

## WHC Nomination Documentation

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SITE NAME ("TITLE") Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery

DATE OF INSCRIPTION ("SUBJECT") 17/12/1994

STATE PARTY ("AUTHOR") GEORGIA

CRITERIA ("KEY WORDS") C (iv)

### DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:

18<sup>th</sup> Session

The Committee inscribed this property on the World Heritage List and requested the ICOMOS mission evaluation report to be transmitted to the State Party.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The construction of Bagrati Cathedral, named after Bagrat III, the first king of united Georgia, began at the end of the 10th century and was completed in the early years of the 11th century. It was partly destroyed by the Turks in 1691, but its ruins remain in the centre of Kutaisi. The Gelati Monastery, whose main buildings were erected between the 12th and 17th centuries, is a well-preserved complex, rich in mosaics and wall paintings. The cathedral and the monastery represent the blossoming of medieval architecture in Georgia.

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1.b. State, province or region: Bagrati: republic of Georgia, Kutaisi  
Gelati: republic of Georgia, Tkibuli district

1.d Exact location:

## I. PLACE OF LOCATION

- a. Country Republic of Georgia  
b. Name of the object Bagrati cathedral  
c. Exact location Republic of Georgia, Kutaisi

## II. Juridical Data

- a. Owner Republic of Georgia  
b. Legitimate status Based on the Law of the Protection of the Monuments of the Republic of Georgia  
c. Type of the property Public  
d. Basis for the protection of the object A high artistic and historical significance of Bagrati cathedral architecture and ornamentation had pre-conditioned the necessity of its scientific protection. The restoration and conservation of the building, begun in 1951, is still continued nowadays (architect-restorer V.Tsintsadze).  
e. Data on the usage of the object Bagrati cathedral dominated in the architectural image of Kutaisi. Due to its high artistic value it is a fascinating sightseeing for tourists, serving for the popularization and propaganda of Georgian art.  
f. Executive administration Nowadays Bagrati cathedral is under the administration of the Patriarchate of Georgia. At the same time a responsibility for it is shared by Kutaisi-Ge-

the tourists and serving for the propaganda and popularization of Georgian art.

f. Executive organization

Nowadays the monastery is in the hands of the patriarchate of Georgia, though it is also under the guidance of Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-reserve and the Main Board for the Protection of the Monuments. The latter fulfills systematic restorational works in the monastery.

III: IDENTIFICATION

a. Description

The territory of Gelati monastery is fenced about with a stone enclosure. Now the entrance is from the east, but originally the road led to the south porch. Here, the greatest Georgian king David IV the Builder was buried in the stone porch, beneath the tombstone bearing an old Georgian asomtavruli inscription: "This is my abode for ever and ever, for I wish it. I have found eternal peace here". Iron gates of Ganja, brought by David's son, king Demétré, in the memory of his victory, after the seizure of Ganja, are hanging here. In the course of the centuries the south porch was rebuilt more than once, being finally shut and turned into an annex.

The main church is erected in the centre

of the enclosure. To the east of it there stands a smaller building - the church of St. George, to the west - a two storeyed church of St. Nicholas and an academy building behind it. To the north-west of the main church there runs a stream, above which a bell-tower is erected. These monuments form an architectural ensemble of perfect unity, its dominant being the main church, while all the other buildings are perceived together with the latter as a single artistic entity.

The main church of the Virgin (12<sup>th</sup>) is a cruciform-domed building, faced with large ashlar. Originally it was intended to make a three-sided ambulatory around the main building, but after the erection was finished, in the reign of Demétré already (1125-1150) separate annexes were built round the church - an annex with a porch from the south and the so called narthex from the west. Annexes from the north were built in different spells during the 13<sup>th</sup>. The craftsmen fulfilling this work tried to fit the exterior arrangement of the annexes to the architecture of the building proper, that is why the monument is

perceived as a single whole.

Massive, huge forms of the main church are lightened by the decorative arcature, embellishing all the four facades of the building and emphasizing the upward movement of its forms. Three polyhedral apses are projecting from the east, complicating the exterior forms of the building. Alongside the decorative arcature, exterior decoration of the church comprises moulded window framings, while on the south facade distinguished is a composition formed by the ornamented and moulded window framings and big rosettes.

The inner space of the church, surmounted by a wide dome, leaves the impression of ampleness and solemnity. The light is flowing lavishly into the church through many windows. The first floor gallery is connected with the central part by means of the arches. A staircase arranged in the west wall of the church leads to the first floor gallery.

Three doors of the main entrance are located in the west. Entering the church the eye is caught by the 12<sup>th</sup> c. well-known

mosaic in the apse conch: the Virgin and two Archangels are depicted in colour tesserae against the golden background. The frescoes, covering the walls are of a later date. Alongside Biblical scenes, the portraits of the historical personages, who had contributed to the restoration and renovation of Gelati are also seen here. On the north wall depicted are David IV the Builder, katholikos Evdemon Sakvarelidze, Bagrat III of Imereti and others. It is supposed, that the portrait of David the Builder was to be represented even earlier on the place of the present effigy. The inscription on the south dome-supporting pier tells, that the church was repainted in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup>c. Afterwards the murals were renovated more than once. The south dome-supporting pier also bears the portrait of a bishop Zacharias Kvari-ani. The lower part of the west cross-arm was painted anew in his lifetime.

