex and nearby contain 16th-19th century artefacts that are of great interest as a source of information on spiritual, social, artistic and scientific achievements. The Town-Island of Sviyazhsk in its current configuration represents a powerful setting that conveys the sense of an historic outpost settlement.

4 Factors affecting the property

The property has never suffered from development pressures, although its setting and particularly the island-town's built fabric was subject to substantial alterations in the 20th century. The impacts of the recent revival of Sviyazhsk and of the monastery life, on the other hand, are being controlled through a strengthened protection.

The main unresolved problems include soil erosion and stability, structural stability of the cathedral, water runoff during snow melting and major/normal rain on the roof, unstable micro-environmental parameters (temperature and humidity) inside the cathedral, insufficient ventilation, certain modes of worship and visitation, and lack of guardianship for the cathedral.

ICOMOS concurs with the State Party that these represent the most crucial factors affecting the property and requested additional information in October 2016.

The State Party provided additional information on the studies prepared to control the indoor climate of the Cathedral as well as on the conservation works being carried out. It also reported on projects for 'model' traditional houses to be reconstructed in Sviyazhsk to regenerate the typical residential environment of the town.

ICOMOS considers that tourism pressures may become a cause of concern also for the immediate setting of the nominated property, namely the Island-town of Sviyazhsk. Therefore, the decidedly tourism-oriented focus of the overall management strategy needs to incorporate consideration of the values of the setting of the property for the understanding and appreciation of its value.

ICOMOS considers that the idea of reconstructing houses in Sviyazhsk based on 'model' houses, reproducing the traditional ones, does not necessarily represent the most appropriate measure to retain the outpost character of the town and of the Island.

In this regard, ICOMOS in its Interim Report requested assurances that no reconstruction be carried out in Sviyazhsk for tourism purposes.

The State Party replied in February 2017 that the preservation of the spirit of the place of Sviyazhsk, as an outpost settlement, which supplements the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, will be guaranteed via the protective status granted to the Island and through a careful management of visitor flows.

ICOMOS considers the reply from the State Party to be reassuring, although there remain potential unwanted impacts from tourism if the tourism-focused planning approach is not reoriented.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are soil erosion and instability of the island and of the foundations of the Cathedral, variations in the micro-environment of the Church, and deficiencies in its roofs. Impacting factors may also derive from an increase of tourism and an excessively tourism-oriented planning for the whole Island of Sviyazhsk, with potential undermining of the outpost character of the town-island.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The nomination dossier states that the boundaries of the nominated property (3.25ha) follow the perimeter of the walls of the Assumption Cathedral within its boundaries

of the 19th century (1,027.3 sq.m). The sites enclosed in the Assumption Monastery's boundaries make up the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Assumption Cathedral, emphasizing its uniqueness, and describing the cultural and spiritual life, a demonstration of the feelings of believers from different eras. The Outstanding Universal Value of the Cathedral is inseparable from the other sites with which it is associated historically and liturgically.

The buffer zone (11,563.9ha) includes a wide area, encompassing also the Island-town of Sviyazhsk, and comprises parts of the river banks. Its boundaries have been established on the basis of a visual study, to ensure that the distant views towards the nominated property be protected from development. Distinct regulated zones ensure the effectiveness of this added layer of protection to the property.

Following the clarification by the State Party in February 2017 that the Monastery is included within the nominated property, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property can be considered adequate.

The boundary of the buffer zone is adequate.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are adequate and provided with ad-hoc zoning and protective measures.

Ownership

The Assumption Cathedral is a State property, used for cultural, religious and liturgical purposes, although it will soon be transferred to the Monastery. The buildings of the Assumption Monastery complex are State property granted to the Tatarstan Metropolitanate for perpetual and free use for religious purposes.

The Historical Buildings of Sviyazhsk and the land where they are situated, have been transferred to the ownership of the Museum Reserve. A significant number of private residential buildings are in private ownership.

