



MANAGEMENT PLAN

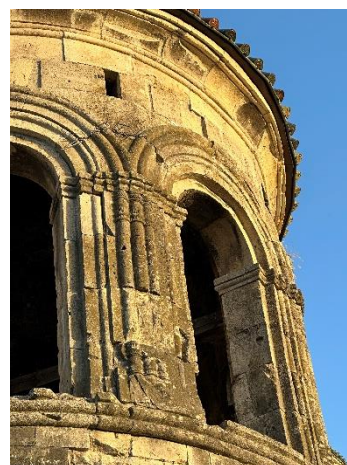
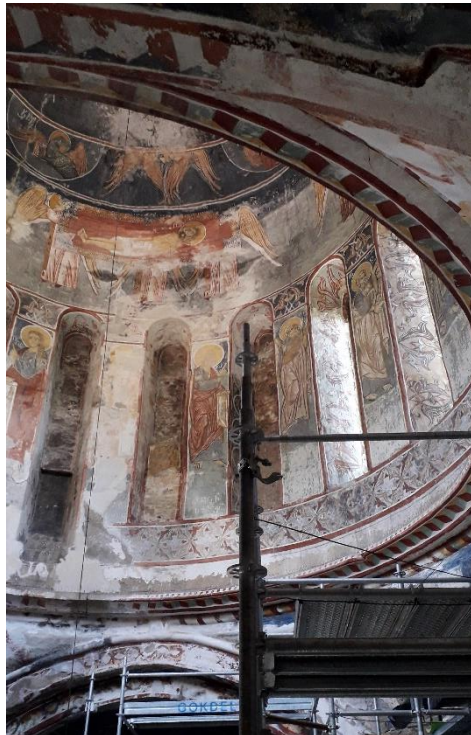
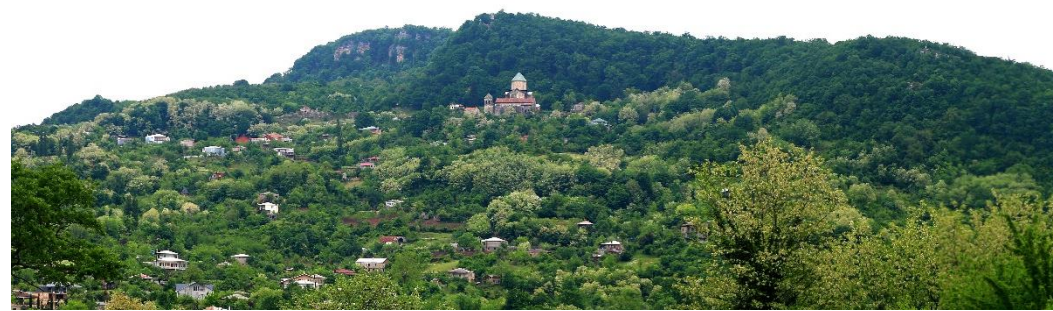
Gelati Monastery. World Heritage Property

2024

Provisional committee for the
rehabilitation of Gelati

The present translation is a first draft in the process of editing, therefore some of the terms may not be in line with the professional or World Heritage Convention language.

Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property Management Plan



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Introduction

This management plan is an updated version of the management plan prepared in 2015 for the Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property (the document was first updated in 2017). The document was prepared under the initiative of the Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati, in accordance with the decision of the World Heritage Committee 45 COM 7B.54 of 2023. A multidisciplinary working group worked on the preparation of the document, with the methodological assistance of an international consultant. Relevant national agencies, regional administration, local self-government, as well as the community of Gelati Monastery and other parties, were involved in the work process.

Document structure and content

The management plan is based on the analysis of the issues of protection, sustainable use and development of the Gelati Monastery as a World Heritage Property and its historically formed environment and defines the framework of actions in accordance with the identified needs, as well as the management structure for the implementation and monitoring of the presented actions, which are necessary for the long-term protection and sustainable use of the monument.

The document consists of 6 main blocks, Sections 1 and 2 of which are unchanged, based on the application of the outstanding universal value of the monument approved by the World Heritage Committee and the main guiding principles of the World Heritage Convention, and Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6), which are variable for each subsequent management cycle according to the physical condition of the monument, environment, socio-economic and management conditions, challenges and perspectives.

Section 1 of the document includes the application of the outstanding universal value of the monument given in the nomination and the list of characteristics (attributes) of this value, with relevant definitions.

Section 2 of the document includes long-term strategic goals and objectives for the management of the monument and its buffer zone, with relevant definitions.

Section 3 of the document includes a description of the current state of the monument and its environment, conservation works and impact factors. This includes an overview of the architectural and archaeological, as well as the landscape part, and the analysis of the current state of the religious and cultural-educational function of the monument.

Section 4 includes an analysis of the existing governance structure and legal framework.

Section 5 provides the specific tasks, actions and roadmap for this management cycle (2024-2027).

Section 6 presents monitoring mechanisms and indicators, including indicators for monitoring features of general human value, as requested by the World Heritage Committee.

Legal status

This management plan and action plans have been developed for the period from 2024 to 2027 and have been approved by the resolution of the Government of Georgia.

The document represents the main official guiding strategy for the management of the monument and establishes the mechanism of integrated management, thus, based on the interests of the monument, the principles of mutually agreed actions of the local community, church and state institutions are determined.

How to read a management plan in conjunction with other documents

The management plan was developed in parallel with the complex conservation studies of the Gelati Monastery, therefore, it is based on the data of the mentioned studies and the sectoral conservation plans determined by specialists for the years 2024-2027:

- Wall Painting Condition Research and Conservation Program (ongoing);
- Mosaic State Research and Conservation Program (ongoing);
- Study of the structural condition of the architecture and corresponding conservation-restoration program¹ (Ongoing²);
- Archaeological Research and Conservation Program³(to be developed)

Also:

- Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Use of Gelati Monastery (under development)
- Interpretation and museography program (to be developed)

The mentioned programs are developed and planned on the basis of reconciliation and mutual cooperation between the groups of specialists in the field, which should ensure the smooth conduct of the conservation works and the protection and safety of the related components.

The developed programs respond to the strategic tasks of protecting and maintaining the attributes of outstanding universal values, developed in the process of updating the management plan.

Management plan development process

The present management plan is based on the study of the management plan developed in 2017 - in the context of the work carried out and the current challenges of managing the monument. Together with the international consultant of the project, the basic approach and principles were agreed upon⁴, technical information was updated and disseminated within the buffer zone, including the cultural heritage inventory, a focus group of entities involved in the management and use of the area was defined, meetings were held with the local self-government, the monastery community, various regional and national agencies, the local community⁵. The meetings aimed at gathering information about ongoing and planned actions by the parties, and identifying current issues, needs and priorities to improve the management of the Gelati World Heritage Property and its buffer zone.

¹As of July 2024, the study concerns only the main church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.

²It also includes a research-based roofing project (ongoing) and a stone conservation program (to be developed).

³In May 2024, a geophysical survey of the territory of the monument was carried out, which, together with the results of the conducted archaeological reconnaissance and excavations, should form the basis for the development of the archaeological research program.

⁴Two working visits were carried out in December 2023 and April 2024.

⁵At the initial stage of updating the management plan, working meetings were held with: Imereti Regional Administration, Tkibuli, Terjola and Tskaltubo self-governments, Kutaisi Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve, Administration of Imereti Caves Protected Areas, National Agency for Spatial Planning and Urban Development, Municipal Development Fund, National Tourism Administration, with the representatives of Imereti destination management organisation, Kutaisi-Gaenati eparchy, Gelati Monastery community, communities of villages Kursebi and Gelati.

Based on written communication with a wide range of agencies, information on cadastral data and land registration of the management area, implemented infrastructure works, construction permits, valid mining licenses, tourism, natural monuments, etc. was updated.

During the course of the project (10.2023-05.2024), the report on the process of updating the management plan was regularly submitted to the Gelati Rehabilitation Temporary Committee and its advisory board. At the mentioned meetings, the material was discussed and recommendations were made in a working format.

The management plan was developed in coordination with specialist groups involved in monument conservation programs. The action plans provided by them form the basis of the conservation direction of the management plan.

limitations

The project to update the management plan was carried out within the framework of existing restrictions, which hinder cooperation among stakeholders and make it difficult to define and implement integrated action plans.

First of all, should be noted the lack of cooperation between the state bodies responsible for the protection of the monument, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia, the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia, and the owner of the monument - the Patriarchate of Georgia and its Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati Monastery. In the process of developing the management plan, it was not possible to receive the information requested in writing and to organize working discussions with the relevant units of the Ministry and the Agency, except for the representative of the Kutaisi Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve⁶. Particularly problematic is the lack of communication between the Ministry of Spatial Planning and the Spatial and Urban Development Agency regarding the preparation of spatial planning documents for the buffer zone of the Gelati World Heritage Property. After the initiation of the study by the management group, despite the spatial arrangement and the readiness expressed by the Spatial and Urban Development Agency, the lack of response from the Ministry hindered the start of the process of discussing the issue of urban planning regulation of the territory at the state level. Consequently, the management plan working group was deprived of the opportunity to cooperate with the agency in the preparation of the Terms of Reference or other preparatory works.

Due to the lack of strategic cooperation, the management plan was limited to the mandate of the current temporary management structure and made recommendations for its technical improvement. The elaboration of a proposal for a complex institutional structure of integrated management is desirable only after it becomes possible to discuss the existing challenges and prospects in a working format with the responsible state agencies and make joint decisions, with a realistic perspective of implementing such a structure.

Another important limitation that was revealed in the work process is the lack of up-to-date scientific research on the monument and its environment. Despite the great national and public importance of Gelati, the historical-geographical, archaeological, architectural or artistic analysis is very fragmented. Graphical documentation is outdated (2008), which would have given the management plan team a clearer visualization of the issues. The documentation is now being updated through laser scanning, based on which the architectural measured drawings and damage maps will be updated. The archaeological excavation plans are not integrated into a single base map, which complicates the spatial perception of the development chronology of the monastic ensemble. The stratigraphic data of

⁶The Ministry was addressed with a request for information and an offer to organize working discussions on December 25, 2023 (#62 and #61) and again on February 2, 2024 (#63)

the architectural components given in the 2008 conservation plan is very schematic. Periodization schemes of wall paintings are in the process of preparation by a group of specialists, there is no integrated map of archaeological excavations in the buffer zone, the scheme of historical roads was created only during the development of the management plan based on existing textual descriptions, etc. In many cases, the cultural heritage objects indicated in the buffer zone had inaccurate coordinates, and photos, descriptions, and registration cards were missing.

Analyzing historical sources and archaeological findings in an integrated context, research of relationships among historical roads and heritage monuments identified in the area, etc. is extremely important for the further analysis and interpretation of the outstanding universal value attributes of the Gelati Monastery.

Basic management approach and principles

The Management Plan provides the overall policy framework for the integrated management of the entire Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property and its Buffer Zone. It maintains the key principles underpinning the preceding management plan for Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property (2017):

- Protect and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the Gelati Monastery and its wider cultural landscape included in the Buffer Zone;
- Enhance the understanding of the dynamic interactions between man and nature that have shaped the present landscape, including the understanding of the cultural, socio-economic and ecological processes;
- Cultivate the understanding and enhance the contribution of the World Heritage designation to the quality of life and well-being of local communities;
- Regulate the resource use in accordance with the priority of the preservation of the OUV, encourage complementary uses and mitigate conflicts through adequate spatial and strategic planning;
- Support the cross-sectoral and multi-level integration in planning and decision-making, linking the broad-scale decision-making to the local interventions.
- Adhere to the principles of participatory governance and promote the participation of the local communities in planning and decision-making;
- Enhance conservation and maintenance policies and regimes for all attributes and features of the World Heritage property.
- Establish a robust monitoring system for the preservation of the OUV and implementation of the Management Plan.

More specifically, it is recognized that:

- The Gelati Monastery is a living religious site as well as a historically significant cultural-educational space, the authenticity and integrity of these functions, together with other attributes, underpin the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.
- Management should be conducted jointly through the cooperation of the respective state institutions and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia;
- Management should enable the participation of the local communities and concerned stakeholders.

Section 1

Gelati Monastery and its Outstanding Universal Value

1.1. Outstanding Universal Value of Gelati Monastery and its attributes

Excerpt from a short synopsis of Outstanding Human Value approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2017 (41COM 8B.31).

On the lower southern slopes of the mountains of the Northern Caucasus, Gelati Monastery reflects the 'golden age' of medieval Georgia, a period of political strength and economic growth between the reigns of King Davit IV 'the Builder' (1089-1125) and Queen Tamar (1184-1213). It was Davit who, in 1106, began building the monastery near the capital Kutaisi on a wooded hill above the river Tskaltsitela. The main church was completed in 1130 in the reign of his son and successor Demetré. Further churches were added to the monastery throughout the 13th and early 14th centuries. The monastery is richly decorated with mural paintings from the 12th to 17th centuries, as well as a 12th century mosaic in the apse of the main church, depicting the Virgin and Child flanked by archangels. Its high architectural quality, outstanding decoration, size, and clear spatial quality combine to offer a vivid expression of the artistic idiom of the architecture of the Georgian "Golden Age" and its almost completely intact surroundings allow an understanding of the intended fusion between architecture and landscape.

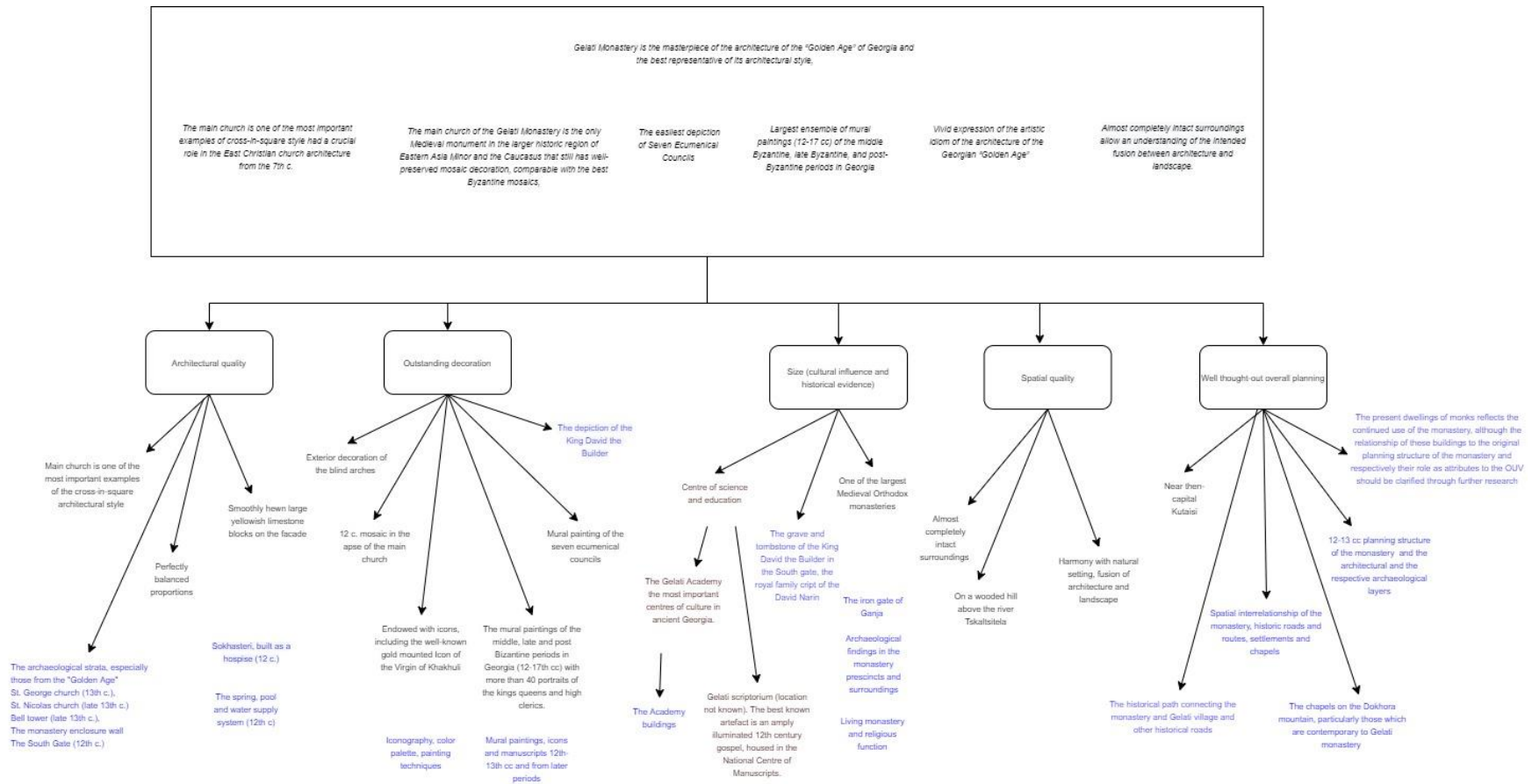
Gelati was not simply a monastery: it was also a center of science and education, and the Academy established there was one of the most important centers of culture in ancient Georgia. King Davit gathered eminent intellectuals to his Academy such as Johannes Petritzi, a Neo-Platonic philosopher best known for his translations of Proclus, and Arsen Ikaltoeli, a learned monk, whose translations of doctrinal and polemical works were compiled into his Dogmatikon, or book of teachings, influenced by Aristotelianism. Gelati also had a scriptorium where monastic scribes copied manuscripts (although its location is not known). Among several books created there, the best known is an amply illuminated 12th century gospel, housed in the National Center of Manuscripts.