The annexes also bear the frescoes dating to the different periods. The walls of the west annex have preserved the fragments of the early 12<sup>th</sup>c. murals depicting the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Individualized

features of the expressive faces, perfect linear rhythm and the garment details all testify to the high skill of the craftsmen.

The south annex was painted anew in the late 13<sup>th</sup> c. Here two portraits of the king David Narin are represented: on the west wall he is depicted in the royal garment, while on the south one - as a monk. It should be noted, that alongside the conventionality characteristic of the medieval painting, these portraits display the individual features of the king as well. The south annex porch has preserved the fragments of the late 14<sup>th</sup> c. murals, while the painting of the west compartment of the same annex date to the Late Middle Ages.

The murals of the north annex are ascribed to the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cc. In the east porch the murals of an earlier date, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> cc., are discovered beneath the 16<sup>th</sup> c. frescoes. The painting depicts the coronation scene of the king, comprising the representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The church of St. George, the first building which the visitor sees entering the enclosure, is a tall domed structure, ere

ted in the 13<sup>th</sup>c. Among the three projecting apses, the middle one is embellished with an archature. The door and the windows are supplied by moulded framings. The only entrance is made in the west facade. The dome is supported by two massive stone columns and apse angles. The interior is lavishly lighted by the windows located in the drum and the walls. The west porch is adjoined somewhat later. It bears the fragments of the contemporary murals. The murals of the church are ascribed to the 16<sup>th</sup>c. The south wall bears the images of katholikos Evdemon, who had commissioned the painting of the church, king Bagrat III of Imereti and his wife Helen. The rest walls also shelter the portraits of the high officials. Painted chancel barrier is also dated to the 16<sup>th</sup>c.

The church of St. Nicholas, erected to the south of the main church, is a peculiar monument of the late 13<sup>th</sup>c. It is a two-storeyed building, the ground floor of which is open on all the sides by the arches. A small domed church is located on the first floor. A stone staircase, built to it later, leads to the church. Earlier



one could get into the church with the help of a ladder. This monument is of certain interest as a rare sample of the architectural solution of a two-storeyed cult building.

The lower part of the church is huge and massive. The visual perception is facilitated by the arch proportions, their wide, two-stepped form and greatly protruding cornice of the ground floor. The impression is strengthened by the roughly treated wall surface. The first floor - the church proper - is of a polyhedral form and minute. Its walls are faced with accurately hewn ashlar. The windows are embellished by minute, articulated framings.

To the north of the main church there is a spring. In the 12<sup>th</sup> c. a stone vaulted canopy on four columns was built over the spring, in the 13<sup>th</sup> c. a room was built over the vault. Upper above there is an open arched part of the the bell-tower.

Academy building was erected in the reign of David the Builder (1025-1125). This large structure is lighted through wide arched windows. Originally the building

was supplied by three entrances from the east (one of them is filled up nowadays). In early 14<sup>th</sup> c. a richly decorated porch was built to the middle entrance. Academy was also accessible from the south through a passage above a big arch. Originally the walls of the Academy were painted. Stone seats are arranged along the hall walls. The place in the middle was allotted for the honorable persons. Alongside the lectures, disputes and solemn receptions were also held in the Academy, preconditioning the necessity of building a main entrance and lighting the hall through the wide windows, opening a view on a fascinating gorge. In Late Middle Ages, when Gelati Academy ceased its existence, the building was turned into a refectory.

b. Graphical material

c. Photographic and cinematographic documentation

d. Historical data

12<sup>th</sup> c. is a "Golden Age" of the medieval Georgia. A spell of nearly 120 years between the reigns of David the Builder and Queen Tamar is not only the period of a complete stabilization, but a political strength and economic uprise. It is the epoch, which Gelati monastery belongs to,

being one of the outstanding monuments of the period, one of the greatest centres of the feudal Georgian culture in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc. Here, within the walls of Gelati Academy worked such prominent thinkers of the time as Ioané Petritsi, and Patriarch of Georgia Arsen. They guided the translational activity of Gelati Academy students. They translated both ecclesiastical and secular literature, commented it and created the original treatises as well. The subjects taught at the Academy were: geometry, arithmetica, astronomy, philosophy, grammar, rhetorics and music.

Historical sources of the contemporaries of David the Builder tell, that alongside certain measures aimed at strengthening the central power, this great king began the erection of Gelati. Here he founded an academy as well, which according to the chronicler, was the favourite creation of this highly educated king. The erection of Gelati was begun in 1106 and ended in 1130. David IV did not live to see Gelati finished; he bequeathed its fulfilment to his son Demetré (1125-1156)

In the same will David the Builder expressed his desire to make Gelati a family burrial of Georgian kings. Gelati, together with its donated property, became a royal domain.

The construction of Gelati took place in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc. and early 14<sup>th</sup> c. mainly. In the posterior period, nearly up to the 16<sup>th</sup> c., the development of Gelati was hindered due to the foreign invasions and intestine feuds. The greater part of the murals and it should be supposed, that many other artistic values, were ruined in those disastrous days.