Protection

The system of World Heritage Site administration in the Russian Federation includes both Federal laws and laws of the regions of the Russian Federation, in this case, the laws of the Republic of Tatarstan. The Assumption Cathedral of Sviyazhsk is protected under the federal law "On Objects of Cultural Heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation", n°73-FL 25.06.2002, and also on the basis of the regional legislation "On Objects of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Tatarstan", n°60-LTR 01.04.2005.

The whole territory of Sviyazhsk is further protected as a "remarkable site" as per Resolution n°497 16 July 2009 and Resolution "On approval of the boundaries of security zones of the cultural heritage site "The Town-island of Sviyazhsk" of regional (republican) importance",

n°481 2 July 2015. It sets the boundaries of the buffer zone of the site "Town-island of Sviyazhsk", coinciding with the boundaries of the buffer zone of the nominated property. The resolution also sets out the sub-zones and related regulations and restrictions of use.

The part of the buffer zone bearing natural value belongs to the natural reserve "Sviyazhskiy" (as per Resolution n°49 of 04.02.1998). In 2007 this area received the status of a biosphere reserve of UNESCO. The area falls also under the Federal Law "On specially Protected Natural Territories" n°33-FL 14 March 1995.

In terms of planning provisions, the scheme of the territorial planning of the Republic of Tatarstan incorporates the buffer zone and is currently being approved.

The evaluation mission was informed that the plans of territorial development of Zelenodolsk and Verkhneuslonsky districts, the General plan of the municipality "Innopolis City" were amended in 2015, integrating the protection zones and their delimitations. The Rules of Land Use and Development of Sviyazhsk settlement, approved on 5.5.2015, take into account the maintaining modes of the Sightseeing Site "Ostrov-grad Sviyazhsk", established by Resolution n°497 /2009 and by the Order of the Ministry of Culture d/d 07.08.2009 n°465.

ICOMOS requested additional information in its letter of October 2016 concerning the protection measures established in 2015. The State Party responded on 15 November 2016 that Russian legislation sets rigid controls over the construction process. Building permissions are issued by local authorities, which, for Sviyazhsk and the adjoining territory are the town planning bodies of the Zelenodolsk and Verkhneuslonsky districts. The restrictions for the buffer zone were established in 2015 by the Rules of Land Use and Development of Sviyazhsk settlement approved on 5 May 2015 and by the decree n°481/ 2 July 2015.

The land use and planning regulations for the sub-zones of the buffer zone provide for seven zones with ad-hoc regulations based on their heritage value and purpose.

ICOMOS considers that the provisions for the Island-Town of Sviyazhsk appear to be too much reconstruction-oriented and suggests that a more cautious approach is adopted, limiting the reconstruction of buildings as much as possible and based on a comprehensive plan that defines overall objectives in line with the function of providing an added layer of protection to the attributes of the nominated property, and clarifies the different envisaged interventions and the areas where some additional building could be accepted and where it would be advisable to keep the open space.

In February 2017, following receipt of ICOMOS's Interim Report, the State Party provided assurances that the

spirit of the place of Sviyazhsk as an outpost settlement will be respected through protective and management measures.

ICOMOS in its Interim Report asked for information about the timeframe for the integration of these regulations into the territorial planning scheme of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The State Party responded in February 2017 that all measures quoted above were included in the land use planning of the Republic of Tatarstan and therefore are compulsory for all administrations.

With a view to strengthening protection through planning, in 2016 an interdepartmental commission on town planning activity in settlements of historic value was set up. All projects within the buffer zone are to be examined by this commission before the building permission is issued, and the ones within the Island of Sviyazhsk also by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tatarstan.

ICOMOS requested additional information on the functioning mechanisms of the interdepartmental Commission set up in 2016 and on when it did, or will, enter into force.