As a royal monastery, Gelati possessed extensive lands and was richly endowed with icons, including the well-known gold mounted Icon of the Virgin of Khakhuli (now housed in the Georgian National Museum) and at its peak, it reflected the power and high culture of Eastern Christianity.

Criterion (iv): Gelati Monastery is the masterpiece of the architecture of the "Golden Age" of Georgia and the best representative of its architectural style, characterized by the full facing of smoothly hewn large blocks, perfectly balanced proportions, and the exterior decoration of blind arches. The main church of the monastery is one of the most important examples of the cross-in-square architectural type that had a crucial role in the East Christian church architecture from the 7th century onwards. Gelati is one of the largest Medieval Orthodox monasteries, distinguished for its harmony with its natural setting and a well thought-out overall planning concept.

The main church of the Gelati Monastery is the only Medieval monument in the larger historic region of Eastern Asia Minor and the Caucasus that still has well-preserved mosaic decoration, comparable with the best Byzantine mosaics, as well as having the largest ensemble of paintings of the middle Byzantine, late Byzantine, and post-Byzantine periods in Georgia, including more than 40 portraits of kings, queens, and high clerics and the earliest depiction of the seven Ecumenical Councils.

Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value



Legend

Definition of the OUV in line with the Criterion iv as defined by the ND

Key attributes mentioned in the OUV statement (boxed)

Attributes as defined by the ND

Attributes specified

Mural paintings of 1291-1292 by the order of David Narin is the only Paleogeorgist style Georgian painting of the time, comparable to the 14th c Georgian and Bizantine paintings.

Mural paintings with the influence of folk art

Feature 1: Architectural quality

The exceptionally high architectural and construction quality of the Gelati monastery complex is manifested in the perfectly balanced proportions of the main buildings of the monastery, in the skillfully smoothed arrangement of large facade blocks and facade decor. All buildings of the monastery are built of stone. The churches and the bell tower are faced with authentic well-hewn large limestone blocks. Nativity of the Virgin Mary and St. George's temples are important examples of the inscribed cross-type. This type developed in Eastern Christianity in the 7th century and later became the dominant form of church architecture.

The largest and main building of the Gelati Monastery is the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God (1106-1130), which was built at the same time as it was founded. It features the leading architectural trends of its time⁷. It is a cross-shaped temple. The dome rests on the corners of the apse on the east, and on two massive piers on the west. On the eastern facade, there are three pointed pentagonal apses. This solution of the altar became one of the characteristic elements of the church architecture in the era of Davit. The facades are decorated with a plain but monumental decorative arch, which is also repeated on the windowsills. Relief ornaments are found only on individual elements of the facades - for example, a decorative cup below the middle window of the altar. The simplicity of the facades and the apse, as well as the space of the narthex, which is less typical for Georgian temple architecture, are considered to be a manifestation of cultural "dialogue" with Byzantine architecture. According to some opinions, the researchers also connect the controversy of the facade decoration with the ascetic worldview of its founder, the author of "The Canon of Repentance" and the influence of the Christian asceticism of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, an outstanding cleric and public figure of the eleventh century, on the development of the Georgian church, according to which it was unacceptable to spend large financial funds for the decoration of churches.

The main entrance to the church is from the west, from the narthex, from where three large doors open into the main space of the church. It is lit by 16 wide windows cut in the throat of the dome and 12 wide windows of the altar and the arms of the cross. The monumental dome is a characteristic element of the churches of this period. In the western part of the temple, there is a patronikea, to which the climbing stairs are cut in the southwestern and northwestern walls of the western arm. On both sides of the altar, there are pastoforiums, a sacristy and a deacon's room. In 1519, by the order of Catholicos Melkisedek Sakvarelidze, a high seat was erected in the apse of the altar, probably in the centre of the 12th-century Synthronon. The stone episcopal seat standing by the north-western dome pier was renovated in 1760 by Catholicos Ioseb Bagrationi, although the original period of its construction is unknown.

The temple is surrounded by gates and chapels. The southern gate was built shortly after the completion of the church, in the 1140s together with the chapels of St. Andrew and St. Marine. Later, at the beginning of the 13th century, the temple expanded again. This time, the northern gate and the Saviour's Church were built. In the middle of the same century, St. Marine's second chapel was built west of the northern gate and its adjoining room. The facades of the built-up chapels and gates are lined with well-hewn blocks of limestone similar to the main temple and both in material and proportions harmoniously agree with the overall architectural appearance of the temple. The constant expansion of the temple indicates its active monastic life and growing importance, although the exact data on the number and status of the community of the monastery have not been preserved.

Synthronon is intended for the seating of priests during the liturgy. The high priest symbolically embodies the enthroned Savior, and the clerics on the steps of the hierarchy represent his disciples and followers. Synthronon has been found in Eastern Christian churches since the 5th century.

⁷V. Beridze, History of Georgian Architecture, first volume, Tbilisi, 2014, p. 305.

From the buildings contemporaneous with the establishment of the monastery, the building considered by researchers to be an **academy, the southern gate of the monastery, the spring and the rampart** have survived to this day. Over the centuries, they have been renovated several times, but the original architectural appearance has not changed substantially. The fragments of the building revealed as a result of archaeological research testify to the existence of another early (probably IX century) cult building in the territory of Gelati Monastery in the northeastern part of the monastery.

On the western edge of the monastery, the **building of the academy**, built on a steep hill, has a rectangular plan and is built of roughly hewn stone. It overlooks the Tskaltsitela valley through arched windows cut into the western wall. An important element of the undecorated building is the 14th-century gate at its central-eastern entrance, which is decorated with a richly carved star-shaped chamber. The arches of the gate rest on four low smooth columns decorated with massive capitals. On one of the capitals, there is a monumental image of a lion, and above the entrance, there is an ornament surrounded by a double shaft.

Historical references, as well as archaeological material, are scarce for a detailed understanding of the original planning of the academy as a building with an educational function and its architectural solution. The scientific-educational building functioned until the 16th century, and later it was used only as a dining room and for receiving important guests of the Royal House of Imereti. The basement revealed by the archaeological excavations and the remains of the building in the north, connected to it by an arched passage, indicate a number of changes after the 12th century. Nevertheless, the building of the Academy remains a rare architectural landmark in view of the unique scientific and cultural importance of Gelati.

The southern gate of the monastery has not so much architectural, but great memorial and historical significance. Here, according to his will, the founder of the monastery, the outstanding king of Georgia - Davit IV Aghmashenebeli is buried. In the Christian monarchs' burial tradition, the monarch's burial outside the temple is a unique case and it reflects the will of Davit Aghmashenebeli. It is also very unusual that the name of the king is not indicated on the tombstone.

This fact adds a special historical value to the building otherwise typical of Georgian monasteries. The gate is also very important in terms of presenting and studying the original spatial organization and planning structure of the monastic ensemble.

Contemporaneous with the foundation of the monastery is the spring with a pool and its water supply engineering structure with the main building located northwest of the main temple. The source and the water supply system have reached the present day almost unchanged. In the second half of the 13th century, a bell tower was built in the square plan building opened by the arches of the source. Similar architecturally decorated springs or fountains, arranged in the courtyard of the main temple or near the temple, were common in Byzantine monasteries and were probably designed with this in mind in Gelati as well. In the historical monasteries of Georgia, there is no such spring preserved anywhere else.

The next most important stage in the development of the Gelati monastery is the 13th century. Among the buildings of this period, are the **St. George and St. Nicholas churches and bell tower**.

St. George's Church is a reduced copy of the main cathedral and also belongs to the cross-type, although it is distinguished by a more elevated proportion, which brings it closer to the Georgian architecture of the 13th century. According to historical sources, the temple was built as a "queen's church", although it is not known exactly for which queen⁸. Unlike the main temple, there is no patron

⁸"Deed of Donation of the King Bagrati to Gelati" (1545), Monuments of Georgian Law, Volume II, text was published, notes and references were added by I. Dolidze, Tbilisi, 1965, p. 183.

saint here, which may indicate its special function. The dome of the church rests on the walls of the apse and two monolithic circular columns. The church has a narthex built to the west, which opens to the outside as a triple arch. The entrance to the church is from the west. The facades are more abundantly decorated with ornamental window frames than the main temple.

St. Nicholas Church has two floors, which is very rare in Georgian church architecture. The architectural solution of its first floor is unique, allowing a completely open space through four arches carried on four piers. According to some opinions, this is "a kind of variation of the copy of the Resurrection Temple of Jerusalem, which is widespread in the Christian world."⁹ On the upper floor, there is a domed church with a cruciform plan, and an altar with a pentagonal apse, which is decorated with a decorative arch. The windows are framed by fancy profiled ornaments. The stone staircase built from the north is of a later period. It is likely that initially, a wooden ladder was used.

The bell tower of Gelati Monastery is one of the oldest surviving bell towers in Georgia. It is also unique in terms of spatial planning solutions and is the only one in Georgia that is built on top of a spring. A stone staircase leading to the octagonal belfry is cut into the wall. Above the spring, on the second floor, there is a low, vaulted space with a fireplace and two windows, which was used as a residence and, in the late Middle Ages, as a prison.

The buildings built at this stage of the monastery's development are faced with well-hewn limestone blocks similar to the main temple. The agreement of building materials, building scale, planning structures and building proportions create a single harmonious ensemble of landmark buildings of the 12th-13th centuries.

One of the main qualities of Gelati Monastery is the harmony of an ensemble. The building of the Catholicon determines the character and distinctive features of other buildings. It sets the tone for the entire monastery complex. Along with the common building material, the ensemble is also unified through the use of architectural forms, such as pointed apses, which rhythmically unite the churches of the ensemble and create exceptional harmony and integrity.

Among the buildings from the time of the founding of the Gelati Monastery, the infirmary, located in the northeast of the monastery, is important, which was transformed into a monastery in the 16th century and named Sokhasteri. Such healing places were known at the early stages of the spread of Christianity in Georgia¹⁰, but Sokhasteri is the rarest example of their material confirmation.

Of the other buildings of the ensemble, only three residential buildings of the XIX century have been preserved, which were partially built on the ruins of the early period. From the architectural point of view, they are typical buildings of their period. Today, two of them are heavily damaged by fire, the monks' residence areas represent the continuity of the authentic monastic life, although the relation of these buildings to the original planned structure of the ensemble should be clarified by relevant studies.

From the architectural point of view, the wall of the monastery is also important, which contains layers from different periods, including piers from the early Middle Ages. The detailed stratigraphy of the wall is important for the study of different stages of the history of the complex, and for the preservation of its authenticity and integrity.

⁹e. Gedevanishvili, For the symbolic interpretation of Saint Nicholas Cathedral of Gelati Monastery, *Antiquities of Georgia*, 13, 2009, p. 93-103.

¹⁰S. Kauhchishvili, *Materials for the biography of Petre Iberi*, Georgika, Volume II, Tbilisi, 1965, p. 253.

Characteristic 2: Outstanding quality mosaics and wall paintings

One of the main characteristics of the outstanding universal value of the Gelati monastic ensemble is its artistic decoration, which on the one hand is a clear expression of the high-level creative life of the "Golden Age", on the other hand – it reflects the continuous chronological, technical and stylistic spectrum of the development of Georgian monumental art from the Golden Age to the late middle centuries (XII-XVIII centuries).

The wall painting and its fragments are preserved both in the main temple and in St. George's Cathedral, in the south gate, in the form of a small fragment in the St. Nicholas Church. Among them, the most important sights are the layers of painting and mosaics from the early period of the development of the monastery: the mosaic presented in the conch of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, and part of the painting of the narthex of the same church (XII century). As for the 16th and 18th-century wall paintings in the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God and its parishes, and also in St. George's Church, they are an integral part of the history of the monastery, providing valuable information on the political processes and artistic trends of the late Middle Ages.

Painting chronological scheme

The mosaic presented in the conch in the most important part of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God is contemporaneous with the construction of the cathedral. It is the rarest authentic sample of artistic decoration left from this period, and therefore, it is very important as a proof of artistic development in Georgia during the Golden Age. The lower part of the mosaic was damaged in a fire in 1510 and was replaced by a painting in the following decades, so the remaining part today includes only the apse corner (almost 50 m² area).

The mosaic is mainly composed of small pebbles. Its colour is distinguished by its rich tone and hue. Natural material obtained near Gelati is also used here - different coloured sandstone, limestone and agate.

In the centre of the composition, the infant Virgin Mary is depicted, on either side of which one archangel is shown. The image is spread over a solid gold background.

The mosaic decoration is rare in Georgia. It is possible to name a few samples (eg, Mtskheta Holy Cross church, Tsromi church, Bagrati Cathedral). This media was perceived in Gelati, on the one hand, as an expression of the strength of the united Georgia, and on the other hand, as a political declaration of the importance of the royal family of Bagrationi and the patronage of Georgia by the Mother of God. The iconographic type of the Mother of God is marked - the Nikopea type, which is considered the palladium of the Byzantine emperors and appears as the palladium of the Georgian kings at least from the 9th century. Along with a deep theological-theological idea, Gelati mosaics are distinguished by their high artistic value. It can be called one of the best examples of mosaic decoration.

Photo + interior layout with reference

The painting of the narthex wall of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God is another contemporary authentic layer of the monastery construction (1125-1130).

Painting is distinguished by its iconographic program. Due to the quality of execution, processing of figures and individuality, and exquisite colouring of monumentality, it is considered the best example of Georgian wall painting of the Golden Age.

In the centre of the chamber, the scene of the raising of the cross by angels is presented, the arches and the upper registers of the walls are dedicated to the images of the Seven World Church Councils, and in the western window, the scene of St. Euphemia's miracle is shown that happened at the world church meeting of Chalcedon.

The importance of the painting of the narthex is immeasurably increased by the fact that the seven world church councils presented here are the earliest samples of this cycle that have survived to us. Along with the chronological factor, it is important to note that the Gelati cycle is distinguished by certain individual iconographic features. This is undoubtedly due to the historical events of Davit Agmashenebeli's reign and implies the presence of "national" accents in the image of the church cycle.

Photo + interior layout

Later layers of narthex painting are represented by warrior figures on either side of the door on the east wall (probably 14th century or later) and the infant Virgin Mary between archangels on the tympanum of the central door (1520s). The canopy in the southern part of the narthex, built and painted in the 1650s-60s, is one of the interesting specimens of the royal tombs of the late Middle Ages.¹¹ The painting of the baldachin presents the images of Alexander III and his wife Nestan-Darejan.

Photo + interior layout

A large part of the main painting space of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin dates back to the restoration period after 1510. The painting was created in different stages in the 16th century. The images of Christ Pantocrator in the dome and apocalyptic symbols and prophecies on the neck of the dome belong to the 1520s. In the 1550s, scenes of the divine liturgy and the communion of the apostles were performed on the altar, and scenes of the life of the Mother of God were performed on the stage of the altar. In the 1550s, and later in 1565 and 1578, the southern and northern arms of the cathedral were painted (here the great royal feasts are depicted) and the western arm (with images of the Passion of the Savior). The pictorial ensemble is also complemented by a large number of sacrificial portraits depicting both secular and clergy. In the lower register of the northern wall, next to the images of the kings of Imereti, there is also a figure of Davit Agmashenebeli. This is one of the rare fresco portraits of King Davit.

Photo of Davit's mural + reference to the layout

The earliest and most noteworthy of the paintings of the chapels and gates is St. Andrias Ekderi's painting, commissioned by King Davit VI Narin in 1291-1292, which is a unique example of early Paleogloss style Georgian painting¹². Two portraits of the king - secular and religious - are depicted here, which is extremely rare. On the west wall of the Narin's church, as well as in the church of St. Marine, other fragments of paintings from an earlier era appear. The ongoing detailed study of the wall paintings is likely to shed light on many previously unknown details.

Photo + Interior

¹¹M. Liluashvili, Architecturally resolved grave monuments in 17th-19th centuries Georgia: canopies, domes, church models, in the book: Grave monuments in 17th-19th centuries Georgia, Tbilisi, 2022, p. 133-135.

¹² K. Mikeladze, The Painted Decoration of David Narini's Iconostasis in the Main Cathedral of Gelati Monastery (PhD Dissertation), Tbilisi, 2001

The wall painting of the first St. Marine Chapel is covered with the so-called folk style of painting, which spread in Western Georgia in the 16th century. The wall paintings of other chapels date back to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

Overall, the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary includes wall paintings of the middle, late and post-Byzantine periods (XII-XVIII centuries) with more than 40 portraits of kings, queens and clergy.

The original painting of St. George's Church belongs to the 16th century (1565-1583). The painting program emphasizes the importance of the church as a seat of Catholicos and a royal resting place: the composition of the Glory of Christ is depicted in the dome; In the altar, the Mother of God Nikopea is represented between the apostles Peter and Paul; The apse and bema are devoted to the stories of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Resurrection. Among the prophets and saints, Georgian saints Davit and Konstantine Mkheidze, who were martyred during the Arab invasion in the 8th century, are depicted. The Motsameta Monastery in the buffer zone is also associated with their name. The lower register of painting is almost entirely devoted to the portraits of the kings and queens of Imereti.