In early 16<sup>th</sup> c. Imereti king Bagrat III undertook the restoration of Gelati. In the second decade of the same century an episcopal see was restored here and afterwards, Gelati became a residence of the katholicos of the West Georgia. Restoration of Gelati was continued in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cc. In early 19<sup>th</sup> c. after Russia had annexed Georgia, Gelati episcopate was abolished and joined Imereti eparchy.

e. Bibliography

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#### IV. PRESERVATION

- a. Estimate of preservation      Nowadays the ensemble is in a good state. Restoration took place in 19
- b. Executive organization      Responsibility for the protection of the monument is shared by the Patriarchate of Georgia, Kutaisi-Gelati Museum-reserve and Main Board for the Protection of the Monuments of Georgia
- c. Necessary measures      Nowadays the state of the monument does demand no additional repairing and reinforcement.

#### V. FOUNDATION

to be included in the "List of World Heritage".

Gelati ensemble is a set of well preserved historical monuments. It is especially valuable for the preserved monuments of architecture, mosaic, m

ral painting, metalwork and enamel. Gelati was not only a monastery, but a centre of science and education, while the Academy, founded in the monastery, was one of the most significant centres of culture in the ancient Georgia. High skill of execution and expressiveness of the mosaic preserved in Gelati monastery place it among the outstanding artistic monuments of the worldwide significance. Mural painting, chronological range of which comprises 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> is a peculiar, significant museum of Georgian monumental painting. Up to recently the unique samples of Georgian metalwork were kept in Gelati; some of them are adorned with enamels, for instance, 12<sup>th</sup> c. magnificent Khakhuli triptych. 12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cc. icons are distinguished by lavish ornamentation and masterly execution. Illuminated manuscripts kept in Gelati are also the unique samples of Georgian culture.

Thus, Gelati monastery due to its architectural merits and magnificent samples of Georgian culture kept in it, is the unique treasury of culture.

Such a collection of excellent monuments of high artistic value, gathered in a single ensemble, is a rare case in the history of the world culture.



I. PLACE OF LOCATION

- a. Country Republic of Georgia
- b. Name of the object Gelati monastery
- c. Exact location Republic of Georgia, Tkibuli district,  
12 km. from Kutaisi

II. Juridical Data

- a. Owner Republic of Georgia
- b. Legitimate status Based on the Law of the Protection of  
the Monuments of the Republic of Georgia
- c. Type of the property Public
- d. Basis for the protection  
of the object Architecture of Gelati monastery and  
high artistic and historical value of  
the murals and other works of art, pre-  
served in it, had preconditioned the  
necessity of its scientific protection.  
Excellent samples of mosaic and mural  
painting, preserved in the monastery  
are the object of a permanent care, that  
is why restoration is being held syste-  
matically in the monastery beginning  
from 19 . Architect-restorers work  
together with painter-restorers ; mo-  
saics and murals are being cleared and  
reinforced.
- e. Data on the usage of  
the object Gelati monastery is the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc.  
grand architectural ensemble, which  
shelters excellent samples of mural pa-  
inting and mosaic, naturally, attracting

lati Museum-reserve, on the territory of which the cathedral is located and the Main Board for the Protection of the Monuments, which is undertaking its restoration and conservation.

### III. IDENTIFICATION

#### a. Description

The church is located in the centre of Kutaisi, on a mountain risen capewise on the left bank of the river Rioni and overlooks the Old Town. A very long winding staircase is leading to the cathedral. After being blown up by Turk invaders in 1691 the church was ruined; it is deprived of the dome, vaults and dome supporting piers. Richly ornamented enormous capitals, the fragments of the piers and vaults are scattered inside the church.

Bagrati cathedral is of a cruciform plan. It is a triconch, i.e. three crosses - east, south and north - are terminated in the semicircular apses, while the forth, west one is oblong and apseless. A compositional centre of this grand building is surmounted by a dome supported by four free-standing piers. The inner space of the church is barrel

vaulted. Apses of the east, south and north cross-arms are provided by the conches. The west cross-arm consists of three parts: middle one, projecting on the level of the rest cross-arms, and two lateral ones, each forming a two-storeyed massive. These first floor compartments were connected with each other by a wide passage made in this part of the west cross-arm. The first floor was accessible thanks to a staircase located in the north part. East, apsidal, lateral compartments were also arranged in two storeys. South and north cross-arms are developed towards the central square bay in the length and width. Thus, a high cruciform space was raised on the so called triconch plan. Such a solution of the inner space is clearly revealed in the exterior. South and north cross-arms are projecting from the connecting line of the east and west portions of the facades, emphasizing the mass concept of the cruciform-domed plan. The architect wittily used the spaces formed by the projecting of the cross-arms: he created an additional stage in the arrangement

of the masses making an ambulatory in the west part of all the three facades. Bagrati architect had supported the dome by high piers, while on the facades he used an arcature system, set over from plane to plane, from facade to facade. It was an innovation in the building history, preconditioned by its development.

Different approaches are discernible in the decorative treatment of the facades: if in the west cross-arm the pilasters form huge rectangular surfaces, in the east part three slim shafts of a low relief serve as pilasters. Similarly different is the decoration of the capitals and the bases. If for the bases the first master uses a vessel-like, plastically modelled solid form, with a scroll enliven in a stone, rising as a kind of a shaft from it, which follows the solid pilaster and emphasizes its structure, the second master outlines an established architectural composition by means of the pilasters formed by flat dryly carved shafts.