The State Party responded in February 2017 that the regional state bodies (including the Tatarstan Ministry of Culture, Tatarstan Ministry of Architecture, Construction, Housing and Communal Services, and local authorities) ensure the implementation of the land-use regulations and restrictions through compulsory building projects approval and licensing procedures. If these are violated the buildings are classified as illegal and eligible for demolition. Violating protected zones of cultural heritage sites is punishable by fines as per the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offences.

The State Party has also clarified that a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in the Field of Conservation, Management and Promotion of the Assumption Cathedral of the island-town of Sviyazhsk has already been signed by all relevant stakeholders.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate. ICOMOS considers that the protective measures for the property are adequate, although the regulations for the Town-Island of Sviyazhsk would benefit from a less reconstruction-oriented approach. Any reconstruction in this part of the buffer zone should be limited as much as possible, based on a comprehensive plan and on the results of an Heritage Impact Assessment.

Conservation

Research activities have been carried out in the past and more recently and will continue, the main focus being the characterisation of the murals' materials and their decay problems, the structural stability of the Cathedral, and the

study of the environmental parameters in relation to the mural paintings.

A "Comprehensive plan for interdisciplinary research of the Assumption Cathedral and Trinity Church for 2014-2020" was also created in 2014, and it is now in operation, financed from federal and regional budgets.

Conservation works on the paintings were started in the 1960's and continued in the early 1970's, by fine art restorers. An overall programme for the conservation of the murals is in place (2010 – 2016) and it includes an extensive diagnostic programme. The current works envisage completing the restoration of the frescoes, renewing and strengthening the metallic roof sheeting of the dome and nave, reinforcement of the walls through injection and of the foundations, stabilisation of the soil, and the conservation of the wooden Iconostasis, currently removed from the church.

The control of the environmental parameters is crucial for the safeguarding of the murals in the Cathedral. Limitation of access to the church is envisaged as the most appropriate measure for its preservation. Only two religious services per year are envisaged, and limited controlled visitation, only in certain periods of the year.

ICOMOS considers that a careful monitoring of the indoor environment and temperature/humidity of the wall surfaces throughout the year is crucial to assess the problems and define the most effective strategy for the preservation of the paintings. Careful consideration should be given to the potential negative effects of grouting and mortar injections in the foundations and the walls with regard to the potential formation of undesired salts that may negatively affect the murals.

The State Party envisages, as a strategy for the conservation of the buildings in the buffer zone, the transfer of all vacant buildings of heritage significance to the Museum Reserve, with a view to transforming them into museums.

ICOMOS considers that whilst the objectives of this strategy are commendable, consideration should be given to the impacts on the historic fabric and character of these buildings of adaptive reuse works and, more generally, to the economic sustainability of this strategy in the long term.

On the other hand, the reconstruction-oriented approach for the Town Island of Sviyazhsk, based on 'model' traditional houses, does not appear to be respectful of the outpost character of the town, which contributes to conveying the values of the property and the role it played in the region.

ICOMOS considers that the current conservation strategies for the Cathedral point in the right direction and need to be continued; consideration of the potential negative effects of injected consolidation materials on the murals is crucial. Visitor number limitation represents

the best option for the long-term conservation of the murals. Careful assessment of the carrying capacity of the whole monastery complex and of the Island in relation to the tourism strategy and the creation of museums is necessary. ICOMOS also recommends that no beautification should be carried out and reconstruction interventions should be kept to a minimum and not triggered for tourism purposes in the Town-Island of Sviyazhsk.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The “State historical-architectural and art Museum Ostrov-grad Sviyazhsk” (approved in 2011) and now converted into a Museum-Reserve (Resolution n. 618 24 August 2015) is the key management body.

A Memorandum of Understanding and cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, the Museum Reserve and the Archdiocese of Tatarstan has been signed, aimed at harmonising the interests of all the parties concerned. The management system envisages a Coordinating Committee, involving all parties concerned: ad-hoc regulations have been drafted, outlining functions, tasks and roles.