The southwest chapel of the St. George's Church is decorated with 13th-century paintings. It was probably painted immediately after the construction of the Church. In the main space, even today, fragments of original decoration appear here and there. The iconographic features of wall painting are especially remarkable. Here, together with the images of the saints, the scene of Ascension appears, which contains a very unusual iconographic detail - a personified image of a mountain, representing a human-face mountain. Such a personified image of a mountain can be considered an influence of the Neoplatonic teachings cultivated in Gelati Academy.¹³

The painting of St. George's Church is an outstanding example of post-Byzantine art. It is largely based on Late Palaiologos art. At the same time, the relatively laconic scenes of his program and the tectonic nature of their compositional construction point to local painting traditions.

Photos + layout of the interior

¹³ E. Gedevanishvili, *Some Elements of Antiquity in the Representation of Mountains in Georgian Painting of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, *Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства*, Saint-Petersburg, 2015, p. 287-293.

Characteristic 3: Scale and Cultural-Historical Significance

Gelati is the largest monastery in Georgia. It is unique in its scope throughout the culture of the Christian East. The Sokhaster complex adjacent to the Gelati monastic ensemble and the abundance of churches and chapels on Mount Dokhora also testify to the scale of this complex.

The monastery is compactly located in the area surrounded by a stone wall on the slope of Dokhora mountain. To date, its original planning structure and constituent buildings have not been fully preserved. However, the most important original and later buildings have been preserved: the main Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and two other churches, the bell tower, the pool and water supply system, the ramparts and gates, the academy, as well as the later monks' residences. Numerous remains of buildings revealed as a result of archaeological excavations indicate the intensive agricultural use of the monastery's territory. According to historical reports, in the late Middle Ages, the buildings in the northern part of the monastery were used for the residence of monks, although these buildings were not completely preserved. The location of the Gelati scriptorium, which was one of the important axes of the scientific life of the monastery, is also unknown. The great cultural and historical importance of Gelati Monastery is due to its role in the revival of artistic and scientific life in Georgia and its connection with historical events and persons who played a decisive role in the development of Georgia and its geocultural region.

It is known that Davit Agmashenebeli conceived the monastery from the beginning as a center of science and education corresponding to the highest international standards of that period. He founded an academy in the monastery and as a result of great efforts gathered Georgian thinkers working both in Georgia and outside the country. Davit's historian compares the Gelati monastery to Athens and Jerusalem, which emphasized the importance of the Gelati monastery as a center of both secular and religious knowledge, philosophy and theology. Historical sources indicate that teaching in the Gelati Academy was conducted according to the Hellenic-Roman tradition of the "seven liberal arts" system. This can be explained by the political and cultural proximity of Georgia to the Byzantine capital of that time - Constantinople. The Gelati Monastery with its educational institution is connected to the model of the Constantinople Mangana Academy. The most important educational center of the Christian East, "Mangana Academy" is known today mainly for its archaeological reconstruction. Gelati represents a protected and "living" organism of this kind of structure, which also allows us to reconstruct such institutions of the Christian East. This indicates the successful coexistence of monastic and educational centers here¹⁴.

Gelati was founded as a royal monastery, which served to strengthen the political and economic power of the king. It is the first monastery of this type in Georgia. It is probable that the monastery was created according to the Byzantine model¹⁵. Gelati Monastery owned vast lands and rich treasures, which included a rich collection of icons and church decorations. Among them is the famous icon of the Mother of God of Khakhuli, which was created in the 10th century, and was placed in a richly glazed and decorated Ched triptych on the instructions of Davit and under the direction of his son Demetre (today the icon is preserved in the National Museum of Georgia). Khakhuli's tryptochon together with Gelati's mosaic appeared as a similar physical evidence of the sacral origin of the Bagrationi family.

photo

¹⁴D. Melikishvili, *Gelati another Athina and the Second Jerusalem*, Tbilisi, 2006; D. Melikishvili, *Gelati Academy - Another Athina and Second Jerusalem School for Children*, Tbilisi, Logos 2019; *Gelati 900, architecture, painting, possessions*, Tbilisi, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid*

The scientific and educational importance of Gelati is emphasized by the presence of the scriptorium here, where manuscripts were copied and created. The location of the building itself has not been determined to date, although the collection of manuscripts created here is preserved in the National Manuscript Center. The most famous among them is the Gospel of the 12th century decorated with miniatures.

photo

Among the donations of the royal monastery, the historic iron door of the city of Ganja stands out, which Davit's son, Demetre I, took as military trophy after capturing Ganja and donated it to the Gelati monastery. According to the inscriptions on the door, it dates back to 1062. A double-winged door made of cast iron and iron closed one of the six doors of the city of Ganja. Only one wing of the door has been preserved in the Gelati monastery. The iron gates of the medieval city are a unique historical artefact of this type. For protection, the original was transferred to the Kutaisi Historical Museum.

photo

According to King Davit's will, the Gelati Monastery became the resting place of the Bagrationi royal family. Davit Agmashenebeli's grave is located in the centre of the exit of the southern gate of the monastery, with an Asomatru inscription carved on it: "This is my grave, forever and ever. This is my will to be buried here". After Davit, the kings and queens of Georgia and then of Imereti were buried in the Gelati monastery. According to historical sources, King Tamar should have been buried here. However, her tombstones, as well as those of a number of other important historical figures, have not survived to this day. Among the preserved royal tombs, the tomb of the royal family of Davit Narin in St. Andrew's Cathedral and the canopy-covered tomb of Alexander III in the narthex of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God stand out from the artistic point of view.

photo

Gelati Monastery, which was a testimony of the solidity and strength of Davit Agmashenebeli's royal power, became the most impressive visual symbol of the "Golden Age" of medieval Georgia.

Preserved religious and monastic function

Gelati Monastery has a history of the ninth century. At different stages of historical development, it has not lost its authentic religious and monastic function. Its importance as a religious centre is indicated by the transfer of the Episcopal Cathedral of Bichvinta to Gelati in the 16th century, after which St. George's Church became a Catholic cathedral.

History has not preserved the number and status of the monks of the monastery. However, as a royal monastery, it was always the subject of special attention and care of Georgian kings. After the annexation of the Kingdom of Imereti by the Russian Empire (1810), Gelati lost its status as a religious-administrative centre. The Catholic Church of Western Georgia was abolished in 1814, and the Episcopal Church of Gelati - in 1820¹⁶. Despite this, the Gelati Monastery continued to function until the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia. From 1923 to 1988, the monastic function in Gelati was temporarily stopped. However, the monastery complex was open to visitors as a department of the Kutaisi Museum and a monument of cultural heritage under state protection and care. It was during this period that the scientific study, restoration and conservation of the complex took place, which played a major role in its preservation and survival.

¹⁶ M. Kezevadze, *The Monastery of Gelati during the Exarchate*, Kutaisi, 2006, p. 39.

Divine service and monastic life were restored in 1988, at the end of the Soviet rule, although they have not regained their original significance. The monastic community consists of four permanently resident monks, one of whom is currently acting as the abbot. The monks use the 19th and 20th century buildings inside the walls of the Gelati monastery, as well as the newly built monastic buildings on Mount Dokhora, adjacent to the chapels of St. Saba and St. Nino.

Proper organization of monastic life and farming is considered one of the prerequisites for maintaining the outstanding universal value of Gelati.

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Characteristic 4: Spatial quality

Gelati Monastery is distinguished by a harmonious combination of architecture with the surrounding nature, which is first of all manifested by the effective selection of the site of the monastery on the slope of Mount Dokhora and by planning monastic buildings.

The monastery is located in a strategically important place in the valley of the Tskaltsitela river, near the historical roads. The monastic buildings are erected on the natural terrace of the mountain, and the silhouette of the monastic complex standing out against the background of the forest-covered mountain is the dominant spatial and visual element of the landscape. The villages of Gelati and Martyrs spread out on the slope below it, with agricultural lands, create a plain background for the perception of the monastery. (see annexe 1.1. The Landscape Visual Panoramic Analysis)

Buildings located in the buffer zone - the ruins of the watch tower on Davit's Cape, Sokhasteri, St. Elias, St. Saba and St. Nino's churches, as well as agricultural plots and the structure of settlements, are integral elements of the spatial organization of the cultural landscape of Gelati.

Characteristic 5: Well-thought-out general planning

Gelati Monastery has a well-thought-out planning concept. Its strategic location near Kutaisi, the then capital of Georgia, from which it is eleven kilometres away, is specially selected.

Historically, the monastery had two roads - one to the north-east, and the other to the south-west. The latter represented the main road, which is indicated by the presence of Davit Agmashenebeli's grave in the southern gate of the monastery courtyard. This road branches several times (in different directions). to the east, it goes towards the village of Godogani and joins the "Kartli Shara" (Nergeeti) passing through it, which connected Eastern and Western Georgia for centuries.¹⁷ A comparison of the ruins of historical roads and bridges from the late Middle Ages in the historical landscape suggests that some of them had bridges in the 12th century.

In addition to its strategic proximity to the administrative centre and important regional roads, the monastery complex is embedded in the historical landscape in the defensive infrastructure from the early Middle Ages. The castle on the rocky promontory to the west of the complex controlled the historical road through the Tskaltsitela valley since the Middle Ages. Another important fortified point was the present Martyr's Monastery, which coincides with the historical Uchimerion.¹⁸

The area of the walled monastic complex has not changed since the 12th century. From the 16th century, its main entrance was arranged from the east, although the reason for this planning change is unknown. This gate is still the only functioning entrance to the monastery, which is due to the paved road leading to it.

The central place in the monastery, surrounded by a stone wall, is occupied by the Church of the Holy Nativity. Other monastic buildings are distributed around it, thereby underlining the dominance of the cathedral. By the end of the 13th century, the planning structure of the monastery was essentially established. Historical records of the late Middle Ages and fragmentary archaeological excavations of the area provide meagre information about the location of the monks' living quarters and other

¹⁷ memkvidreoba.gov.ge/Home/Immovable/8422

¹⁸O. Lanchava, Archeology of Kutaisi, Kutaisi, 2015, p.

buildings. Excavations confirm dense agricultural and other types of development inside the wall, which changed many times over the centuries. A photo of the 1880s taken by Dimitri Ermakov gives a clear idea of the late period of the monastery, which shows the stone and wooden one-story agricultural and residential buildings, most of which no longer exist today.



1880-1916 The photos taken by Ermakov show the changes in the northern part of the Gelati monastic ensemble. Collection of the National Museum of Georgia, source: <https://gelatirehabilitation.ge/uploads/documents/docs/ERMAKOV-ARCHITECTURE-1880-1916.pdf>

Section 2

Strategic goals of management

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Based on the guidelines of the World Heritage Convention and the main principles of the previous management plan, this management plan defines the following strategic goals and tasks grouped accordingly:

I. to protect, preserve and present the special public value of the Gelati monastic ensemble and its historically formed environment;

- 1.1. The objects of the monastic ensemble should be preserved with a high degree of conservation: temples, bell towers and their architectural and decorative elements, mosaics and wall paintings, movable monuments (cross-icons, manuscripts and other movable parts), other architectural components of the ensemble, the condition should be regularly checked according to the agreed monitoring protocols and using appropriate tools.
- 1.2. Open and covered archaeological remains revealed as a result of excavations should be preserved with a high degree of conservation and information about them should be properly presented to the visitor.
- 1.3. to prepare a map of still unexcavated archaeological layers and an archaeological research strategy;
- 1.4. to preserve the historical planning structure of the monastery and the specifics of space use;
- 1.5. To maintain a harmonious relationship with the surrounding landscape, both visually and functionally and symbolically.
- 1.6. The surrounding area of the monastic ensemble and the historical landscape of Mount Dokhora to be protected from development;
- 1.7. To preserve Sokhasteri with a high degree of conservation, to make its proper interpretation and presentation; The conservation status was checked as needed.
- 1.8. To preserve the historical churches on Mount Dokhora with a high degree of conservation, the state of conservation will be checked as needed.

II. To promote the development of historical religious, cultural and educational functions of the Gelati monastic ensemble;

- 2.1. to maintain and expand the educational function of the monastery;
- 2.2. monastic life should be organized in accordance with the special public value of the monument;
- 2.3. Rehabilitate-adaptation of monks' residential and economic historical buildings;
- 2.4. The Academy building should be adapted for public use in accordance with its historical-cultural significance and special public value;
- 2.5. The moving monuments related to Gelati should be presented to the general public with appropriate interpretation and compliance with safety conditions.

III. To promote the sustainable use of the monument by the monastery community, the local population and the general public and the positive impact of the World Heritage on local social and economic development.

- 3.1 To develop spatial planning documentation of the buffer zone, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development of territories and protection of the special public value of world heritage;
- 3.2 Historic roads and trails will be surveyed and marked and equipped with presentation panels and other infrastructure as needed.
- 3.3 Objects of cultural heritage identified in the buffer zone will be protected.

IV. To improve sectoral cooperation of management stakeholders, coordination between levels of governance, involvement of the local population and general public.

- 4.1. to improve coordination-cooperation between levels of government and inter-agency;
- 4.2. To improve the mechanism of monument management (in-situ management).

V. To deepen the knowledge about the history and development of the Gelati Monastery, its relationship with its surroundings and wider environment, and accordingly to spread the interpretation and presentation of the special public value of the monument.

- 5.1. To determine the detailed chronology of the development of the monument, including through non-invasive archaeological reconnaissance and targeted excavations;
- 5.2. Multidisciplinary study of the cultural landscape and its archaeological layers, historical analysis for its detailed interpretation and presentation should be carried out step by step.

To achieve the above objectives, the management plan defines the specific tasks and actions of the management cycle, which is grouped into the following areas:

1. Institutional provision and development
2. Legal regulation and protection
3. Conservation and monitoring
4. Interpretation and presentation
5. Education and skill building
6. Development of monastic life

Specific tasks and actions can be revised, modified and extended in subsequent management cycles according to current priorities.

The current management cycle is defined by the years 2024-2028, the corresponding roadmap, directions and actions are presented in Chapter 5 of the management plan and the corresponding Annex 5.1.

Due to the emergency situation created in the main Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin due to water infiltration, the main challenge of this management cycle is to correct the conservation condition of the monument. Accordingly, when defining the tasks and actions, priority was given to the physical rescue and conservation of the monument and overcoming the created crisis situation.

Section 3

Historical development, current situation,
conservation, impact factors

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3.1. Gelati Monastery - religious center

Gelati Monastery was founded in 1106 by the initiative of Davit IV Agmashenebeli. It was the same royal monastery that owned vast lands and rich treasures. Among the richly decorated icons of the temple was the famous icon of the Mother of God of Khakhuli, which was a unique example of Georgian icon painting, partition enamel and goldsmithing (today it is preserved in the National Museum of Georgia).¹⁹

History has not preserved the number and status of the monks of the monastery. Probably, it changed according to the general political and economic situation in the country. As a royal monastery, it was always the subject of special attention and care of Georgian kings.

In 1510, the monastery was burned by the Turks. King Bagrat III of Imereti restored it soon (1519) and turned it into an episcopal seat. Between 1565-1578, the Catholic seat of Western Georgia was moved from Bichvinti to Gelati, to St. George's Cathedral. In 1759, the monastery burned again, this time during the invasion of the Leks. In 1770-1780, the monastery was restored again with the efforts of King Solomon I of Imereti.²⁰

After the annexation of the Kingdom of Imereti by the Russian Empire (1810), Gelati lost its status as a religious-administrative center. The Russian rulers abolished the Catholic diocese of Western Georgia in 1814, and the episcopal diocese of Gelati in 1820.²¹

Nevertheless, the Gelati Monastery continued to function until the establishment of Soviet rule in Georgia. The monastery was closed in 1923, like many other religious institutions. At the same time, due to its high historical and cultural importance, the monastic complex was assigned a cultural-educational function and became a subject of state protection and care. From 1923 to 1988, the monastery complex was open to visitors as a department of the Kutaisi Museum and a monument of cultural heritage.

Divine service and monastic life in Gelati Monastery were restored in 1988, at the end of Soviet rule. The monastic community is small and consists of only four permanent resident monks, one of whom is currently acting as abbot. The monks use the 19th and 20th century buildings inside the walls of the Gelati monastery, as well as the newly built monastic buildings on Mount Dokhora, adjacent to the chapels of St. Saba and St. Nino.

According to the statute of the monastery, the daily life of the monks includes prayer and maintenance of the churches. Maintenance does not mean monitoring the physical condition of buildings, nor simple preventive conservation actions that require appropriate knowledge and skills. Due to a lack of security norms and infrastructural malfunctions, in the last two decades, three

¹⁹ The icon was created in the 10th century. According to Davit Agmashenebeli's decision, his successor King Demetre I (1125-1156) placed the icon in a triptych richly decorated with enamels and embossed ornaments. The triptych was made by three Gelatian masters. L. Khuskivadze, External carving of the Khakhuli carpet, *Antiquities of Georgia*, 7-8, 2005, p. 110-123; R. Kenia, carving the icon of the Mother of God of Khakhuli, Tbilisi, 1972; L. Khuskivadze, *Khakhuli Triptych*, Tbilisi, 2007.

²⁰b. Lominadze, Gelati, Kutaisi, 1958, p. 12-13.