Thus the erection of Bagrati cathedral is begun in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. by an architect, whose creative activity is characteristic of the early stage of Georgian picturesque style. According to the asomtavruli inscription placed below north window of the east cross-arm, the erection was fulfilled in 1003. The inscription is equally interesting as a testimony of the earliest use of Arabic numbers in Georgia. Another lapidary inscription is placed on the same facade, to the left of the window and is also carved in asomtavruli. It mentions Bagrat Curopalat and his family and the last inscription above the window of the east facade reads as follows: "With the aid of God, by the will of God and Bagrat, king of Georgians, queen Gurandukht this holy church was built by the hand of..." Unfortunately, the inscription is damaged in this place and the name of the architect is left unknown.

Not long after the erection of the cathedral was finished, a three storeyed tower was built to its north-west cor-

ner. All the three storeys of the tower were provided with a single room, fireplaces and niches. On the second floor there was a separate lavatory. It should be thought, that the bishop dwelling in Kutaisi lived in this tower.

The next stage of the erection is represented by adjoining large solemn porches from the south and the west. In the course of the two decades, which had passed from the time of the erection of the cathedral and adjoining the porches a sharp change took place in the comprehension of the decorative design and architectural forms. Carving of the window ornament dated to 1003, as well as the restoration of the east window, is characterized by a somewhat graphical, fine, distinct manner, patterns of the small forms being executed on the plane surface; while carving the porch ornamentation preference is given to the wavelike or protruberant surface on which the design of the freely executed charming ornaments enriched by the deep chiaroscuro picturesqueness is unfolded. Such a solution was generally accepted

and widespread in Georgia beginning from the first two decades of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.

A sculptural composition comprising animal, bird and plant motifs is widely used for the capitals of the porch.

b. Graphical material

c. Photographic and cinematographic documentation

d. Historical data

The erection of Bagrati cathedral was begun in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. and finished in the first years of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. The cultural situation of Georgia fully corresponded to its political and economic progress at that period; then the country was governed from Kutaisi. Kutaisi was turned into the royal residence as early as the mid 8<sup>th</sup> c., when the East Georgia - Tbilisi and Mtskheta - was occupied by foreign invaders - Arabs.

Kutaisi was mentioned in the historical sources even earlier in the connection with the battles, which Byzantium and Persia fought for the conquest of Georgia in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. At those days Kutaisi was a typical Georgian town of the Early Middle Ages with an upper fortress on

the top of a rocky hill, a bridge thrown over the river, a market square and the inhabitants dwelling beyond the townwalls

The next stage of the development of Kutaisi belongs to the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> c., when king Archil resided there. It was the period of a large scale building activity. In the course of the rising of the town life new quarters had emerged, but the architectural organism of the town had not then undergone significant changes, at any rate their traces are not discernible.

Kutaisi, as a feudal town, reached the acme of its development in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> cc. This is marked by the erection of a grand cathedral church, commissioned by the first king of the united Georgia Bagrat III. This new stage in the development of the architectural physiognomy of the town - erection of a new dominant in the ensemble - seems to symbolize the end of a fight for the unification of the country.

The chronicler tells, that the cathedral was consecrated with great solemnity - th



representatives of various regions of Georgia took part in it: nearly the whole country was united under the reign of Bagrat III. By this solemn festive occasion Bagrat seemed to manifest the common national significance of the cathedral newly built in the capital of Georgia of those days. Russian ambassadors, who had seen Bagrati cathedral before it was ruined, note that it was adorned with the mosaics inside.

In 1691 the Turks, having invaded Georgia, blew up the cathedral, in the result of which the dome and roofings had collapsed.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. south and west porches were still nearly undamaged, as shown on the picture executed by the painter N. Chernetsov. Later, they were ruined as well. Nowadays, richly ornamented fragments of the porch are scattered on the ground.

e. Bibliography

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#### IV. PRESERVATION

##### a. Estimate of preservation

Restoration and conservation of the cathedral is being held beginning from 1951; a fundamental scientific study of the monument is being undertaken. Some supporting piers and walls are partially restored, the project of the graphical restoration of the cathedral is worked out. Restoration work is not finished.

##### b. Executive organization

Executive organizations are the Main Board for the Protection of the Monuments of the Republic of Georgia and Kutaisi-Geleti Museum-reserve.

##### c. Necessary measures

A systematic work is being carried out on the monument.