At present, all the functions assigned to the Coordinating Committee are being performed by the Regional Foundation for Revival of Historical and Cultural Monuments, set up in 2010. The Foundation will transfer its functions to the Coordination Committee, as soon as the above regulations are approved.

ICOMOS considers that the above are important steps to ensure partnership, coordination and consensus, much needed to implement the ambitious management and development programme for the nominated property and the town of Sviyazhsk.

A detailed analysis of the risks and threats to which the nominated property is susceptible has been developed. An outline of the steps undertaken for their reduction and management has been provided. Brief reference to the measures in place at the national level is also made.

ICOMOS considers that an overall strategy which links the general measures and mechanisms established at the national level with specific risk and disaster preparedness measures conceived for the property and its buffer zone is necessary.

The need for specific training of the staff of the Museum Reserve is outlined in the nomination dossier; this concerns especially World Heritage management requirements, including tourism. A steady flow of financial resources has long since been granted to the whole complex of Sviyazhsk.

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

The elaboration of the Management Plan for “The Assumption Cathedral of the Town-island of Sviyazhsk” started in 2014 (by order of the Minister of Culture) for the period 2015-2035, with a focus on 2015-2020. The plan contains three major strategic objectives: the preservation of the Assumption Cathedral and its environment, creating conditions for sustainable development of the surrounding territory, and achieving public consensus concerning the preservation, use and sustainable development of the property. Each objective is articulated into an action plan with prioritised actions.

With a view to improving the landscape character of the Island, the Management Plan envisages regulations for new constructions, aimed at respecting the traditional character of the town.

ICOMOS’s comments on the above are provided in the Protection section of this report.

The evaluation mission was informed that the Management Plan is currently under peer review with the assistance of a wide range of experts. As soon as the Management Plan has been reviewed by the World Heritage Committee, it will be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan as a legal instrument.

ICOMOS requested additional information on the approval status of the Management Plan in its letter dated October 2016.

The State Party responded on 15 November 2016 explaining that, following the review of the Management Plan by the World Heritage Committee, a Coordination Committee will be established that will have transferred to it all the functions currently incumbent on the Regional Foundation for the Revival of the Historic and Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Tatarstan.

Tasks of the Coordination Committee include the monitoring of the implementation of the Management Plan, providing advice on the decision-making processes for the property, developing and improving research, establishing and maintaining a database on the site, and increasing public awareness about the property.

Additional information has also been provided on the museum development strategy being developed for the revitalisation of the nominated property and its buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the overall management strategy envisaged for the property, its buffer zone and wider setting is ambitious and aims at achieving the valorisation of the nominated property and its setting, through an agenda for sustainable development based eminently on cultural, religious or eco-tourism. While the

approach is solidly grounded through the action plan, attention should be given to avoid over-exploitation of the nominated property and its immediate setting (e.g. the Monastery and the island as a whole) through tourism. Reconstruction of 'traditional houses' in the Island for tourism purposes should be avoided.

In this regard, ICOMOS considers that the tourism management strategy needs to widen its scope, considering the potential of the buffer zone outside the Island to house small-scale accommodation facilities, parking lots and visitor centres, so as to reduce the pressures from visitors on the nominated property and the whole island.

The programme envisaged by the State Party to develop new museums on the Island would contribute to expanding the visitor experience and reduce the pressures on the Cathedral and other historic monuments. In this regard, the establishment of the Assumption Cathedral museum in St. Nicholas Refectory Church, will allow the presentation of the significance of the Assumption Cathedral without compromising its conservation. The future creation of the Museum of the Orthodox Art and Culture, which will display the icons of the Assumption Cathedral and Trinity Church, is also an important step that will strengthen the integrity of the property and increase the offer to visitors.

Although the strategy is interesting, ICOMOS considers that no further museums should be envisaged, as the Island seems to have reached its maximum capacity in this regard.

In its additional information provided in February 2017, the State Party informed that for the period 2017–2018, five museums are planned. ICOMOS suggests that no additional museums be planned for subsequent years.