²¹M. Kezevadze, *The Monastery of Gelati during the Exarchate*, Kutaisi, 2006, p. 39.

historical buildings housing the monks in the monastery complex - 18th century Oda, 1882²² and the residential buildings built at the end of the 19th century were burnt down.²³

According to the current monastic regulations, the gates of the monastery are opened at 07:30 in the morning and closed at 22:30. The continuous flow of visitors makes the solitude necessary for monastic life more difficult. Proper organization of monastic life and farming is considered as one of the prerequisites for maintaining the special public value of Gelati.

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²² The house was built by the famous Imeretian architect - Bereakashvili.

²³ The building was the residence of the archbishop. Below it, remnants of an XII-XIII century structure can be seen, which consists of several rooms.

3.2. Cultural, scientific and educational role of Gelati Monastery

Upon establishment Gelati Monastery was conceived not just as a religious institution, but as a center of science and education corresponding to the highest international standards of that period. King David founded an academy together with the monastery, where, as a result of great efforts, he gathered the most outstanding Georgian theologians and philosophers living both in Georgia and abroad. Georgian chroniclers describe the history of the establishment of the monastery and academy as a special event in the life of the nation.²⁴

Education in Gelati was carried out in accordance with the Roman tradition with the "seven free arts" system²⁵. Basically the same disciplines were taught here as in other theological schools of the Byzantine Empire. The abbot of the monastery also held the position of head of the academy, or teacher of the teachers²⁶.

Since its foundation, Gelati Monastery has been an "unusual union of monks and scholars".²⁷ It was a sample. It was an outstanding center of literacy and science. The important philosophical-religious literature of that period was translated and created here. A scriptorium also functioned (the location of the building is unknown), where manuscripts were actively copied. Probably the most famous of the books transcribed in Gelati is the 12th century Gospel decorated with miniatures (now it is preserved in the National Center of Manuscripts, Q-908)²⁸. It is likely that the monument of Georgian law of the 14th century "Treaty of the King's Gate" should have been compiled in Gelati.²⁹

Liturgical objects were also created in the Gelati monastery: icons and crosses, wooden products were made. In the 1770s, there was a calligraphy and art school in Gelati, which was founded by the famous church figure Zakaria Gabashvili.³⁰ It is here that the iconostasis of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God of the Savior Ekuder and the iconostasis of the Ekuder of St. Marine should have been made. At the end of the 19th century, Estate Kereselidze (St. Ekvtime Confessor) re-arranged a list of a unique musical collection with about 3000 hymns in Gelati.³¹

Gelati Academy existed until the 16th century. According to sources, after the 16th century, the building of the Academy was used only as a dining hall.

In 1990, on the initiative of Metropolitan Kalistrate Margalitashvili of Kutatel-Gaenati and with the blessing of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II, Gelati Academy was restored as a religious and educational institution. The Academy is located in Kutaisi (Dvalishvili St. #7), although various scientific

²⁴Life of Kartli, vol. 1, s. Edited by Kaukhchishvili, Tbilisi, 1955, p. 318-364; The life of King David, the text was prepared for publication, research, dictionary and search results were added by M. Shanidze, Sources of Georgian history, vol. 62, Tbilisi, 1992.

²⁵ *Gelati, architecture, painting, possessions*, p. 3.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁷ *Gelati, architecture, painting, possessions*, p. 3.

²⁸ *Georgian handwritten book, V-XIX centuries*, n. Edited by Chkhikvadze, Tbilisi, 2010, p. 66.

²⁹e. Takaishvili, Khelmspifi Kari Garigama, Tiflis, 1920; Iv. Javakhishvili, History of Georgian Law, Book 1, Tbilisi, 1928; N. Kavtaria, Four Chapters of Gelati, Antiquities of Georgia, 2007, 11, p. 59-77.

³⁰ *Gelati, architecture, painting, possessions*, p. 265.

³¹i. Tavberidze, *19th century Georgian figures and church hymns*, Tbilisi, 2010, p. 67-80.

and educational events are periodically held in the Gelati Monastery, in the former building of the Academy.³² The theological seminary attached to the academy offers undergraduate programs in theology and Christian studies, a master's program in theology, and a one-year course in humanities.

During the Soviet period, the Gelati monastery complex, although it lost its religious significance, acquired a new important scientific-research and educational function. The complex has become a research object of Georgian architecture and art history. In addition, it was open to visitors, thus serving to promote Georgian culture at the national and international level. This function did not stop even after the resumption of monastic life in Gelati.

The exact number of visitors to the Gelati World Heritage Property has not yet been recorded. Tickets for entering the monastery are not sold, because according to church tradition, entry to the active church is free for anyone.

According to the 2008 conservation plan, the separation of visitors and monastic life was supposed to be resolved by building a visitor center, regulating the flow of visitors and zoning the area, but the issue is still unresolved. A visitor center was built outside the monastery walls according to the plan and handed over to the National Agency for Cultural Heritage for management, although it is still unused. Despite the significant state investment, there is still no presentation space at the monastery, brochures and publications are not available, and the souvenir business is still disorderly. Due to the non-functionality of the visitor center, public toilets are not accessible to visitors, which makes it impossible to hold any kind of public educational-cultural activity on the site.

³² <https://gelati.edu.ge/2020/09/21/Gelatis-sasuliero-akade-8/>

3.3. Monastic ensemble architecture and planning

3.3.1. Planning structure of the ensemble

The walled Gelati monastery is built on the natural slope of the Dokhora mountain, the western part of which is steep and inaccessible. Below this natural platform, on the western slope going down to Tskaltsitela, the village of Gelati is spread, and the rocky slope to the east of the monastery is covered with deciduous forest where there are small churches of St. Elias, St. Saba and St. Nino, which are part of the Gelati Monastery ([see photos](#)).

Data about the initial planning of the monastery are very scarce. From the surviving buildings, the original complex consisted of the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, the southern gate, the wall and the academy. The dating of the archaeological layers of the monks' residence in the northern part of the monastery indicates that there was probably a building here from the time of the foundation of the monastery, although its volume and planning structure have not been fully studied.

St. George and St. Nicholas churches, bell tower and other buildings were added to the complex in the 13th century. Historical sources, archival photos and remains revealed by archaeological excavations in the north of the Academy and St. George's church, in the courtyard of the monastery, indicate a dense agricultural and residential development³³, although the picture of the development of the complex has not been specified yet. Archaeological excavations in and around the monastery courtyard are likely to reveal many interesting planning details.

[Ensemble plan with chronology](#)

3.3.2. Architecture³⁴

The main temple named after the Mother of God of Gelati Monastery is a large cross-domed building. The walls of the building are faced with well-hewn blocks of yellowish limestone, some of which are very large. On the eastern facade, there are three bays, a pentagonal apse. They are separated by a simple decorative arch, which is also repeated on the windowsills. Relief ornaments are found only on individual elements of the facades.

The church has a narthex to the west, from where we enter the main space of the church. The dome rests on the corners of the apse and two massive piers. To the west of the temple there is a patronymic, to which the stairs are cut in the south-west and north-west walls. On both sides of the altar there are pastoforiums, sacristy and deacon's room. The southern gate was added to the temple in the 1140s. St. dates from the same period. Andrew's church east of the gate and St. Marine's Equder to the west of the gate (it was restored in the 13th century). The northern gate and the church of the Savior to its east date from the beginning of the 13th century. Later, in the middle of the 13th century, St. was added to the northern gate. Marine's second chapel and adjoining room. The facades

³³Isakadze, R (2019) Archaeological Report, National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection

³⁴ A detailed architectural description and characterization of the buildings of the Gelati ensemble is given in the preparatory study for the conservation plan developed in 2008.

of the chapels and gates are covered with well-hewn blocks of limestone similar to the main temple and harmoniously agree with the overall appearance of the temple (see the photo of the main temple).

Among the buildings of the ensemble, the academy building, a large part of the wall, the southern gate of the monastery, a pool and a spring also date from the 12th century.

The Academy building is an elongated rectangular hall built of roughly hewn stone. The western wall of the building protrudes from the gable and is reinforced with strong buttresses built later. A portico opened by a monumental large-arched arch is built on the western wall, from which a two-story entrance to the academy space is arranged. The eastern wall is also reinforced with later buttresses. A monumental, richly decorated gate was built in this part in the 13th and 14th centuries, which is the main entrance to the building today. The original function of the building and the chronology of the renovations raise many questions to this day, especially since it was used as a refectory in the late Middle Ages, and until the 20th century, it survived only in the form of outer walls without roofing. The basement and the cellar revealed by the archaeological excavations prove the economic function of the building, and the wooden structure of the building was roofed in 2009-2010.

Photo or measured drawing

The pool, spring and water supply engineering system located in the northwest of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin are contemporary with the establishment of the monastery. The pool and the spring are covered by a square-plan building with arches on three sides, on which a bell tower was built in the second half of the 13th century. This is one of the earliest bell towers in Georgia. On the second floor is a low vaulted space with a fireplace and two windows. The belfry is crowned with an octagonal fanchat.

An important element of the water supply is the main building outside the fence and the collection basin, which is marked by a small church.

photo

The monastery is surrounded by a wall made of roughly broken stone. Most of it is probably contemporaneous with the foundation of the monastery. It is known that the wall was repaired in the 19th century. With documentary sources and visual observation, it is possible to distinguish the layers of restoration and repair, although detailed stratigraphic study and documentation were not carried out.

photo

It is known from the sources that the historical road leading up to the monastery was directed towards the southern gate, which was the main entrance of the ensemble since its establishment, it is proven by the historical tomb of Davit Aghmashenebeli, that the gate has been rebuilt and renovated several times over the centuries. The building is a rectangular corridor opened by arches from the south and north, in the center of which is the tomb of Davit Aghmashenebeli. On the second floor, there is a small storage room, and to the south and north, there are buildings of the late period. From the 16th century, the southern gate was abolished and turned into a chapel, and the function of the main entrance was assigned to a small gate built in the eastern part of the wall.

On the fragment of the painting preserved on the arch, a heavily damaged symbolic image of the "Ise tree" is presented. It seems that this painting is also related to the era of the reconstruction of the gate. Its representation here is undoubtedly a symbol of the Bagrationis' sacral genealogy.

In the vicinity of the monastery complex, the existence of its contemporaneous Sokhasteri, which was originally built as a refuge for the fallen, makes it probable that the exit in the eastern part of the wall was there from the time of the establishment of the monastery. The gate built in this part in the 16th century³⁵ The function of the main entrance of the monastery was acquired, although the reason for this planning change is not known.

After the foundation of the monastery, the most important stage of its development is the 13th century. During this period St. George and St. Nicholas churches and the bell tower, as well as various agricultural buildings were built, which were revealed by archaeological excavations.

St. Giorgi's "Queen's" church was built to the east of the main cathedral, as a smaller copy of it, but with a higher proportion, which brings it closer to Georgian architecture of the 13th century. Unlike the main temple, there is no patron saint here. The dome rests on the walls of the apse and two circular columns. The narthex built to the west of the temple opens to the outside as a triple arch. The facades are more richly decorated than the main temple.

St. Nicholas Church to the west of the main cathedral appears as a "connecting" space between the Academy building and the main temple, but at the same time, it brings artistic asymmetry into the overall ensemble. The church has two floors, which is very rare in Georgian church architecture. All four sides of its lower floor are opened with arches. The upper floor is a small cross-plan domed space with a pointed pentagonal apse of the altar, which is decorated with a decorative vault. The windows are framed by fancy profiled ornaments.

In the late Middle Ages, the difficult political and economic situation of the country was also reflected in the development of the monastery. Important new buildings were no longer built here, a large part of educational, residential and economic buildings were remodeled and the function changed many times. According to the reports of the Russian ambassadors Yevlev and Tolchanov in the 17th century, there were eleven or thirteen chambers inside the wall. At the end of the 18th century, Guldenstedt mentions only three residential buildings. The three remaining residential buildings date from the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, although they were built on much earlier layers. One of the buildings of this period is the house of Bishop Gabriel Kikodze, built at the end of the 19th century according to the project of the architect Vercinski. Its rehabilitation was carried out in 2015 according to the conservation plan of the Gelati monastery complex. The other two residential buildings were heavily damaged by the fire that broke out on October 10 and January 16, 2022. On November 9, 2014, as a result of a fire, the 18th-century Oda House, which was brought to the monastery yard for presentation, was also destroyed (see [photos](#)).

3.4. Cultural and natural components of the landscape

Gelati Monastery and its buffer zone is an organically developed cultural landscape³⁶, where there are abundant architectural and archaeological remains of different periods.

A joint analysis of archaeological remains and historical sources explored throughout the buffer zone of the monastery gives a certain idea about the development of the area. Palaeolithic burial caves in Motsameta Canyon prove the human use of this area since ancient times. Field observations show

³⁵R. Mepisashvili, Architectural ensemble Gelati, Tbilisi, 1966; R. Mepisashvili, T. Virsaladze, Gelati. Architecture, mosaics, frescoes, Tbilisi, 1982.

³⁶UNESCO (2023) Action Guide for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

that from the 1st millennium BC, the Gelati area was almost completely exploited. The remains of settlements can be found in the foothills and northern slopes of the Dokhora-Sakholavi massif. (see the map of the monuments of this period).

The field study of the buffer zone revealed a number of cultural heritage objects for secular or religious purposes. As part of the update of the management plan, information was updated on about one hundred objects (see annexe 3.1 Report of the Buffer Zone Cultural Heritage Inventory), including 24 churches/parishes/monasteries of Gelati and Motsameta; 9 bridges/ruins of bridges; 10 defensive towers/ruins; Remains of agricultural and residential buildings, roads, settlements.

Among them, the contemporary Sokhasteri complex adjacent to the Gelati Monastery is particularly noteworthy. According to the sources, it was founded together with the Gelati monastery as a refuge for the fallen, the so-called Xenon, although from the 16th century, it acquired the function of a monastery. Its existence in its own way testifies to the scale of Davit Agmashenebeli's idea. Sokhasteri has two fenced yards. To the west of the large yard is a 12th-century hall-type church built with well-hewn stone. To the east of the church stands a three-story residential tower. Fragments of paintings are also preserved in the complex. Today, Sokhasteri is separated from Gelati Monastery by a road, which prevents the perception and understanding of these two complexes as a single system.

The dating of the small chapels on Dokhora Mountain indicates that already at the time of the establishment of the Gelati Monastery, the monks were using the surrounding area as well. In the XII-XIII centuries, on the forested slopes of Mount Dokhora, St. Saba and St. Elijah churches were built (see photos). The hall-type church of St. Saba is paved with large, well-hewn stones. Three plain crosses are carved on the border of the east and south windows and the west door; St. Elias church has also added buildings to the north and west of the hall church. The regular arrangement of cleanly hewn blocks and the decoration of the west door must be the result of a 19th-century renovation. The walls of the church were painted in the 16th century in the late Middle Ages in the style of the folk stream.

To the southwest of the monastery, on a rocky cape, there are ruins of a 12th-century castle, the construction of which is attributed to Davit Agmashenebeli. This is the only more or less preserved sample of defence architecture in the immediate vicinity of Gelati and in the entire buffer zone (see photo).

The Motsameta Monastery Complex is a monument of national importance in the buffer zone. It is erected on a high and narrow rocky promontory in the Tskaltsitela valley, near the village of Motsameta. It is known that in the early Middle Ages, there was a fortress and the Church of the Annunciation, which was destroyed during the Arab invasions. Princes of Argveti, David and Constantine, who were martyred during this invasion, were buried in the crypt of the ruined church. King Bagrat IV (1027-1072) built a monastery in this place and buried the saints in the church. The name of the monastery is also related to this fact. The main church of the monastery got its present appearance in the 1840-60s. The church is an inscribed cross-type building. The church is distinguished by the location of the altar, which faces north. Since the 18th century, every October 15, the day of commemoration of the saints (Ortsipoba) has been celebrated in the monastery.

Gelati village is bordered by another historical village - Kursebi. Several historical monuments of different periods have been preserved here, of which Zenobani's Church of the Savior stands out from the artistic-architectural point of view. The hall-type building was built at the turn of the X-XI centuries. The facades are covered with hewn squares. The construction inscription carved on the border of the southern door is almost impossible to read. On the longitudinal facades, there are high-

relief images of a lion, an eagle, a bull and a ram under the shelf cornice. The painting of the church dates back to the first half of the 13th century. Depicting religious holidays (it also contains the images of St. Eustathius and St. George), the painting of the folk stream with its stylistic features and selection of iconographic themes shows a great similarity with the south-west painting of the Church of St. George in Gelati, which demonstrates the existence of a single artistic tradition originating from Gelati at that time.³⁷

Among the monuments surrounding the buffer zone, it is worth noting the 10th-11th century monument of Tsutsukhati (saddle) St. George Hall Church (restored in 2020)³⁸. Local tradition considers the Tsukvati church to be the burial place of the babies of the royal Bagrationi family. The unusual iconography of the skull preserved in the church - St. Giorgi - may be related to this context³⁹.

In the buffer zone, there are nine more or less preserved bridges of different designs over Tskaltsitela, its tributary Korena River and Sakire Gorge. However, the analysis of historical paths makes us think, that some of them had a bridge in the 12th century (see map of historical roads).