#### V. Foundation

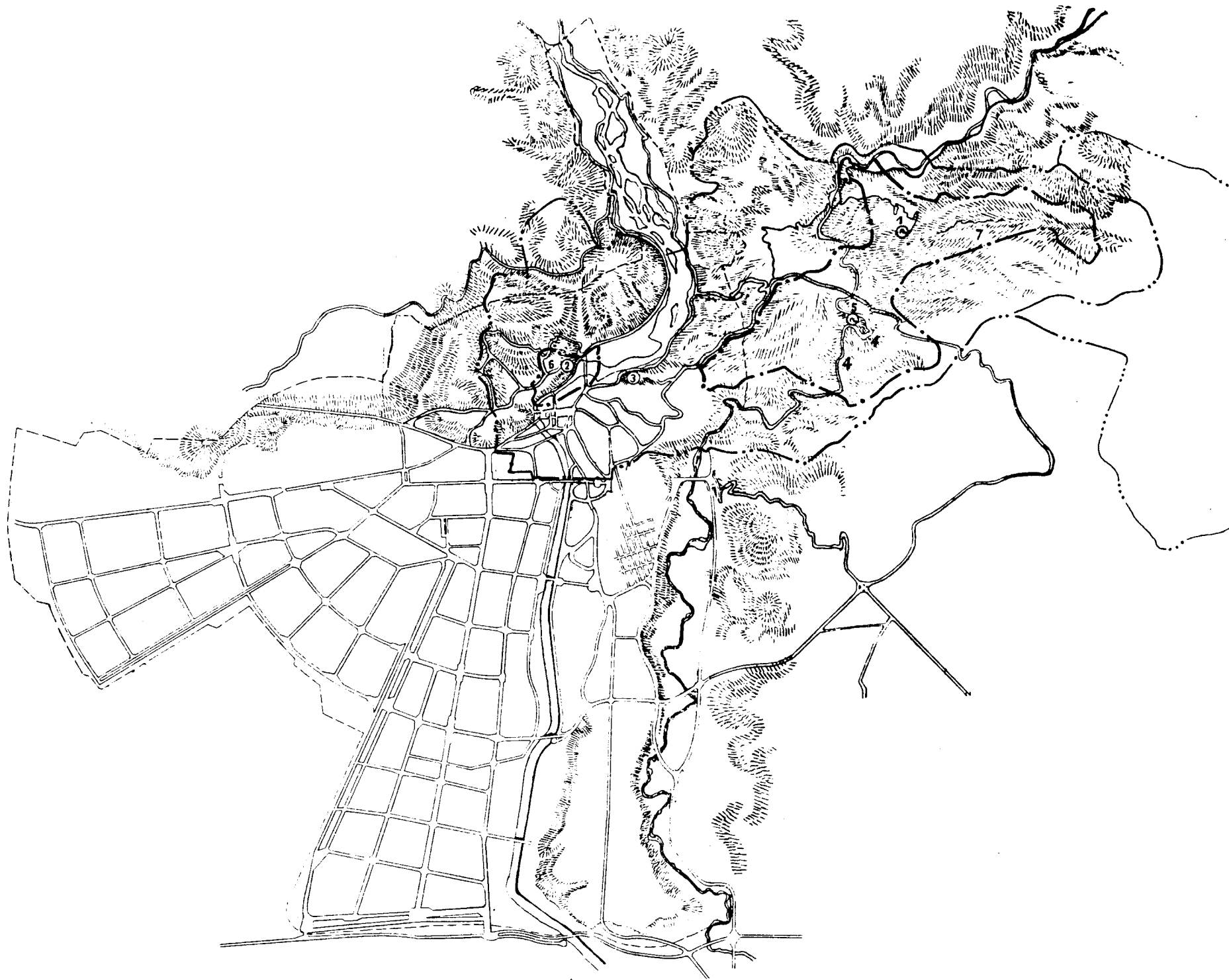
to be included in the "List of World Heritage".

The outer appearance of the building is monumental and grand, varied and dynamic. Or

Ornamental decoration contributes to the picturesqueness of the cathedral. The building amazes and fascinates the viewer by perfect proportions, free and artistic execution of the mouldings, ornaments, arches, light constructions.

Bagrati cathedral ornamentation makes it possible to trace the evolution undergone by Georgian architectural ornament in a less than half a century; this ornamentation is an excellent sample of the world architectural plastics.

High artistic value of Bagrati cathedral goes far beyond the local significance. It is one of the best monuments of the medieval Christian architecture.