ICOMOS in its Interim Report asked for further clarification on the approval status of the Management Plan, as the process envisaged by the State Party does not seem to be fully in line with the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines*.

The State Party responded that the Management Plan approval procedure has been completed and that the Plan is now compulsory (implementation period 2015–2020), although no formal approval document has been transmitted to ICOMOS.

Involvement of the local communities

Local communities seem to be involved in the process. The Museum has brought job opportunities into the area and this is seen favourably.

ICOMOS considers that involvement of local communities and stakeholders needs to be continued in order to ensure a shared understanding of the values of the property and the role played by its setting.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property could be considered overall adequate, although the tourism management strategy should extend to the entire buffer zone, beyond the Island of Svyazhsk, and should put in place mechanisms to avoid tourism-based over-exploitation of the Island, by limiting the creation of museums to just the ones indicated in the additional information provided in February 2017 and avoiding reconstruction of former buildings on the Island for tourism purposes. Furthermore, ICOMOS recommends that the risk management system be reinforced by developing an ad-hoc risk management plan for the property, integrated with the prevention and disaster management measures in place at the national level.

6 Monitoring

The monitoring programme included in the Management Plan only provides very general information about this aspect.

ICOMOS considers that a full monitoring programme needs to be implemented with indicators suitable to measure the state of conservation of the property as well as the effectiveness of the management actions. A specific continuous monitoring programme for the condition of the Church and its frescoes is indispensable.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system needs to be expanded to include a full and permanent monitoring system for the structural conditions of the Church and of its frescoes. Indicators to measure the state of conservation of the property need to be in place and these should be complemented by indicators to measure the effectiveness of the management system.

7 Conclusions

A mixed nomination for The Sviyazhsk Historical, Architectural, Natural and Landscape Complex was submitted in 2012. This nomination covered the whole island of Sviyazhsk and part of its hinterland.

Sviyazhsk was seen to have preserved the form, area, planning and some elements of a 16th century fortress; to have an outstanding architectural ensemble from the 16th-early 20th centuries with unique 16th century wall paintings; to have an archaeological layer that has been uniquely preserved because of the island's natural peculiarities; to reflect many 16th century geopolitical and historical events having extreme importance for Eurasia; to have been, from ancient times, a religious centre for the pagan population of Povolzhie and, since the 16th century, a spiritual centre of Orthodoxy in the region; and to have been one of the first camps for political prisoners in Russia and thus a memorial place for the victims of Stalin's repressions.

ICOMOS could not support this multi-faceted proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Its overall conclusion was that the island as a whole could not be said to reflect in an outstanding way the role it played in the defeat of the Kazan Khanate, as too little remains from that time. The ICOMOS evaluation therefore recommended non-inscription. The nomination was withdrawn by the State Party in May 2013. Subsequently the State Party invited an ICOMOS Advisory Mission to explore whether there could be other potential nomination options for the whole island or for parts of the island. This mission took place in August 2014.

Based on exploration of the main cultural assets of the island, the ICOMOS mission considered that the wall paintings of the Cathedral of the Assumption monastery might be seen to be an outstanding testimony to the strategic development of Sviyazhsk as a staging post for the successful campaign by Ivan the Terrible to take the Kazan Khanate and to the subsequent ambitious cultural programme initiated by the Muscovite ruling circles in the middle of the 16th century to reinforce links between theology and imperial expansion. The mission suggested that if a nomination based on these murals and their surrounding monastery were to be pursued, it would need to be submitted with as much evidence as possible for the way Sviyazhsk was linked to the major cultural developments in Moscow and elsewhere in the late 16th and early 17th centuries through this monastic complex.

The revised nomination presents significant new research in the archives and reflects detailed study of the iconography of the mural paintings. A significant amount of detail has been assembled in a comparatively short space of time. What has been revealed shows clearly the way the Sviyazhsk monastery was created as a result of patronage at the highest national level, that its builders from Pskov were linked to buildings at Kazan, and that the size, material and elaboration of the Sviyazhsk monastic buildings reflect their significance as part of a cultural programme directed from Moscow, particularly through the distinctive style of the architecture that reflects distinct modification of the Pskov style of its builders.