In the buffer zone of the Gelati Monastery, several historical roads from the Middle Ages have been preserved to this day. The highway from Kutaisi to Gelati repeats the outline of the old road. In the village of Gelati itself, a footpath leading from the south has also been preserved. This road known as "Davit's Road" is narrowed several times. The most important of them is the eastern branch, which goes to the village of Godogani and joins the "Kartli Shara" (Nergeeti) passing through it. This historical road, the authentic parts of which have survived to this day, connected Eastern and Western Georgia for centuries⁴⁰. The southern branch of the road from Gelati leads to Motsameta. Today it is one of the tourist routes of the area.

Gelati Monastery, built against the background of Dokhora Mountain, is the architectural dominant of the landscape. The silhouette of the monastery is clearly visible from a distance against the background of the forested slope (see photo). Protection of this unique silhouette is one of the prerequisites for preserving the special public value of the monument and is an important task of territory management.

The landscape of the Gelati Monastery with the forested slopes of Dokhora Mountain, the villages spread out in the valley and the cultural heritage of different periods and typologies scattered in the surroundings is the most important historical environment for understanding the special public value of the monument, which in itself has a high historical and cultural value. There is an urgent need to create appropriate spatial regulations for the protection and sustainable development of this environment.

Illustration- Inventory map with cultural heritage objects)

³⁷M. Didebulidze, Painting of the Church of the Savior in Zenobani, Bulletin of the Academy of Sciences, 1990, 1, p. 160-175; M. Bullia, M. Janjalia, Kutaisi, Old Towns of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2006, p. 150.

³⁸https://www.heritagesites.ge/ka/news_item/506

³⁹ E. Gedevanishvili, Reflection of biblical models in the iconography of St. George (on the examples of Urtkhvi Kankeli (11th century) and Tsutsvati relief (10th-11th century)), report read at the international conference "Bible in Words and Faces", Tbilisi, May 27-29, 2022, abstracts, p. 18-19.

⁴⁰ memkvidreoba.gov.ge/Home/Immovable/8422

3.4.1 Natural components of the landscape

The main natural components of the landscape of the Gelati Monastery are the Tskaltsitela River and its surrounding forested slopes and rocky plateaus. The natural conditions of the area (relief, moderately humid and warm climate) led to the formation of a broad-leaved Colchic forest, which covered the largest part of the area in the early Middle Ages. As a result of centuries of human use, the place of natural forest has been mostly occupied by agricultural lands, secondary bushland, pastures and settlements. Today, the natural forest is mostly preserved on Dokhora Mountain and its surrounding slopes. Detailed information on the natural components of the area is included in the updated version of the management plan in 2017.

DRAFT

3.5. History and current status of conservation

The history of conservation-restoration in the modern sense of the Gelati Monastery spans almost a century. The monastery buildings were measured by Rusudan Mepisashvili and Vakhtang Tsintsadze in 1952-1954.⁴¹ In 1953, the frescoes of the narthex of the Cathedral of the Mother of God were cleaned and strengthened (artist-restorer Shalva Abramishvili). One fragment of the painting, which was on the verge of falling, was transferred to the Kutaisi Historical-Ethnographic Museum.⁴² In the same year Sh. Abramishvili cleaned and carried out emergency measures on the murals of the South-Eastern Gate, South Gate and North-East Gate.⁴³ In the 1970s, the tin roof and windows were renewed on the main temple, and drainage was arranged.⁴⁴ In 1979-1981, conservation work was carried out on the paintings of all four windows of the Northern Building. The plaster was restored, the painted layer was cleaned and hardened, and plaster chemicals and fillings were made. The early (XIII century) layer of Southwest painting was opened. The work was carried out by a group of artist-restorers led by Amiran Goglidze⁴⁵. In 1984-1989, the mosaic of the central space of the Cathedral of the Mother of God was strengthened and painting conservation works were carried out (artist-restorer Karlo Bakuradze).⁴⁶ In 1985-1990, the frescoes of the southeast corner and the southern gate were strengthened, and the plastering of the paintings and fillings were made. The work was carried out by a group of restorers led by Vladimir Gurgunadze.

Among the works carried out after the Soviet period, the general conservation plan developed in 2008 (approved in 2009, updated in 2015) deserves special mention, which was the basis for the long-term conservation-restoration and development process of the monastery.

According to the general conservation plan, during the last decade, the following was performed:

- St. Nicholas Church conservation and restoration;
- conservation and restoration of the Academy building and restoration of its roof;
- conservation and restoration of the bell tower;
- Conservation and restoration of the house of High Priest Gabriel Kikodze;
- cleaning, conservation and restoration of the South Gate;
- restoration of the eastern gate;
- Conservation of wall painting of St. George's Church;
- conservation of wall painting of the dome of the main temple;
- arrangement of the dome roof of the main temple;

⁴¹The documentation describing the works is published in the book: R. Mepisashvili, *Architectural Ensemble Gelati*, Tbilisi, 1966.

⁴²T. Virsaladze, *Fragments of ancient fresco paintings of the main Gelati temple*, *Ars Georgiaca*, V, Tb., 1959, p. 165. 4.

⁴³Archives of the Department of Monuments Protection of Georgia, photographs # 13113-13132/493; # 14382-14411/509.

⁴⁴Archives of the Department of Monuments Protection of Georgia, photographs n# 40578-40588/754; # 39459-39477/746.

⁴⁵The relevant documentation was not prepared. The murals of all four compartments of the northern glass building were photographed before restoration in 1979 (Archives of the Department of Monuments Protection of Georgia, # 45377-45605/788).

⁴⁶L. Khuskivadze, *Gelati mosaic*, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 9-13. Digitalized report of the works is accessible on the website of the Temporary Committee

<https://gelatirehabilitation.ge/uploads/documents/docs/%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%96%E1%83%90%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%90-%E1%83%AB%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A9%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98.pdf>

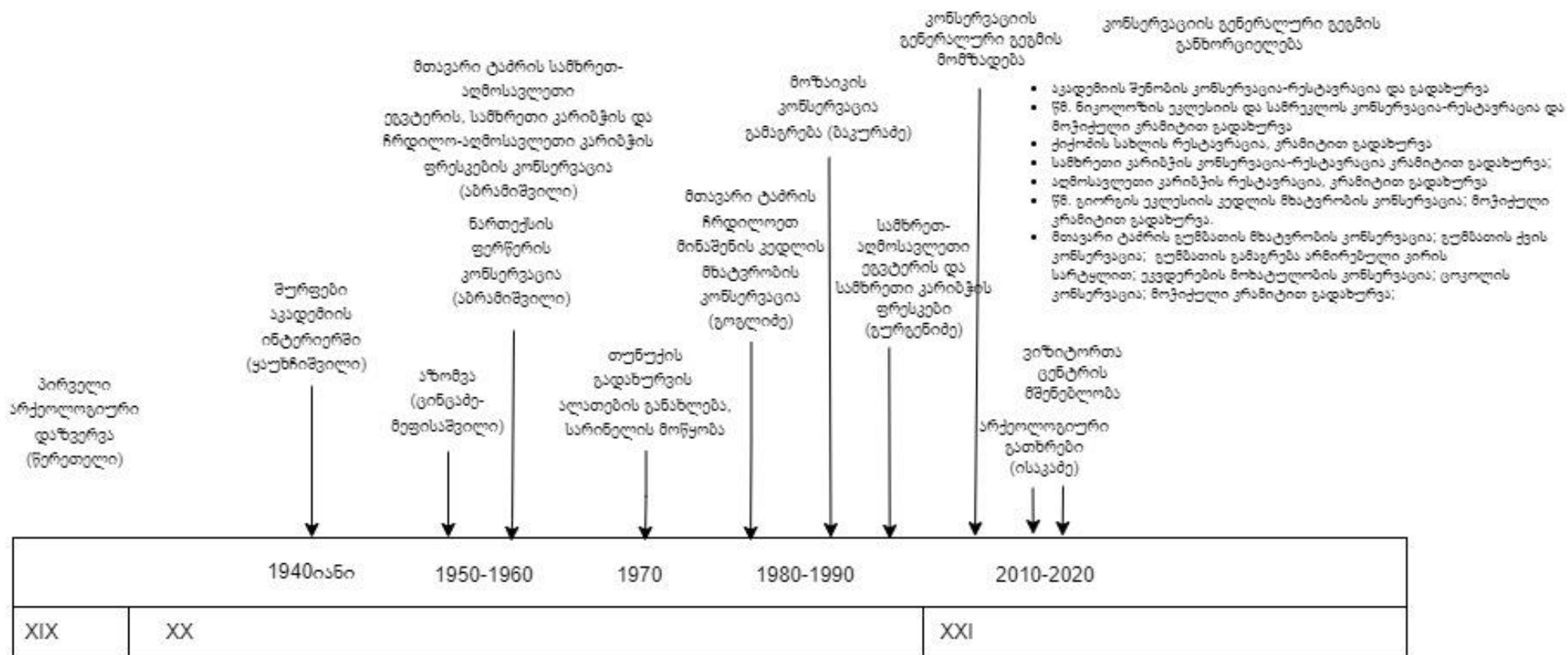
- Arrangement of the roof of the dome of St. George's Cathedral;
- stone conservation of the dome of the main temple;
- Reinforcement of the dome of the main temple with reinforced lime belt.
- cleaning and conservation of the main temple altars;
- Plinth conservation of the main temple;
- Arrangement of the roof of the main temple;
- urgent conservation of the main temple and the painting;
- arrangement of the roof of the lower building of the main temple;
- Arrangement of the roof of the lower building of St. George's Cathedral.
- rehabilitation of the historical drainage system identified in the territory of the complex;
- rehabilitation of the so-called oil-refinery;
- Rehabilitation of the access road and retaining wall of Gelati Monastery;
- construction of Gelati visitor centre;
- Rehabilitation of the tunnel leading from David Spring in front of the Gelati Visitor Center.

Shortly after the conservation and restoration work was completed in 2019, water infiltrated into the interior from the new glazed tiled roofs of the Main Cathedral and St. George's Cathedral, damaging the medieval wall paintings. In 2016-2019, the reason for the infiltration was the wrong method of arranging roofs with tiles and the low quality of the material. In 2020-2021, both temples were covered with temporary tin roofs. Starting in 2020, a gradual monitoring of the condition of the wall painting began, in order to stabilize the condition of the painting in the main temple, emergency works were carried out, but the problems could not be eliminated.⁴⁷ At the end of 2022, the roof was lifted over the western arm and the space under it was cleared of filling mass. Currently, a temporary tin roof is installed here on wooden slats. Temporary tin roofs were not found to be sufficient to protect the monuments from water infiltration. In February 2024, during strong winds and rains, water once again entered the interior of the main temple.

From 2023, the architectural and constructional research, monitoring and analysis of wall painting and mosaic, architectural and structural research, monitoring and analysis are being carried out by the teams of leading international and Georgian specialists.

Current conservation reports are published regularly on the project website www.gelatirehabilitation.ge. The website was created at the initiative of the Gelati Temporary Committee to ensure the availability of information related to the rehabilitation process and the involvement of the general public. In addition to the current news, there are also collected here documentation showing the research and conservation works carried out on the buildings of the Gelati Monastery since 2007, archival photos, decisions of the World Heritage Committee and mission reports.

⁴⁷For detailed information on conservation status and interventions undertaken, see: <https://gelatirehabilitation.ge/ka/painting>



3.5.1. Archaeological studies

Despite its great historical importance, the systematic archeological study of the territory of the Gelati Monastery was not carried out either during the Soviet period or after. Archaeological explorations and excavations were mostly carried out in conjunction with conservation works and not as an independent research process. The first archaeological researches were carried out by Giorgi Tsereteli and Simon Kaukhchishvili at the end of the 19th century and in the 40s of the 20th century.

In 2007-2019, in parallel with the development of the conservation master plan and the subsequent conservation-restoration processes, the archaeological study in the territory of the monastery took a relatively regular form. Researches were carried out under the leadership of the Kutaisi Historical-Archaeological Museum-Reserve. During these works, important material for the conservation of the monastery buildings and for a better understanding of their history was identified.⁴⁸

In 2007-2008, archaeologically sensitive sections were identified based on the data of 15 archaeological and 32 geological excavations.⁴⁹ (see 2008 plan). The obtained data confirmed the opinion expressed earlier based on written sources about the existence of early medieval buildings in Gelati. It was the glazed tiles of different colours found as a result of the excavation that formed the basis of the idea of roofing the monastery buildings with tiles, which ended with the roofing of the main temple in 2016-2019.

Excavations in the interior of the Academy revealed the original stone desks and a wine cellar with archaeological layers dating back to the 12th-15th centuries. In 2009, a long vaulted corridor of the 13th-14th centuries was discovered in the north of the Academy, with rooms of different sizes and periods on both sides, from the 13th century to the beginning of the 20th century. (see plan).

The discovered remains were preserved and covered. However, today the roof has been removed. The conservation of archaeological remains needs an urgent solution.

In 2010, three archaeological layers were discovered near the southern gate of the monastery. 12th-century steps leading south from David's tomb to a paved road have been excavated. A grave from the beginning of the 12th century was discovered near the last step⁵⁰ (see photo).

In 2018, under archaeological supervision, the drainage system of the 13th-14th century monastery was discovered, opened and cleaned. As the works showed, drains were installed in the entire territory of the monastery.⁵¹

In 2019, archaeological works continued north of St. George's Church. Archaeological layers from Late Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages were revealed, including the 2nd-3rd century underground tomb, and the 8th-9th century building, which was significantly remodelled in the 12th-13th centuries. In this period, its use for agricultural purposes is indicated by the remains of a cellar, a cellar and a refrigerator. Also appeared the 13th-century drainage channel, which was abolished in 1510; An open

⁴⁸O. Lanchava, R. Isakadze, Archaeological studies in Gelati and Mozameta, *Ancient Art DayS*, 1, 2010, p. 14-20;

⁴⁹O. Lanchava, R. Isakadze, Archaeological researches in Bagrati Cathedral, Gelati and Mozameta in 2008-2009, *Searches in the archeology of Georgia*, 20, 2011, p. 153-160.

⁵⁰O. Lanchava, R. Isakadze, Gelati, David Agmashenebeli's gate (archaeological research results), *Ancient Art Today*, 2, 2011, p. 20-24.

⁵¹O. Lanchava, R. Isakadze, Sh. Buadze, N. Silagadze, Report of the archaeological research conducted in the vicinity of St. George in 2019, Gelati, Kutaisi, 2019, p. 1-2; gelatirehabilitation.ge/uploads/documents/docs/2019.pdf

cellar and a wooden structure were excavated after the burning of the monastery in 1510 (see plan). The above information has not been interpreted and presented to the visitors in any way yet⁵².

The supervision and maintenance of the architectural remains revealed as a result of archaeological excavations in the Gelati Monastery is carried out by the Kutaisi Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve of the National Agency of Cultural Heritage. Cleaning of the area and general maintenance are managed by the community of the monastery. Due to the lack of relevant knowledge and skills, as well as administration-financing difficulties, the state of archaeological remains is very unfavourable today.

⁵² Ibid., p. 3-18.

3.6. Impact factors

3.6.1. natural environmental conditions

As the observation of the last decades confirms, the main threat to the physical condition of the ensemble's architectural components, mosaics and wall paintings is high humidity and dampness. The ingress of water from the roof during wind and rain, as well as rising damp, is still an unsolved problem, which causes irreversible damage to the most important attributes of the monument.

Georgia is a region of medium seismicity. According to historical records and data measured by instruments, an earthquake of magnitude 7 and a macro seismic effect of up to 9 points are possible in such a region. A joint advisory mission of ICOMOS and the World Bank (January 21-25, 2015) recommended that the State party "conduct a historical analysis of seismic activities in the microzone of the monument region, which should include a systematic identification of the characteristics of these activities (magnitude, intensity, epicentre and frequency) and the corresponding results." ". With these recommendations in mind, an electronic surveillance device was installed on the dome of the main temple to monitor seismic activity.

Another important impact factor for monastery buildings is strong wind. For example, in February 2024, the meteorological station located on the territory of the monastery recorded a strong wind of 30 m/s. The storm was accompanied by heavy rain, which caused precipitation to enter the interior of the temples.

3.6.2. POTENTIAL VISITOR IMPACTS

Gelati Monastery is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Georgia, although there are no special regulations. There are no official statistical data on the number of visitors. The current or potential impact of uncontrolled tourist traffic on the monument is unknown, although there were many acts of vandalism during the Soviet period in the form of commemorative scratches and inscriptions. Visitor supervision, security and cleanliness are currently not properly organized.

3.6.3. Fire

Based on the events of recent years, it can be said that fire is the most serious artificial threat to the monastery. Between 2014 and 2022, three historical buildings housing the monks were burnt on the territory of the monastery. Archimandrite Ioseb Burjanadze himself died in the last fire. The arrangement of monastic infrastructure and the introduction of a fire safety system is an urgent need.

Photos

3.6.4 Inappropriate new constructions

The registration of lands in the vicinity of Gelati Monastery and Sokhasteri in private ownership leads to the potential possibility of construction development on these plots. The development of the Dokhora slope directly threatens the harmonious perception of the monument against the background of the natural landscape and, therefore, is considered to be an infringement of the universal value (characteristic 4).

Protection of the mentioned area from development should be one of the tasks of city-building plans. Until the development of plans, it is possible to establish a temporary regulation regime, however, as the practice of other World Heritage Properties in Georgia shows, a temporary solution can lead to an indefinite postponement of the solution of the issue.