## პირობითი აღნიშვნები: Conventional Signs:

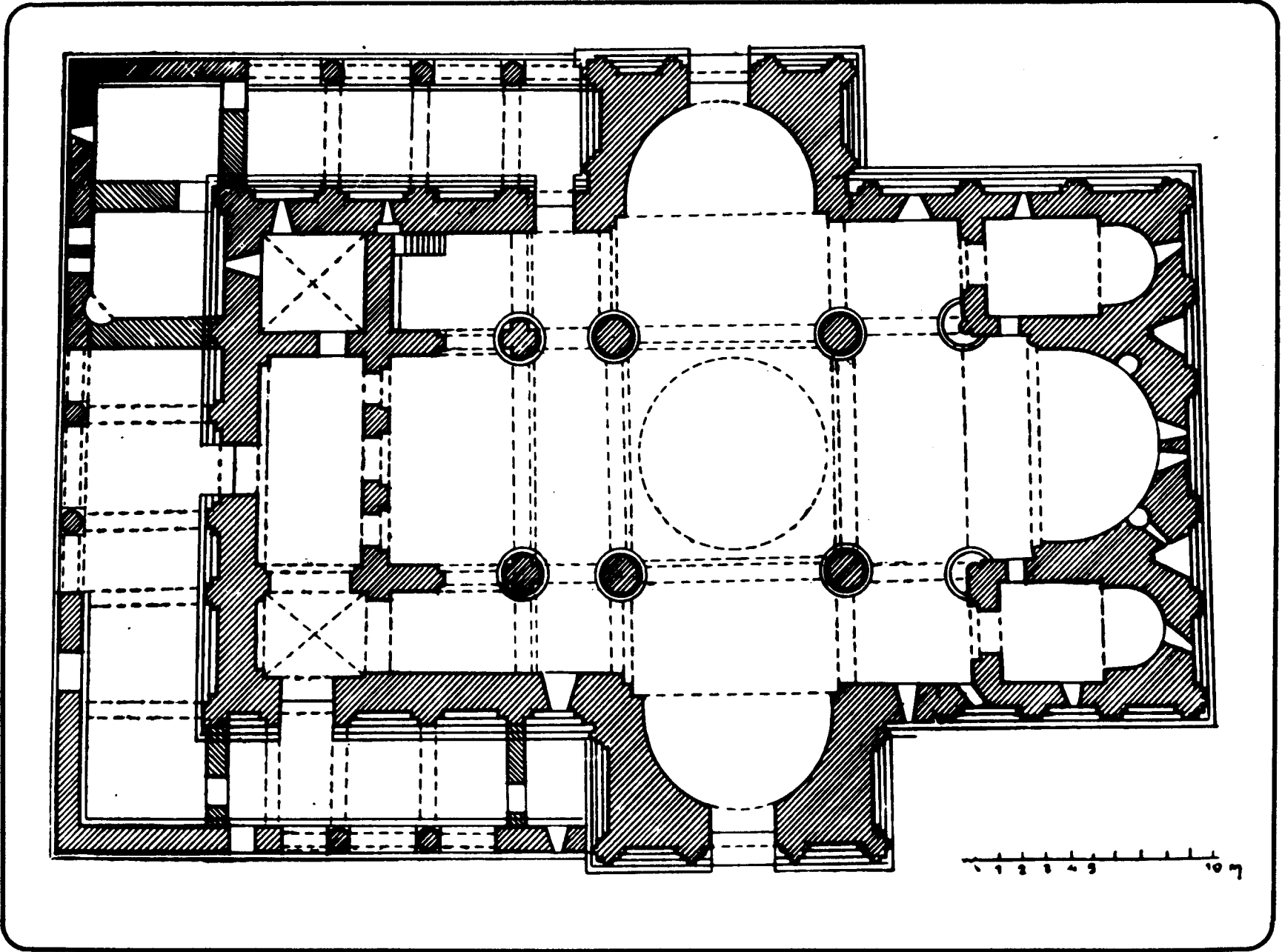
- ბაგრატის ტაძრისა და გელათის სამონასტრო კომპლექსის მკაცრი დაცვითი ზონების სასიღვარო.
- The border of the strict protective zone of Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery -Complex;
- ქ. ქუთაისის კულტურულ-ისტორიული, ბუნებრივ-ლანდშაფტური კომპლექსის დაცვითი ზონის სასიღვარო.
- The border of the protective zone of cultural-historical and natural-landscapecomplex of Kutaisi;
- თანამედროვე ქუთაისის ტერიტორიულ-ადმინისტრაციული სასიღვარო.
- The territorial-administrative boundary of modern Kutaisi;
- ძველი ქუთაისის მიდამოების ისტორიულ-ანტიკონოკენური ლანდშაფტის აღდგენის, დაცვისა და ქალაქის სავარეუბნო, კულტურულ-რეკრეაციული გამოყენების ზონის სასიღვარო. მსოფლიო მნიშვნელობის უნიკალური კარსტული მღვიმეების ლოკალიზების და ბუნებრივი ტყე-პარკის ორგანიზების ზონა.
- The border of the historical-anthropogenic landscape restoration, protection and suburban, cultural-recreative usage zone of the old Kutaisi surroundings. The zone of localisation of world import unique karst caves and a natural forest-park organization.

## მასშლიკაცია:

1. გელათის სამონასტრო კომპლექსი. 2. ბაგრატის ტაძარი. 3. მწვანეყვავილას კომპლექსი. 4. მდინარე წყალნიეთლას პალეოლითის ხანის ძეგლები. პირველყოფილი ადამიანის მღვიმე ნამოსახლარები. 5. მონამეთას სამონასტრო კომპლექსი. 6. სადღეისოდ მიმდინარე არქეოლოგიური გათხრების შედეგად გამოვლენილი IV-VI სს-ის დროინდელი ფეოდალური ქუთაისი. ქალაქის ტერიტორიის შემომზღუდავი საფორტიფიკაციო-სათავე-დაცვითო კედლების სისტემისა და სამოქალაქო დანიშნულების ნაგებობების ნაშთებით. 7. მნიშვნელოვანი, პოტენციური არქეოლოგიური ტერიტორია. არგონავტების ლაშქრობის (ძვ.წ. XIII-XI სს.) ლეგენდაში აპოლონიოს როდოსელის (ბერძ. ავტ. ძვ. წ. 295-215 წწ) მიერ მოხსენიებული კოლხეთის მეფე „აიეტის სატასტო ქალაქის“; „ერმრავალი“ ქალაქის, „ბარბაროსთა ქალაქის“ — „საიდანაც იყო მედეა“ (სტრაბონი ბერძ. ავტ. ძვ. და ახალი წ.-ის მიჯნა) ე.ი. კოლხეთის დედაქალაქის