The dossier also sets out clearly the new research into the murals – and comes to the conclusion that they are ‘the most completely preserved fresco ensemble of the epoch of development of the Moscow kingdom’. The text sets out very clearly the results of exploration of the various sets of images and the significance of specific aspects of their symbolism. The clarity and harmony of the frescoes overall and of their narrative reflect the way a team of painters worked together to cover the whole of the church’s interior as a unified task.

Overall the revised dossier appears to have responded to the need for a full justification to be provided of the significance of the Assumption Monastery and its frescoes.

ICOMOS congratulates the State Party for the amount of work that it has been able to accomplish: several important steps have been undertaken to strengthen protection and management. However, due to the vastness of the challenge, some areas still need to be completed, e.g. the operationalisation of the Coordination Committee, the reinforcement of the risk management plan, and the implementation of a full monitoring system.

Following an explicit request by ICOMOS in its Interim Report, the State Party has confirmed that the entire Monastery Complex is being nominated along with the Assumption Cathedral, due to the central role it played in the Christianisation of the region and in the affirmation of the power of Ivan the Terrible over these lands formerly controlled by the Tatars.

ICOMOS notes, however, that the current name of the property in fact focuses on the Cathedral alone, and suggests that the State Party considers modifying the name as follows: “The Assumption Cathedral and Monastery of the town-island of Sviyazhsk”.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that The Assumption Cathedral of the town-island of Sviyazhsk, Russian Federation, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iv)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

The Assumption Cathedral is located in the town–island of Sviyazhsk and is part of the homonymous monastery. Situated at the confluence of the Volga, the Sviyaga and the Shchuka Rivers, at the crossroads of the Silk and Volga routes, Sviyazhsk was founded by Ivan the Terrible in 1551 as the outpost from which to initiate the conquest of the Kazan Khanate. The Assumption Monastery was to function as both missionary and administrative centre for the conquered region. The Cathedral, with its extensive cycles of mural paintings, realised in a relatively short period of time, reflects the ambitious cultural and political programme of the Russian State in the recently conquered Islamic Kazan Khanate, and illustrates new trends in Christian Orthodox art in Russia and Europe.

The Assumption Monastery in its location, setting, layout and the architectural composition of its buildings contributes to illustrating its political, military and missionary role in the 16th century. The Cathedral is the most outstanding part of the Assumption Monastery Complex: its architecture reflects the prevailing Rus tradition of religious architecture from Moscow, Novgorod, Vladimir and Pskov, shaped upon Byzantine

classical heritage as expressed by local craftsmanship and materials. The 18th century renovation of the building with baroque decoration illustrates new trends in art and architecture transposed from Western Europe by Peter the Great into the Russian empire as reference models. The architectural image of the cathedral with its 16th century cycle of wall paintings with scenes from the Old and New Testaments express Ivan's political and religious program to convey his royal power and the power of Orthodoxy to the Tatars, via a comprehensible/acceptable religious vocabulary based on the Old Testament and on the Virgin Mary. St. Nicholas Refectory Church with its bell tower, the Archimandrite building, the monastery school building, the Brethren's building, and the walls with the Ascension church above the gate supplement and enhance the values of the Assumption Cathedral, illustrating the religious and daily life of Orthodox monasteries in the past. The location and architectural bulk and configuration of the Assumption complex within the town-island of Svyazhsk made it a prominent complex visible in the distance when approaching the town and express its role as a territorial and religious reference. The cultural layers and archaeological strata preserved in the grounds of the monastery complex and nearby contain 16th-19th century artefacts that are of great interest as a source of information on spiritual, social, artistic and scientific achievements. The Town-Island of Svyazhsk in its current configuration represents a powerful setting that conveys the sense of an historic outpost settlement.