Although the monastic and religious function is one of the characteristics of the special public value of the Gelati Monastery, the inappropriate development of the monastic infrastructure may also threaten the public value of the monument, if it is not planned and processed in a unified, harmonious way. The 2008 conservation plan and its updated version included the possibility of improving and expanding the monastery. At present, this issue is partially balanced, because monks and followers also use the newly built residential and agricultural complex on Mount Dokhora near the Gelati Monastery. However, provision of monastic infrastructure in the territory of the monastery still remains a major challenge. The revival and development of the monastic function should be carried out by protecting the special public value of the monument and in harmony with its characteristics.

3.7. Socio-economic characteristics of the buffer zone

3.7.1. Population and social infrastructure

Gelati Monastery and the largest part of its buffer zone is part of Tkibuli municipality (see Section 4). 16,848 inhabitants live in the municipality as a whole (2023).⁵³ The regional community of Kursebi with 1603 inhabitants (820 families, according to the information provided by the representative of the community) is the administrative center of the community and, in addition to the village of Kursebi, it also includes Gelati (408 people) and Motsameta (187 people) (2014).⁵⁴ The community is served by two public schools in Kursebi and Gelati. According to the data of 2023, 150 students study in the school of Kursebi, and 140 in the school of Gelati. Of the primary educational institutions, two kindergartens operate, which is very important for the promotion of women's employment. Primary health care infrastructure in the form of two outpatient clinics is also available in the community. The local population receives more complex healthcare services in Tkibuli and Kutaisi.

General population censuses conducted in 2002, 2014 and 2023 show a sharp demographic decline in Tkibuli Municipality. According to the representatives of the Kursebi community, an important factor in the demographic decline is the outflow of young people. Vocational colleges in Zestafon and Kutaisi, in addition to crafts (construction work, stonework, electrical, plumbing, etc.) also train personnel in the field of service and hospitality, among them there is a course for tourist guides, which cooperates with the National Tourism Administration and the Imereti Destination Management Organization (DMO). Young people can get higher education in Kutaisi, Batumi and Tbilisi.

The existing educational and professional infrastructure has the potential to create a critically important human resource for the implementation of various programs in the Gelati World Heritage Property and its buffer zone or to participate in the management of the site. The alignment of educational programs with the conservation or other priorities of the cultural heritage and the Gelati World Heritage Property will help the employment of young people on the spot.

3.7.2. Property

Based on the constitutional agreement signed between the State of Georgia and the Apostolic Orthodox Church in 2002, Gelati Monastery is owned by the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia (cadastral code: 39.07.31.362). The territory of the monastery was registered as an agricultural plot in 2023. According to the cadastral map, the monastery is surrounded by farmland owned by the villagers- agricultural plots with residential houses and one non-agricultural plot (see map).

The agricultural plot of land with a residential house inside the fence of the Gelati Monastery is privately owned (registration number: 39.07.31.121). The Jangavadze family has been living here since the Soviet period. The family performed the duty of the guardian of the monument, which led to the registration of the right of private ownership on the property located inside the historical walls of the

⁵³National Statistical Service of Georgia, population of cities and towns as of January (2023)

1, <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/41/mosakhleoba>.

⁵⁴<https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/737/mosakhleobis-2014-tslis-saqoveltao-aghtseris-shedegebi>

monastery in 2016 with the consent and support of the monastery. The courtyard of the Jangavadzes is separated from the rest of the territory of the monastery by a stone wall, which includes the remains of the 9th-century church revealed as a result of archaeological research⁵⁵.

The state owns the plots of land adjacent to the eastern gate of the monastery (registration numbers: 39.07.30.248; 39.07.31.007; 39.07.31.057), on which a parking lot, visitor center and souvenir sales counters are located. The forests surrounding the monastery and the river Tskaltsitela, which crosses the buffer zone, are owned by the state.

The cemetery located in the southeast of the monastery, whose territory is almost completely used, is not registered. Allocation of a new territory for the village cemetery by the municipality remains an issue to be resolved.

In terms of land ownership, uncontrolled registration of agricultural or non-agricultural lands by the population is especially dangerous. For example, the surrounding area of Sokhasteri is privately owned, there is already one inappropriately designed residential building, which visually cuts into the perception area of Gelati. Registration of new plots of land in Tskaltsitela Valley or Sormoni Ridge as private property is also taking place intensively. Instead of traditional architecture, triangular prefabricated cottages, which are much cheaper, are being built.

In the absence of specific town planning restrictions and design guidelines, land registration is considered a prerequisite for potential non-conforming construction. The conflict between landowners and the interests in protecting the historical landscape of the monument is resolved by the authority of the World Heritage Center today.⁵⁶, although this does not allow a long-term solution to the problem.

3.7.3. Employment and major economic sectors

Targeted socio-economic and demographic research was not carried out in the buffer zone, therefore, the present data is based on the estimates provided in the previous management plan (2017), field observations carried out within the framework of the management plan update, and the local population survey (2023-2024).

⁵⁵The date is indicated by the historian G. According to Gagoshidze's opinion.

⁵⁶The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection sends construction projects to the World Heritage Center for evaluation. In addition to making the review process much longer, it also makes evaluation more difficult.

Most of the inhabitants of the villages of Gelati, Motsameta and Kursebi, located in the buffer zone of the Gelati monastery, are more or less engaged in agriculture for family needs - including those families whose main income is employment in the public sector and private companies. Agricultural activity is not the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population. Only a small part of the population produces agricultural products for the market. A certain part of the population is employed in Kutaisi.

Some families in Gelati and neighbouring villages are engaged in the production of agate handicrafts, some of which are also sold at the famous souvenir counters at the entrance of the Gelati Monastery.

One of the important economic sectors in the buffer zone is stone mining and processing. According to local estimates, about 60% of the population is employed in this sector. In the 20th century, the mining industry was widespread, but now only two stone quarries and a few stone processing workshops are in operation. There are three such workshops directly in the village of Gelati (between the Tskaltsitela River and the railway station).

Cultural, eco and agro-tourism is an economic direction of growing importance in the region. The economic importance of tourism is also confirmed by the local population. Four family hotels operate in Gelati ("Korena", "Vila Gelati", "Agate" and "Chatto Gelati"). Individual families also rent rooms of different prices and quality. "Korena" offers its guests eco and agro tours and traditional Imeretian cooking master classes.

According to the local population, the lack of a systematic sewage system and limited water supply remains a hindering factor for the hospitality business. The sewerage system and treatment tank, which was built for the visitor center in 2014-2017, do not serve the needs of the village. According to the local population, metering of the water supply system would greatly contribute to the sustainable consumption of limited water resources in Gelati. In recent years, positive steps have been taken in the improvement of villages: concrete pavements were arranged on rural roads, and cable internet was introduced in villages.

3.7.4. Transportation and accessibility

Intercity public transport in the buffer zone is represented by private minibuses. According to the local population, Kutaisi-Tkibuli connecting minibuses go to Gelati and Kursebi four times a day, and Kutaisi-Gelati route - five times a day. The Kutaisi-Tkibuli railway line is no longer operational. The railway infrastructure and the Gelati station need to be updated, but the plans of the Georgian Railways LLC are not known.

The lack of public transport leads to an excess of private transport, which burdens the parking lot and access road near the monument during the tourist season and holidays. The limited area of the parking lot makes manoeuvring difficult (See photo), which disrupts traffic. The improvement of tourist transport traffic remains on the agenda for the functioning of the World Heritage Property and Monastery.

Section 4

Legal protection and management

DRAFT

4.1. Legal protection status of Gelati monastery complex

Gelati Monastery was granted the status of a national monument back in the Soviet period. The status was updated in accordance with the new legislation in 2006 (Order of the minister of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports of Georgia on granting the status of an immovable monument (3/133 30.03.2006) and the Decree of the President of Georgia on granting the category of national importance (No. 665 7.11.2006)). In 1994, the Gelati Monastery together with the Bagrati Cathedral was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (18 COM XI).

In 2010, Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery were added to the list of World Heritage in Danger by the World Heritage Committee in response to the large-scale reconstruction work carried out on Bagrati Cathedral. In 2017, according to the committee's decision, the state prepared a "significant change of the boundaries of the monument", on the basis of which the Bagrati Cathedral was excluded from the boundaries of the World Heritage Property, while the Gelati Monastery remained on the World Heritage List as an independent object (41 COM 8B.31 and 41 COM 7A.20)..

In accordance with the decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2013, by the order #03/5 of the Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia dated January 9, 2014, an extended visual protection area was defined for the Gelati Monastery, which was accepted by the World Heritage Committee in 2017 as a buffer zone of the World Heritage Property.

In the same period, the project of the management plan of the Gelati Monastery World Heritage Site was developed and submitted to the World Heritage Center. In the 2017 decision of the Committee (41 COM 8B.31 and 41 COM 7A.20) in the recommendations related to the management of the monument, it is worth noting the reference to the official approval of the structure of the management of the monument; The creation of the monument management coordination committee and the granting of such legal status to the management plan, by means of which it will be taken into account in the planning process. The urgent need to register the respective plots of land is also mentioned. Despite these guidelines, the management plan has not been given legal status, although some changes (see Chapter 4.2) have been made for greater stakeholder involvement and coordination in the decision-making process.

4.2. Monument management institutions

The religious life and use of the monastery is led by the community of the Gelati monastery, which is included in the diocese of Kutaisi-Gaenati and is subordinate to the relevant metropolitan. The monastery is responsible for the maintenance and security of the territory within the boundaries of the monastery.

The management of the monastery complex as a monument of cultural heritage is carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia and its subordinate structures - the Agency for the Protection of Cultural Cultural Heritage and the Kutaisi Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve.

According to the legislation of Georgia, the Ministry is the main body for the implementation and coordination of the general strategy and policy for the protection of cultural heritage. The Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia, which is subordinate to it, ensures the protection of the

authenticity and integrity of the monument, the preservation of its special public value and the conservation of physical components. It is the authority issuing permission for research and rehabilitation works on the monument and in order to preserve the integrity of the monument's environment, the agency also participates in the process of making decisions about development projects by the self-government within the buffer zone and acts in accordance with the law in case of illegal or inappropriate intervention (criminal actions, criminal proceedings). The agency ensures the submission of reports to the World Heritage Center about the planned and implemented actions of the monument and its buffer area in the prescribed manner.

The Kutaisi Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve is a structural subdivision of the Agency. Due to scarce human and financial resources and administrative difficulties, its function in relation to Gelati Monastery is mainly limited to general monitoring of the physical condition of the monument, archaeological supervision and consultations in the permit process; The museum-reserve is also envisioned as a visitor management structure for Gelati, which should guide the operation of the new visitor center. However, despite the fact that the construction and improvement of the visitor center building has been completed, concrete steps have not been taken by the museum reserve and the agency for its implementation.

Since 2017, the geo-information system of cultural heritage data management and the GIS portal created by the agency is a platform for the systematization of documentation, accessibility to the public and effective sharing of information between agencies (<https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge/>). The main information, archival and updated graphic and photo documentation provided by the law about the monument of world mortality of the Gelati Monastery are included in the system.

In accordance with the legislation on cultural heritage, in order to make a decision on the construction of works on the monument by the owner of the monument, since 2002, the Methodological Council has been functioning in the Patriarchate of Georgia - "Council of Architecture, Art and Restoration", which includes clergy, persons, and specialists in the field. Grounds for the state (National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia) to issue a permit for works on a religious monument. The two councils acting independently of each other in the state and the patriarchate, often with radically different decisions, could not respond to the interests of the protection of the monument. Accordingly, it became necessary to harmonize the decision-making process in relation to the monument.

Since 2014, the responsibilities between the state and the church have been clarified by the "Memorandum of Cooperation between the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia and the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia," which defined the main aspects of cooperation and coordination in the protection and preservation of the Orthodox religious heritage. In particular, representatives of the Patriarchate of Georgia were invited to the councils operating in the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia; Joint councils are appointed for especially important issues, which makes the process of making the best decisions for the protection and preservation of the monument more effective.

In 2020, by order of the Director General of the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (N02-15), the Agency's "World Heritage Protection Council of Georgia" was launched, to which representatives of national and local agencies and professional institutions involved in the management of the territory were invited.

Unlike other councils under the Agency, the decision of the World Heritage Council is binding on the Director General of the Agency and the local authorities issuing permits. The creation of a specialized council for World Heritage Properties has strengthened the mechanism for the implementation of mutually agreed decisions by institutions and sectoral specialists.

4.3. Special management circumstances

As a result of the crisis caused by the ineffective rehabilitation and conservation interventions carried out on the Gelati monastery complex in recent years, with the agreement of the Government of Georgia and the Patriarchate of Georgia, the management of the conservation-rehabilitation process of the Gelati World Heritage Property was taken over by the temporary committee created by the Patriarchate.⁵⁷ The main task of the committee is the strict enforcement of the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee and its advisory bodies⁵⁸.

To receive professional advice on rehabilitation and conservation issues, two deliberative bodies were established with the temporary committee - the National Scientific Council and the International Advisory Council, which discuss all the conservation projects to be implemented in the Gelati monastery complex. At the next stage, project proposals are evaluated by the World Heritage Center and its advisory bodies, reviewed by the relevant councils, and permission is issued in accordance with the procedure established by the Georgian legislation.

The National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia maintains the function of issuing permits, monitoring the monument and supervising the conservation processes; The agency also conducts communication with the World Heritage Center through the official channels of the state.

4.4. Protection and management of the buffer zone

4.4.1. Agencies involved in the management of the buffer zone of the Gelati World Heritage Property

The self-government of Tkibuli, Terjola and Tskaltubo municipalities has the leading role in managing the buffer zone of the Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property. The self-government ensures the improvement of territories, the organization of communal services. Their role is very important in terms of issuing construction permits (Article 100 of the Code of Spatial Planning, Architectural and Construction Activities of Georgia), which they conduct in agreement with the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (Resolution No. 255 of May 31, 2019, of the Government of Georgia "On the Rules and Conditions for Issuing Construction Permits and Commissioning of Buildings")

At the national level, the following sectoral agencies are involved in the framework of competencies, which, in addition to the development and management of sectoral policies, also implement specific projects:

⁵⁷ On April 6, 2023, according to the agreement signed between the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia.

⁵⁸ World Heritage Committee Decision 44 COM7B.47 and Report of the 2022 Joint Mission of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM.

Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and its subsidiary organizations:

- LEPL National Administration of Tourism of Georgia (establishment and implementation of the state policy of tourism development).
- LEPL National Agency of State Property (with privatization/realization of state property, transfer of right of use and management of enterprises created with the participation of the state).
- LEPL National Agency of Mineral Resources (issuance of licenses for the use of minerals (except oil and gas)).
- LEPL Agency for Spatial and Urban Development (implementation of spatial planning and urban planning projects).

The Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and its sub-departmental organizations:

- LEPL National Environmental Agency (monitoring of meteorological, hydrological, geological processes and the qualitative state of the environment).
- LEPL National Agency for Sustainable Land Management and Land Use Monitoring (Management of Agricultural Land Resources).
- LEPL Protected Areas Agency (management of the system of national nature conservation areas, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Properties and wetlands of international importance).
- LEPL National Forestry Agency (forest maintenance and sustainable use).

Sub-departmental organization of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia: LEPL National Agency of the Public Registry manages the registration of rights to immovable objects, and the registration of cadastral data.

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia and its subsidiary organizations:

- LEPL Municipal Development Fund (investment in municipal infrastructure and services, urban renewal of cities, arrangement of tourist infrastructure, etc.).
- LEPL Department of Highways of Georgia (construction-rehabilitation of roads of international and state importance).

Imereti regional administration coordinates the implementation of regional policy; develops and/or implements socio-economic development programs and participates in regional development events; Coordinates relations between the Georgian government and state agencies with local self-government bodies.

4.5. Recent legislative changes

The European conventions in the field of culture and the international agreements ratified by the Georgian authorities have not experienced such significant changes since 2017 that would affect the management processes of the Gelati Monastery, a World Heritage Property. At the national level, the Law of Georgia "On Cultural Heritage" remains the main instrument for regulating relations in the field

of cultural heritage. It regulates the granting and removal of monument status, works on the monument, permit procedures, protection zones and other issues.

The structure of cultural heritage protection zones (individual and general monument protection zones), as well as the radii and regimes of individual protection zones defined by law for different categories of monuments, remain unchanged. The World Heritage Buffer Zone of the Gelati Monastery Complex legally represents the Visual Protection Area of the Individual Protection Zone.

General protection zones have not been defined within the buffer zone of the Gelati Monastery World Heritage, although the material obtained during the inventory reveals the need to define such zones. It is recommended to define general protection zones together with or before the development of urban planning documents.

Among the changes implemented in the national legislation from 2017 to the present, the following should be noted:

From January 1, 2018, the obligation to participate in the environmental impact assessment procedure provided for by the Environmental Assessment Code and to submit the relevant conclusion was added to the powers of the Ministry (National Agency) determined by Article 5 of the Law of Georgia "On Cultural Heritage". The implementation of the mentioned rights and duties ensures the detection of direct and indirect impacts on the cultural heritage caused by the construction activities to be carried out in the cultural heritage protection zone.