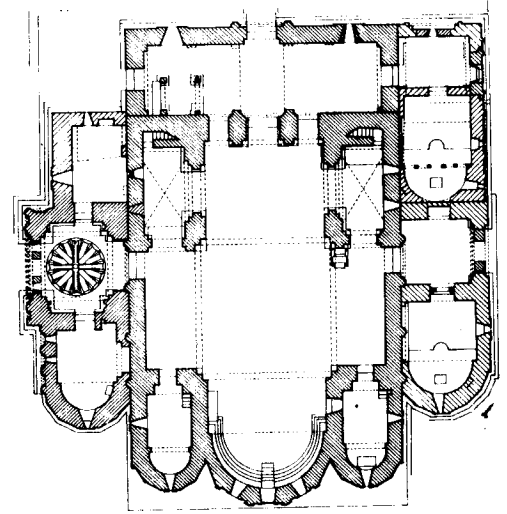
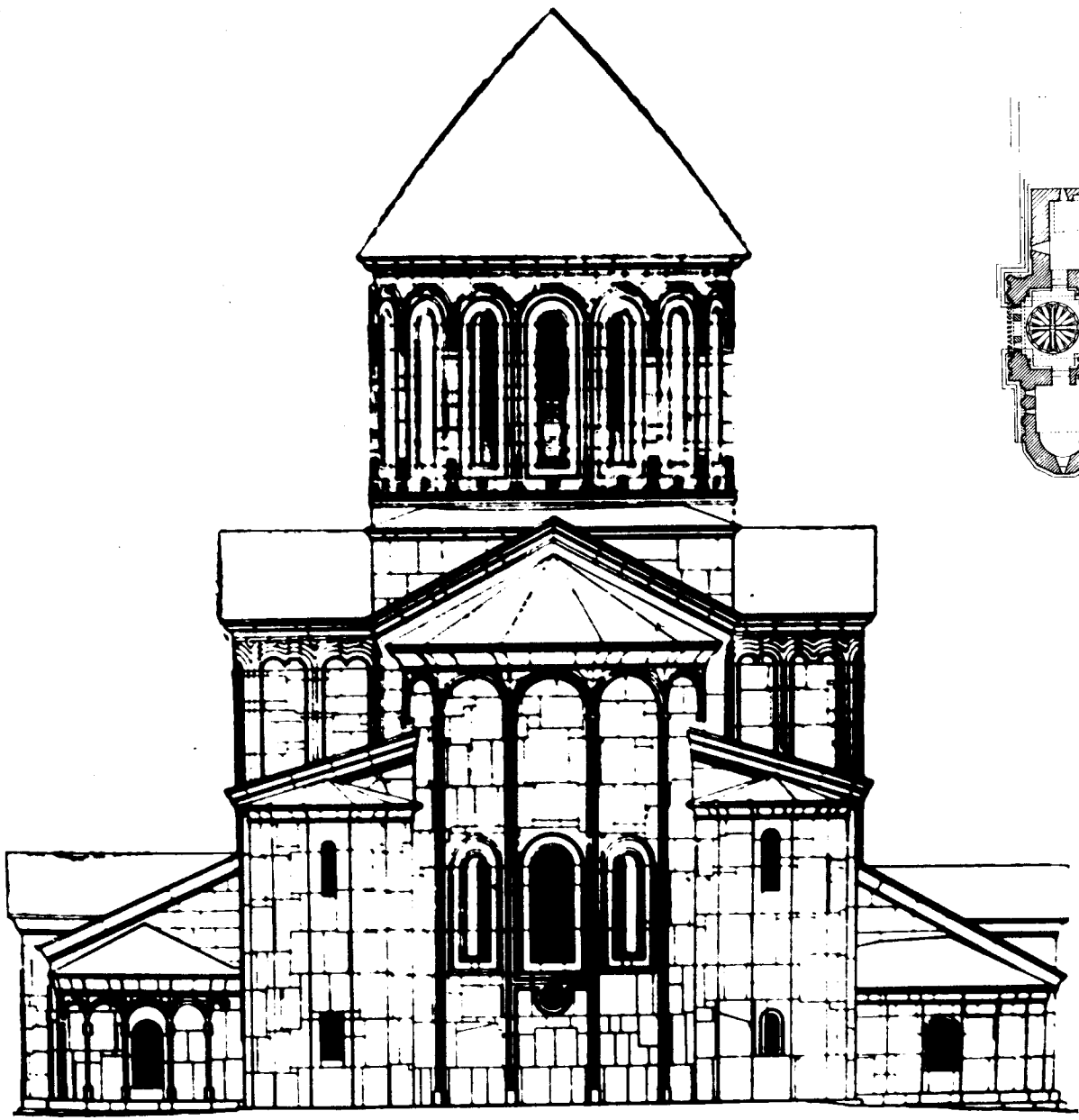
## EXPLICATION:

1. Gelati Monastery Complex; 2. Bagrati Cathedral; 3. Mtsvanekvakila Complex; 4. The monuments of paleolith period of the Tskaltsitela River; Cave dwellings of primitive Men. 5. Mtsameta Monastery Complex; 6. The feudal Kutaisi of the IV-VI cc. revealed by the current archaeological excavations. The remains of the fortification-protective wall system encircling the town territory and other municipal buildings; 7. The significant, potential archaeological territory. One of the hypothetical zones of the existence of the capital of Colchis, the town mentioned by Apollonios Rodoseli (Greek author, (295-215 B.C.) in his book about Argonauts campaign against the kingdom of Colchis (XIII-XI cc. B.C.), „The Royal Town of Aeetes“ – the King of Colchis; „Populous Town“, „Barbarian Town“, „the Town where Medea came from“ (Strabon, Greek author the boundary of B.C. and A.D.)