Criterion (ii): The Assumption Monastery with its Cathedral is real evidence of cardinal historical and geo-political interchanges in Eurasia at a time when the Rus State undertook its expansion eastwards. The architecture and Mariological cycle of wall-paintings of the Cathedral exceptionally reflect the interaction of the Christian-Orthodox and Muslim cultures and interchanges with Western Christian religious iconographical themes, e.g. the Creation or the Proto-evangelical and Evangelical cycles. The unique style of wall-painting and icons of the Assumption Cathedral iconostasis resulted from the fusion of artistic forces of large artistic centres of the Russian state, such as Novgorod, Pskov and Moscow, as well as of masters of the Volga region towns and artists working in the Rostov and Suzdal regions. The Iconostasis pictorial complex is part of the whole artistic system of the Cathedral.

Criterion (iv): The Assumption Monastery with the Cathedral illustrates in its location, layout and architectural composition the political and missionary programme developed by Tsar Ivan IV to extend the Moscow state from European lands to the post-Golden Horde Islamic states. The architecture of the Assumption Cathedral embodies the synthesis of traditional ancient Pskov architecture, a monumental Moscow art of building, and construction traditions of the Volga region. The Assumption Cathedral frescoes are among the rarest examples of Eastern Orthodox mural paintings. The iconographic program of the cathedral includes

themes of the Creation and iconographic interpretations of traditional cycles of Proto-evangelical and Evangelical history, reflecting absolutely new trends for Russian religious art and expressing new theological concepts and Tsar Ivan IV's political programme.

Integrity

All elements necessary to convey the Outstanding Universal Value of the property are contained within its boundaries. The Assumption Monastery complex with the Cathedral and the other stone buildings is contained within its historic perimeter and the whole complex depicts its historic political and religious functions. Overall, the property exhibits acceptable condition, following conservation, restoration and reconstruction interventions. However, there are some unresolved problems concerning structural instability and unstable indoor environmental parameters in the Cathedral, as well as soil erosion and instability, that are being studied and addressed. Tourism and tourism-related development pressures on the buffer zone and particularly on the town-island of Svyazhsk are being controlled, but need close monitoring from the relevant authorities.

Authenticity

The location, setting, layout and composition of the Assumption Monastery complex and of its structures are key to understanding its role as a missionary post in a settlement that was strategic from a military and political perspective when it was founded. The architecture of the Assumption Cathedral reflects in its configuration and substance at least two significant stages of its development, dating back to its construction and decoration in the 16th century and its baroque rearrangement in the 18th century. The entire cycle of mural paintings in its interior are key sources of information that credibly attest to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The architecture and mural paintings of the refectory and of St. Nicholas Refectory Church complement the iconographic programme of the cathedral. With the exception of the Cathedral, which retains most of its historic fabric in architectural and artistic terms, the buildings within the monastic complex have undergone interventions of different degrees of restoration or reconstruction, which, however, do not prevent them from substantially contributing to illustrating the value of the property.

Management and protection requirements

An array of federal and State legislation ensures that the property and its buffer zone are adequately protected. The whole territory of the buffer zone is legally protected and provided with legally established sub-zones and related regulations. Natural values of the area are also legally protected at the state and federal level and by a much larger UNESCO biosphere reserve designation (Great Volzhsko-Kamsky). To ensure effective protection, the legal provisions/restrictions are integrated into the relevant territorial and urban planning for the districts and the municipalities. All state and local authorities ensure