The legislative amendment of July 15, 2020 allowed citizens on the one hand, and on the other hand obliged them, together with the Ministry and other state bodies for the protection of cultural heritage, as well as municipalities, to immediately provide information on the discovery, detection of cultural heritage or the presence of circumstances threatening cultural heritage; In addition, according to the mentioned change, the minister has the obligation to inform the municipality of the information about the state registration of the identified (discovered) cultural heritage together with the citizens. The purpose of this change is to strengthen the involvement of municipalities with citizens in the ongoing cultural heritage management processes.

According to the decision of the Constitutional Court of Georgia No. 2/6/1216 of July 27, 2018 Paragraph 8 of Article 30 of the Law of Georgia on "Cultural Heritage" was declared unconstitutional, which exempted the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia and other religious denominations from the obligation to maintain the monument. In accordance with the mentioned decision, the responsibility for the maintenance of the monument was assigned to the Patriarchate of Georgia, and since the owner of the Gelati Monastery is the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia, the protection and development of the said monument of world heritage, together with the state, became the responsibility of the Patriarchate of Georgia.

Since 2018, the Law of Georgia "On the Fundamentals of Spatial Arrangement and Urban Development" has been repealed, and the Code of Spatial Planning, Architectural and Construction Activities of Georgia is in force instead. The Code introduced and clarified the term - cultural heritage protection zone, which was used in the previous law out of the general context, according to the Law of Georgia "On Cultural Heritage".

The need to take into account the requirements of cultural heritage protection zones in the spatial planning and general plan of Georgia was clearly highlighted. The conditions for using the land for construction, when it is simultaneously included in the cultural heritage protection zone or is subject to the regime established by another sectoral plan, must comply with the regime defined for this zone and/or the requirements established by the relevant legislation.

According to the Code, in the case of a cultural heritage protection zone and a cultural heritage monument, it is mandatory to unconditionally take into account the requirements of the Georgian Law on Cultural Heritage during the implementation of city-building measures (Part 2 of Article 54). Urban planning documentation in cultural heritage protection zones is approved in agreement with the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection.

It is also news that the administrative body issuing the construction permit is obliged to make a decision on issuing a construction permit or refusing to issue a construction permit within 20 working days. And, in the case of special circumstances, the period of administrative proceedings required for issuing a permit may be extended by no more than 20 working days, and in the case of a cultural heritage protection zone - by no more than 30 working days.

On May 31, 2019, Resolution No. 255 of the Government of Georgia "On the Rules and Conditions for Issuing Construction Permits and Commissioning Buildings" was adopted, where the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection of Georgia, part of the management system of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, was defined as the authorized another administrative body in the event that the administrative procedure for the issuance of the permit is ongoing in the cultural heritage protection zones.

After 2017, the state actively uses the opportunity defined by Article 172 of the Action Guide for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention to receive the opinion of the World Heritage Center on projects and initiatives related to the monument. Projects related to the Gelati monastery ensemble and planned in its buffer zone, after the initial review at the local level, are sent to the World Heritage Center for additional agreement. Permission for works on the monument or construction works in the protective zone is issued only on the basis of a positive conclusion of the centre.

"The World Heritage Committee invites the States Parties to the Convention to inform the Committee, through the Secretariat, of their intention to undertake or to authorize in an area protected under the Convention major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Notice should be given as soon as possible (for instance, before drafting basic documents for specific projects) and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse, so that the Committee may assist in seeking appropriate solutions to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is fully preserved". Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, Art 172.

Section 5

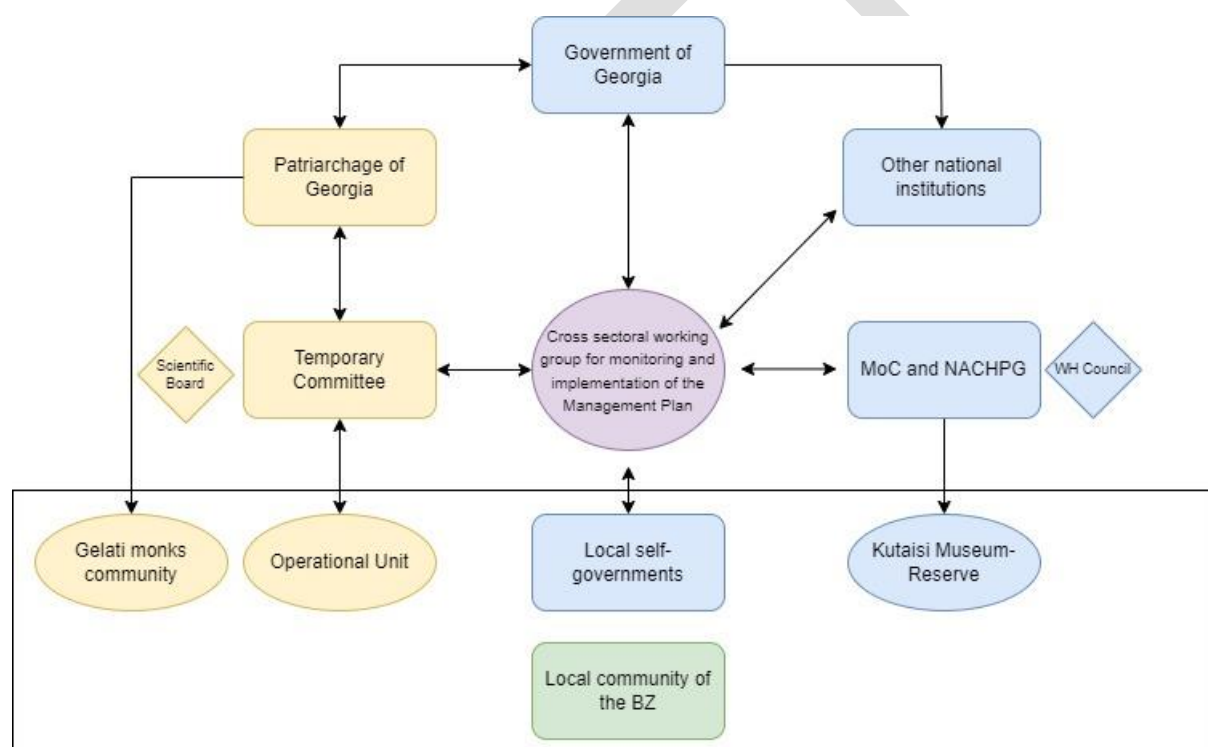
Organizational and operational framework for the 2024-2028 management cycle

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5.1. Organizational framework

According to the present management plan, its implementation in the 2024-2028 management cycle is coordinated by the Government of Georgia through the inter-agency group created for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the management plan. The ad hoc committee is the leading structure for the implementation of the management plan, with its international and national scientific councils and local operational link. Ministry of Culture, with relevant sub-departmental structures and councils, sectoral national agencies and institutions and self-governments participate in the implementation of the management plan within their competence.

An inter-agency working group is expected to meet twice a year to agree on the annual plan and monitor results.



Such a structure is similar in concept to the structure proposed in the predecessor plan, but improves upon it with a higher hierarchical status, bringing coordination to the governmental level, and a more active role of the patriarchate.

5.2. Action Framework

Below is an overview of the specific tasks and actions corresponding to the strategic management objectives and main directions set out in Chapter 2, the implementation of which is urgently important to start in the 2024-2028 management cycle. The text below should be read in conjunction with the table in Annexe 5.1, which presents a wider range of actions.

The starting point for processing the present tasks and actions was the analysis of the action programs contained in the previous management plan, which was reworked in accordance with the issues raised during the meetings with the representatives of self-governments and national agencies, the community and the population of the monastery, and the conservation priorities of the monument.

Direction 1: Institutional provision and development

(Strategic Objectives I, II, III, IV and V)

Action 1.1: Creation of an operational link for monument care and monitoring within the mandate of the temporary committee

As mentioned, the lack of cooperation with the responsible state structures has significantly hindered the discussions in the working format around the development of institutional mechanisms. Accordingly, the specific tasks of institutional development remain within the framework of the agreement reached between the state and the church in 2023 and serve to facilitate the functioning of the temporary committee, which will guide the important processes around the monument.

The ad hoc committee provides planning of conservation processes, consultation with scientific councils, obtaining relevant permits, financial provision of works, monitoring of implementation, coordination with other parties as needed and public relations. The existence of a local operative link for the maintenance and monitoring of the monument under its control would improve the timely detection and resolution of daily issues. The operational ring should provide technical support for research and rehabilitation works, as well as maintenance and cleaning of the area, security protection and regular monitoring of the ensemble components (periodic inspection of the functioning of the equipment, contact with specialists in case of faults, control of data exchange). At the initial stage, such a ring can be staffed with one local cadre, who will oversee the territory of the monument and, in accordance with the mandate of the temporary committee, determine the needs for the purchase of relevant works (protection, cleaning, etc.).

Along with technical support, it is important that the local link assists the Interim Committee in informing and engaging the population of the buffer zone.

Action 1.2: Establishing an inter-agency working group for the management plan

The lack of legal status and lack of inter-agency efforts are considered to be the most important shortcomings of the previous management plan. The prerequisite for the implementation of the tasks set by the given management plan is the assumption of responsibility by the main parties participating

in the management within the scope of competence. Such responsibility can be determined by the government formally approving the management plan and creating an inter-agency working group to coordinate and monitor its implementation.

Direction 2: Legal regulation and protection

(Strategic Objectives I, II, III, IV and V)

Action 2.1. Adoption of the management plan as an official action document

In order for the management plan to become a mandatory document for all participating parties, it is advisable to approve it with the appropriate legal act of the Government of Georgia.

Action 2.2. Protection of cultural heritage in the buffer zone

The objects of cultural heritage identified as a result of the inventory should be assigned the appropriate status and category in accordance with the established law.

Action 2.3. Spatial planning and town planning regulation of the buffer zone

The agreement of the ongoing construction development projects in the buffer zone is a multi-step and long process, which is made more difficult by the absence of proper spatial planning and urban planning. Self-government representatives of all three municipalities participating in the management of the buffer zone confirmed the necessity of town-building regulation and expressed their willingness to participate in the preparation of documents, if the appropriate state budget is allocated. Since the area of the buffer zone extends over the territory of three municipalities, and, moreover, has special international importance, it is desirable that the National Agency for Spatial Planning and Urban Development lead the preparation of such a plan. The willingness of the agency has been confirmed, however, taking effective steps requires the official support of the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection and the allocation of the appropriate budget from the government. The urban development plan should prioritize the protection of features of special public value, including visual corridors of monument perception and the historic landscape. The technical assignment for the preparation of town planning plans should be agreed upon with the World Heritage Centre.

In the case of postponing the preparation of town planning plans, it is possible to fill the existing vacuum with a spatial decision-making guide, which would make it easier for residents to prepare building projects in harmony with the historical landscape. According to locals, the absence of specific rules and the vagueness of preferences are the most confusing for permit seekers and prolong the permit processes. The construction design guide will create a single agreed framework, which will be prepared jointly by the Spatial Arrangement and Urban Development Agency, Tkibuli, Terjoli and Tskaltubo municipalities, the joint group of specialists of the relevant agencies of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection, agreed with the World Heritage Center and approved by the relevant legal act.

Direction 3: Research and documentation

(Strategic Objectives I, II, III and V)

Action 3.1: Systematization of monument documentation in the relevant database

The main part of the existing documentation of the monument has been digitized and is now collected in the national database of cultural heritage⁵⁹ and in the document repository of the National Agency of Cultural Heritage, as well as on the special website created by the temporary committee⁶⁰. However, since 2023, the ongoing complex research and monitoring work on the monument and the resulting mass of documentation (ensemble architecture, wall painting, archeology) creates a growing and urgent need to determine the way to systematize this documentation. Although the documentation can be stored in the national cultural heritage database, the existing restrictions on access and administration do not allow the ad hoc committee and the groups of specialists hired by it to work directly with the database. In addition, the future need and possibility of interrelationship of moving monuments related to Gelati Monastery, buffer zone monuments and objects, as well as elements of intangible heritage and other information should be considered.

The National Database of cultural heritage can be used for the systematization, storage and use of the mentioned documentation, although such a possibility should be considered under the condition of proper provision of technical and human resources of the database.

Action 3.2: Archaeological survey

The reconnaissance and excavations carried out in the Gelati Monastery in the last decade and the geophysical survey of the area in May 2024 give hope that a systematic archaeological study program of the area will be formed and an annual budget will be allocated for its implementation in the 2024-2028 management cycle. The mentioned process is necessary for planning and designing the vertical planning of the monument territory, drainage systems, presentation spaces and monks' residences. In the first stage, it is necessary to carry out a detailed cartographic fixation of the already carried out archaeological research both in the territory of the monastery and in the buffer zone.

In addition to the territory of the Gelati monastery, systematic archaeological studies are to be carried out to study the monuments of the Dokhora massif and the Tskaltsitela valley and to draw up an archaeological map. This can be done with both LIDAR technology and point surveys, within the framework of a single survey grid.

It is desirable that archaeology students of the Akaki Tsereteli State University of Kutaisi were regularly involved in archaeological excavations, which will help train local staff and raise awareness of the archaeological importance of Gelati.

Action 3.3: Study of the historical landscape of Gelati Monastery

Historical-geographical, landscape, archaeological or other studies on the formation of the historical landscape of Gelati are scarce and fragmented. At the end of 2024, the publication of the ongoing multidisciplinary work - "Desktop Book - Gelati" by the end of 2024 will somewhat fill this vacuum. The work, in the preparation of which more than 25 scientists from different scientific and research institutions of Georgia participate, brings together archaeological, historical, and artistic knowledge about the complex and historical environment. Nevertheless, the process of developing the management plan revealed many unanswered questions and the need for modern multidisciplinary research.

The creation of such a body of knowledge is impossible only by the monument management institution, without the constant involvement of higher education and scientific institutions. From the

⁵⁹ www.memkvireoba.gov.ge

⁶⁰ www.gelatirehabilitation.ge

side of the state (Ministry of Education, Science and Youth) for the years 2024-2028, the multidisciplinary research of the Gelati World Heritage Property should be named as a priority and appropriate instructions should be given to the National Science Foundation and research and educational institutions for the appropriate mobilization of budgets.

Action 3.4: Continuation of the study of the architecture and wall paintings of the Gelati monastic ensemble

From 2023, the process of wall painting, mosaic and structural research must continue until all the buildings of the ensemble are fully explored. The cleaning program should gradually cover the building itself, including the fence, drainage system or water supply system. In the next stage, the research should cover Sokhasteri near Gelati and the small churches on Mount Dokhora. The collected documentation should be systematized in the national heritage database or in a digital repository specially created for the monument.

Direction 4: Conservation and monitoring

(Strategic Objective I)

Action 4.1: Conservation of wall paintings and mosaics

The critical damage to the wall paintings of the main Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, St. George due to water infiltration and damp causes the absolute priority of wall painting and mosaic conservation in the management cycle 2024-2028. Specialists have developed action plans (see annex 5.2 Integrated Conservation Plan) and the state's efforts to implement these plans give hope that in 2024-2028 These challenges will be successfully addressed in the management cycle.

Among the current steps, the arrangement of a complete temporary roofing of the main temple based on the project agreed with the World Heritage Center is particularly noteworthy, which will create an opportunity to identify the causes of water infiltration, and design and implement adequate roofing.

In addition to the main church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, St. The conservation needs of the wall painting of St. George's Church include the ongoing conservation and maintenance work of other components of the ensemble. Regular cleaning-conservation of stone, treatment of biodegradation on walls, conservation of discovered archaeological remains.

Action 4.2: Conservation of architectural components of the ensemble - replacement of roofing, stone conservation.

On the basis of the project agreed with the World Heritage Center, the arrangement of a complete temporary roofing of the main temple creates an opportunity for a detailed architectural and structural study of the main temple and appropriate conservation actions. First of all, this implies the preparation and implementation of such a roofing project for the monument, which will ensure as much as possible the ingress of water into the interior in the future and will be compatible with the historical appearance of the ensemble and its environment. In addition, it will be possible to conduct a detailed study of the state of the facade stone and to plan and implement appropriate conservation works. A program of architectural and structural study and conservation should gradually cover all the main buildings of the ensemble.

Action 4.3. Drainage of surface water from the area

Historical drainage canals in the area were traced during archaeological excavations, which confirms the urgency of the need to transport water. The arrangement of an adequate drainage system in the area is necessary to reduce the rising damp in the main buildings, and to protect both the architectural components and the damage to the wall painting, and the archaeological layers.

Action 4.4: Preparation of a strategic plan for conservation and use (complex monument conservation plan)

The rehabilitation-adaptation of the historical residences of the monks should also be considered in the first-order works on the territory of the monastery. From 2024, a temporary conservation laboratory was located in one of the buildings. However, a long-term solution to the issue of the use of buildings is inappropriate without a unified strategic plan for conservation and use. Before that, it is necessary to take elementary security and order measures (removal of burnt roofs and loose stones and bypassing the fence).

According to the strategic plan of conservation and use, the functional (residential-economic) zoning solution of the territory and the rehabilitation, conservation and adaptation projects of the monks' residential buildings, the academy and other buildings should be adopted. The plan should include a chart of visitor flows, taking into account the perspective of the existing visitor center and the proposed use of the Sokhaster area. The plan should also present a strategic solution for the development of the monastery, taking into account the existing monastic infrastructure on Mount Dokhora.