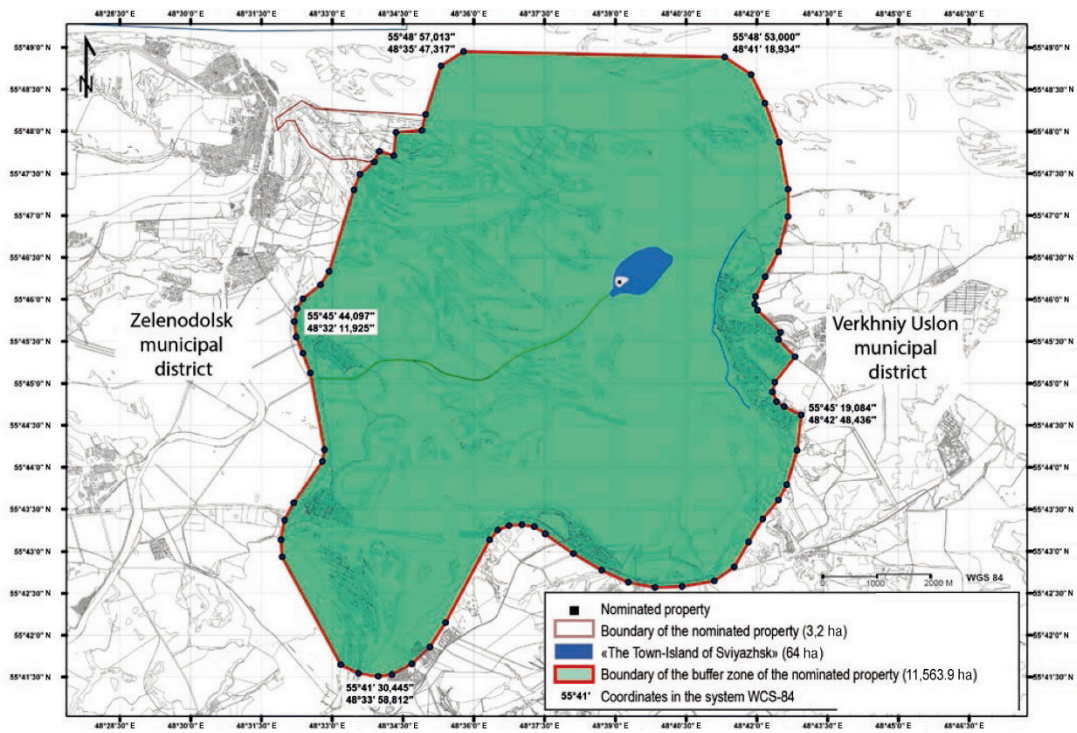
implementation of land-use regulations and restrictions; an interdepartmental commission on town planning ensures compliance of any project proposal falling into the buffer zone with the objectives and requirements for the protection of the property.

An established Coordinating Committee is tasked with advice on decision-making and has a monitoring role on the implementation of the management plan. The effective management of the property derives from the coordination of the various legal and planning instruments and close collaboration among the different institutions; careful consideration of tourism pressures needs to be integrated into any development plan or programme.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Changing the name of the property to become: "The Assumption Cathedral and Monastery of the town-island of Sviyazhsk",
- b) Developing a complete diagnosis of the problems of the Cathedral and include considerations of the potential negative impact of certain conservation materials (e.g. grouting mortars) on the murals,
- c) Establishing a permanent monitoring system to keep a continuous record of the structural behaviour and of the interaction of the frescoes with the indoor environmental parameters of the Cathedral,
- d) Avoiding touristic over-exploitation of the property and of the town-island of Sviyazhsk,
- e) Avoiding reconstruction of 'traditional houses' on the island for tourism purposes and consider that any reconstruction in this part of the buffer zone should be limited as much as possible, based on a comprehensive plan defining in advance what is planned to be rebuilt and for what reasons, and on the results of an Heritage Impact Assessment,
- f) Expanding the tourism strategy to encompass the wider territory of the buffer zone to spread tourism facilities and services outside of the Island, thus decreasing tourism pressure on the town-island,
- g) Carrying out a carrying-capacity study for the Island with regard to tourism and the envisaged museum development strategy;



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of Sviyazhsk



Assumption Cathedral from the north-east



Frescoes of the dome



A fragment of the frescoes of the vault of the refectory