Action 4.5: Monitoring the state of conservation

Monitoring devices installed in the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and St. George regularly record indoor climate data, changes in cracks and seismic data. The local operational link of the temporary committee should ensure the smooth operation of the monitoring systems, regular technical checks, periodic checks of the condition of the buildings (environmental factors (humidity, temperature) and structure (vibration, cracks, endoscopy, sonar tests) by communicating with the relevant specialists. The results of the monitoring should be summarized in annual reports. The monitoring indicators of the characteristics of special public value given in the management plan are the framework for the evaluation of the mentioned reports (see Chapter 6).

Direction 5: Interpretation and presentation

(Strategic Objectives I and II)

Action 5.1: Develop guidelines for the interpretation of World Heritage attributes

Archaeological excavations and explorations, and recent scientific studies of architecture, wall paintings and mosaics greatly enrich the existing knowledge about the monument. It is very important that this knowledge is gathered in a unified document for the interpretation of the monument, which will become a desk guide for the church, state management agencies, the National Tourism Agency and the Imereti destination management organization, the guide association and the actors involved in the hospitality business.

In the current and next management cycles, monument guides, brochures, television programs and other mass-productions should be prepared for visitors and the general public according to the mentioned document.

The mentioned document should be the basis for the permanent presentation of the monument and its environment in the Gelati visitor centre and in other spaces designated for presentation according to the Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Use of Gelati Monastery⁶¹.

Action 5.2: Planning the presentation of the monument and its environment (within the strategic plan for conservation and use)

The lack of presentation space for visitors in the territory of the monastery remains an irreparable problem. With the cooperation of the Government of Georgia and the World Bank, as a result of long consultations with the World Heritage Center, the visitor centre built within the framework of the second regional development program is still unused and closed. Even if the visitor centre is opened, due to the small size of the building, it will be more difficult to fully present the history and importance of Gelati here.

In 2023, at the initiative of the Temporary Committee, the preparation of the updated Masterplan⁶² of the Gelati monastery began. The project considers the zoning of the monastery territory, separation of monastic and visitor zones, and adaptation of different spaces of the monastery, including access for disabled people. During the working process, the refined scheme of features of special public value developed in the process of updating the management plan and the working versions of the panoramic analysis of the landscape were shared with the group.

It is important that the presence of a visitor center already built according to the agreed conservation plan of the World Heritage Centers is taken into account in the process of preparing the plan.

The plan should prioritize the protection and presentation of features of special public value. Among them: preservation of the historically formed silhouette of Gelati monastic ensemble and important points of its perception; the need to study, protect and present the archaeological layers in the territory of the ensemble and its vicinity; the priority of protection and conservation of the physical characteristics of the individual architectural component of the ensemble; Maintaining the planning structure and spatial quality of the ensemble.

The content part of the plan should be in accordance with the guidelines for the interpretation of the attributes of special public value of the monument.

A heritage impact assessment must be prepared for the plan and agreed with the World Heritage Centre.

Action 5.3: Public awareness of conservation works

Keeping visitors informed about ongoing conservation work is an accepted and widely implemented practice at World Heritage Properties. Solving this issue in Gelati is urgently necessary, due to the fact that in the 2024-2028 management cycle, large-scale conservation works will be carried out on the

⁶¹ Conservation plan for the complex monument (Cultural Heritage Law, Article 27), which also includes issues related to the use and development of the territory.

⁶² It is desirable that it covers all aspects of the strategic plan for conservation and use.

territory of the Gelati Monastery, and a large part of the territory will be occupied by a massive temporary roofing scaffold. Due to this, the movement of visitors in the area will be hindered.

The general plan of the presentation should take into account the possibility of presenting the ongoing conservation works (massive banners erected on scaffolding in the outdoor space, a separate constantly updated hall in the indoor presentation space with videos taken with conservation specialists, virtual reality, etc.).

Action 5.4: Public relations

A special website created by the Ad Hoc Committee is an important open resource for informing the public. Current processes are also covered regularly through briefings and presentations organized by the committee. It is desirable that the mentioned process takes the form of a long-term strategy, according to which the coverage of Gelati's conservation works for the general public will continue on a regular basis, documentary video material will be prepared, etc.

It is important to pay special attention to proper communication, informing and consultation with the local population. This function can be performed by the local operating system.

Action 5.5: Renovation-improvement-maintenance of tourist trails in the buffer zone

The development of tourist trails in the buffer zone was defined as one of the actions of the previous management plan. This task was partially fulfilled within the framework of the project implemented by the association Elkana. Trails from Gelati to Motsameta and Dokhora Mountain were marked and signs were installed. These routes are available online through various applications. The routes mostly coincide with the directions of historical roads, so their use also serves to preserve information about the historical landscape.

When fencing the agricultural areas of the Dokhora Monastery, the existence of tourist trails was only partially taken into account. Today, part of the paths pass through the agricultural areas of the monastery. In some cases, there are gates in the fences, but the fact is that it is necessary to re-plan the tourist paths and the farm fences of the monastery, in agreement with the community of the monastery.

According to the information of the National Tourism Agency, it is planned to transfer the responsibility of monitoring and maintenance of tourist trails to local organizations. The Imereti Destination Management Organization has confirmed its readiness to take on such responsibilities if appropriate funding is allocated.

Direction 6: Education and capacity building

(Strategic objectives I, II, III, V)

Action 6.1: Organization of general education courses

The mentioned task was also included in the previous management plan, but it remained unfulfilled until now. Lack of necessary infrastructure and inability to mobilize human and financial resources can be cited as reasons. Based on the current acute conservation and visitor management problems, the creation and implementation of the educational program for the 2024-2028 management cycle is a low priority within the mandate of the temporary committee. Responsible state agencies (National

Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation), educational and other institutions should take the main steps to fulfil this task in 2024-2028. The agency has significant experience in educational direction. For years, the educational service has been conducting children's educational programs ("Archaeology for children", "Cultural heritage for children") in Tbilisi and also in museum reserves. When developing the course, it is recommended to use the "Cultural Heritage Introductory Course for Elementary and Middle School Students" translated and adapted by ICOMOS of Georgia.

Action 6.2: Cultural heritage vocational training

Cooperation with local vocational schools in order to include information about cultural heritage in the training programs of guides and other relevant disciplines, despite the efforts, remains an unrealized prospect (summer schools, field practice, theoretical courses, etc.). Responsible state agencies (National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection), and educational and professional institutions should take the main steps to fulfill this task in 2024-2028.

It also includes strengthening the skills of the local operatives (assessment of physical condition, use of monitoring tools, preparation of reports, etc.).

Direction 7: development of the monastery

(Strategic Objectives I and II)

Action 7.1 Development Planning of Gelati Monastery

The program of operation of the monastery in the previous management plan included the development of rules of conduct for visitors, the regulation of the admission of large groups, the coordination of conservation-restoration processes with the monastic life, as well as the good arrangement of monastic residences and infrastructure. A number of issues, such as the coordination of the restoration processes, have been more or less resolved and regulated, although the monks' residences inside the monastery walls have become almost unusable as a result of the fire.

Resolving the issue of rehabilitation of monastic buildings inside the monastery fence must be planned taking into account the already developed agricultural and residential infrastructure on Mount Dokhora. The development plan of the monastery should include the possibility of functioning and development of the monastery in accordance with its features of special value to the general public. It should not violate the historically formed silhouette, the spatial quality and the planning of the Gelati monastic ensemble. It should take into account the relationship of the Gelati Monastery with the chapels located on Mount Dokhora, historical roads and paths, as well as the priorities of preserving the natural environment. The plan should be developed with the involvement and guidance of the community of the monastery, agreed with the relevant national agencies and should comply with the basic urban planning principles defined by the Georgian legislation.

A heritage impact assessment should be prepared for the plan and agreed upon with the World Heritage Centre.

According to the plan, the preparation and implementation of separate architectural projects should be planned in stages within the next management cycle.

Section 6

Monitoring

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6.1. Monitoring the implementation of the management plan

Management planning and implementation are part of a dynamic process that needs adjustment over time. Monitoring assists in understanding whether the direction of travel undertaken is the correct one and is achieving the expected outcomes. Therefore, measuring progress is essential to adapting and improving the property's management as needed; regular monitoring helps to reassess priorities in light of new issues and progress made.

In heritage management, monitoring is an essential exercise of collecting and analyzing data which has two purposes:

- a) inform an understanding of how the conditions of a heritage site, in this case Gelati Monastery, are evolving
- b) understand whether the management plan and arrangements are being implemented and delivering the expected outcomes.

In the World Heritage system, it is essential that the property continues to convey its OUV over time and to do so, the attributes that express OUV should be maintained in good conservation condition. Monitoring the conditions of the attributes assists in identifying any important threats as early as possible and in providing the necessary information to implement remedial measures before the damage becomes too great.

The revision of the 2015 management plan, appraisal of what has been achieved or not in the previous management cycle, and assessment of the property's conditions and needs have led to defining specific actions for the next management cycle that are considered essential to begin meeting the above - mentioned strategic objectives.

Different themes/lines of action have been defined for the next management cycle, the implementation of actions pertaining to each theme is the responsibility of different institutional actors, who need to be involved also to measure the progress being made by The Management Entity of Gelati Monastery World Heritage Property. For the purpose of the present management cycle, such a management entity is considered the Temporary Committee for Gelati Monastery Rehabilitation.

Arrangements for ensuring regular monitoring include:

- periodic (annual) progress reporting to the Management entity – currently the Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati – by responsible agencies or entities in charge of implementing specific activities included in the action plan
- mid-term progress reporting and appraisal of the state of implementation and effectiveness of the management system and plan (relying on the methodology proposed by the Enhancing our Heritage Toolkit 2.0) – revision of the action plan as needed.
- Comprehensive progress report at the end of the management cycle and review of the level of implementation of the plan and its effectiveness
- Preparation of the Periodic Reporting document at the next PR cycle

All entities involved in the design and implementation of the management plan are responsible for contributing to the review and monitoring, with the support and guidance of the Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati and the support of its National Scientific Council in relation to the interpretation of collected data and appraisal of progress.

Reviewing the issues and updating the Plan should be the main role of the Management Entity (currently the Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati), assisted by the National Scientific Council. Preparing operational action plans and mid-term review of the action plan are an important part of this process.

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection has a statutory responsibility to inspect the property regularly; the Temporary Committee intends to establish a local operative overseer in charge of regular inspection and simple upkeep interventions (eg, litter removal, grass cutting, verification of the good functioning of technical installations, early detection of minor failures, etc.).

Key areas of the state of conservation monitoring include specialized permanent monitoring of the structural stability of the two churches, the hygrothermal parameters of the indoor environment and a post-conservation work monitoring program which will be carried out for the duration of the management cycle under the management of the Temporary Committee and National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation in the framework of its statutory duties.

The International Conservation team responsible for the study and conservation is preparing a monitoring program and related monitoring protocols, instruments, data interpretation and reporting modalities and frequency. The conservation teams are to provide specialized advisory services to ensure regular assessment of monitoring data and respective feedback to the Temporary Committee.

6.2. Monitoring indicators of OUV

Indicators need to be linked to the attributes expressing the property's OUV and the objectives of the Management Plan because one of the key aims of monitoring is to measure the conditions of the World Heritage Property and whether the OUV is maintained.

Based on the available documentation on Gelati Monastery (, a set of attributes and strategic objectives has been defined (see Sections 1 and 2). If met, these objectives will ensure the long-term preservation of the property and its capacity to convey the OUV Indicators and monitoring activities that have been identified and tied with established strategic objectives.

Given that monitoring of all attributes would require human, organizational, and financial resources not currently available for the property's management, key attributes have been selected to be monitored, also in relation to the property's current state of conservation and affecting factors (ascertained or potential).

A set of 21 indicators has been established to monitor three families of attributes of OUV: those related to the architectural quality of the property and outstanding decoration, those related to the spatial quality and the tangible evidence of the importance of the monastery – architectural quality and outstanding decoration.

The choice of these attributes as preferential for the monitoring exercise relates to their extreme importance in conveying the OUV and their relative current vulnerabilities.

Some of the monitoring indicators are also indicators of performance (eg, the preparation of the spatial planning instruments for the villages, or the completion of the conservation works currently being implemented): these have been included because their implementation is a pre-condition for retaining adequate conservation conditions or improving them, ie, in the case of the mural paintings and the mosaics, so as attributes continue to convey OUV.

Some indicators and their measurement are being developed in detail by the specialized international conservation teams and will be shared with the management entity as soon as ready. Arrangements are in place for the monitoring of the paintings and the mosaics to be carried out for the next five years by these conservation teams.

Other indicators will have to be developed. They will be elaborated and tested in this management cycle, with the aim of being ready for implementation with a baseline assessment from the second half of this management cycle and definitively in place from the next management cycle. This means that some of the proposed indicators might be slightly adapted/modified throughout the testing phase.

The table links the attributes with specific strategic objectives and indicators; it also indicates who is responsible for collecting the information and for its interpretation, the frequency, and whether their measurement is already in place. The table identifies how the data may be collected, by whom, and how often.

Collaboration of all responsible actors in carrying out the monitoring exercise is essential and is part of the interinstitutional collaboration agreement.

Monitoring Indicators for the key OUV Attributes

Attributes	Objectives	Monitoring indicators	Responsible entity	periodicity	In place
Architectural quality, Exceptional decoration	Strategic Objective 1.1: The churches of the monastery, their exterior and indoor architectural and decorative elements, the mosaics, mural paintings, the movable heritage (icons, manuscripts, historic fittings in the Churches), and the belltower are well preserved and regularly monitored based on agreed protocols and adequate instruments	Conservation works of the mural paintings and of the mosaics carried out (completed by 2027)	Temporary Committee Mosaics and wall painting conservation team	monthly	Instruments installed in the main church and St. George's Church
		Structural assessment completed – if needed process for structural rehabilitation prepared	Temporary Committee Structural conservation team	One time	In the main church and St. George's Church
		Permanent monitoring in place for structural behaviour based on scientific protocols	Temporary Committee Structural conservation team	Continuous (data collection every two months)	In the main church and St. George's Church
		Permanent monitoring of indoor environmental conditions	Temporary Committee Structural conservation team and mosaics and wall painting conservation team	Continuous (data collection – seasonally)	In the main church and St George Church
		Periodical inspections from a short distance of mural paintings	Temporary Committee Mosaics and Wall Painting Conservation Team	After completion of conservation works, once every two years	In the main church
Architectural quality, well-thought-out overall planning, size and historical cultural significance	Strategic Objective 1.1: The buildings forming the historical nucleus of the monastery, including the gates, the Academy building, the monastery wall, the water supply system, and David the Builder's grave are well-conserved and regularly monitored as necessary	Protocols and formats for regular inspections prepared by the end of 2024	Temporary Committee for Rehabilitation of Gelati (TCRG) – National Scientific Council	One time - testing usability in one year	Partially
		Regular inspections carried out – reports prepared and transmitted to management entity -	Local operative resource person	Seasonally (but immediately after extreme meteorological events)	Partially
		An annual program for upkeep and regular maintenance is prepared and implemented Reports of maintenance interventions	Local operative resource person supported by TCRG	Program prepared for each fiscal year – maintenance implemented as necessary –	Not yet in place
Size and historical cultural significance	Strategic Objective 2.2.: The monastic life is organized in coherence with the	Masterplan for the development of the Monastery is prepared	TCRG – Studio Milou	To be revised in each	In progress

	OUV of the property	respecting the attributes of OUV and undergoes HIA		management cycle	
		Masterplan is sent to WHC for ICOMOS comments	TCRG and NaCHPG		
		Expansion and adaptation of monastery buildings are always presented to and examined by the National Scientific Board and NACHPG and then sent to WHC before any final decision is taken	TCRG/ NSB/ NACHP		
Well-thought-out overall planning; size and historical cultural significance	Strategic Objective 1.2.: Excavated archaeological remains are well-protected and presented to the public.	A comprehensive archaeological map of the Monastery is prepared	Temporary Committee		In progress
		Inspection of archaeological remains carried out by archaeologists – conservation needs identified	Temporary Committee, tbc		
		Leaflet or other supporting material for the presentation of the archaeological remains and of the monastery prepared	Temporary Committee, NACHPG, other stakeholders		
Spatial quality	Strategic Objective 1.6.: The territory adjacent to the monastery and the Dokhora mountain is preserved free from urban development	Principles and guidelines for protection and zoning are prepared and approved	Temporary Committee for the Rehabilitation of Gelati		
		Spatial Plan for the Buffer zone including non-built-up areas prepared and approved with implementing regulations	Municipalities, Agency for Spatial Planning		
		Embedding HIA approach in building permit issuance process -	MoC/NACHPG/Agency for Spatial Planning/Municipalities		
		Recording each building permit issued with the specification of the type of development – annual reporting	Municipalities (recording and reporting) Assessment: Management entity/ NACHP and Agency for Spatial Planning	Annually	
		Reviewing land use changes and new developments	Municipalities/TCRG/Agency for Spatial Planning	Annually	
		Fixed-point photographic survey and annual mapping of changes in the landscape	TCRG	Every management cycle	Landscape visual panoramic analysis prepared in

					2024
		Comparative analysis of aerial photographs and issued building permits	Agency for spatial planning/municipalities	Every management cycle	

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