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**Identification**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Nomination</i>  | Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery |
| <i>Location</i>    | Tkibuli District                       |
| <i>State Party</i> | Republic of Georgia                    |
| <i>Date</i>        | 28 October 1993                        |

**Justification by State Party**

The external appearance of Bagrati Cathedral is monumental, varied, and dynamic. The perfect proportions, artistic mouldings, ornamentation, arches, and light construction amaze and fascinate the viewer. The cathedral demonstrates the rapid development of architectural decoration in Georgia in less than half-a-century. The high artistic value of Bagrati Cathedral extends far beyond merely local significance: it is one of the outstanding monuments of Christian medieval architecture.

Gelati Monastery is a well preserved historical ensemble. It is of special importance for its architecture, its mosaics, its wall paintings, and its enamel and metal work. Gelati was not simply a monastery: it was a centre of science and education, and the academy established in the Monastery was one of the most important centres of culture in ancient Georgia. By virtue of its high architectural quality and the outstanding examples of art that it houses, Gelati Monastery is a unique Georgian cultural treasury, and a rare case in the history of world culture.

**History and Description***History*

The earliest historical record of Kutaisi dates back to the 6th century AD, when the Byzantine Empire and Persia fought for possession of Georgia. At that time it was a typical early medieval town, with a fortress on a hill overlooking the walled town, built where a bridge crossed the river Rioni. The first half of the 8th century was one of large-scale expansion during the reign of King Archil. It was selected as the royal residence in the mid 8th century when eastern Georgia was occupied by the Arabs and reached the zenith of its development in the 10th-11th centuries.

Construction of Bagrati Cathedral, on the orders of Bagrat III, first king of united Georgia, began in the last quarter of the 10th century and was completed in the early years of the 11th century. The new stage in the architectural evolution of the town symbolized the end of the fight to unify the country. It was consecrated with great ceremony in the presence of representatives of all the regions of Georgia.

Gelati Monastery belongs to the "Golden Age" of medieval Georgia, a period of political strength and economic growth between the reigns of King David IV (the Builder) and Queen Tamar. It was David who began building the Monastery in 1106; it was completed in 1130 in the reign of his son and successor Demetré. One of its functions was to be the burying place of the Georgian royal house, and so it became a royal domain. It also housed the Academy, a project dear to the scholar king; among the projects carried out there were the translation into Georgian of ecclesiastical and secular literature and teaching in many subjects.

Buildings were added to the Monastery throughout the 13th and early 14th centuries, but there ensued a period of foreign invasion and internal feuds which resulted in much damage being incurred, culminating in the destruction by fire of the church in 1510 by Turkish invaders. Restoration work began in the early 16th

century when it became the residence of the *katholikos* of western Georgia, and continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

In 1691 the Turks blew up the Cathedral during their invasion, and the dome and roofs collapsed. The south and west porches were still intact in the later 19th century, but now they, too, are in ruins. Gelati Monastery escaped this fate, but it lost its episcopal role in the early 19th century, when Georgia was annexed by Russia.

### *Description*

*Bagrati Cathedral* is located in the centre of Kutaisi, on a hill on the left bank of the Rioni, overlooking the Old Town. It is reached by a long, winding stairway.

The building has been in ruins since 1691. Richly ornamented capitals and fragments of piers and vaulting are scattered throughout the interior. It is cruciform in plan; three of the cross arms (east, south, and north) terminate in semicircular apses whilst the west arm is squared off. The central dome was supported by four free-standing pillars and the original roof was barrel-vaulted. The west end was extended beyond the main walls to align with the north and south transepts, creating a large two-storeyed structure and emphasizing the cruciform domed plan when viewed from the exterior. Different approaches can be seen in the decorative treatment of the facades, the capitals, and the bases, resulting from the preferences of successive master-builders.

Not long after the main building was completed a three-storey tower was constructed on its north-west corner. Each floor consists of a single room with fireplace and niches. It is believed that this was the residence of the Bishop of Kutaisi. Large monumental porches were next added to the south and west, in a new stylistic form, with animal, bird, and plant motifs.

*Gelati Monastery* is located 12 km from Kutaisi. The monastery precinct is enclosed by a stone wall, now entered from the east but originally through the south porch, which houses the tomb of its founder, David the Builder. The main church is in the centre of the enclosure, flanked by the Church of S George to the west and the two-storeyed Church of S Nicholas and the academy building behind it. A stream flows to the north-west with a bell-tower alongside it.

The main Church of the Virgin is domed and cruciform in plan. The original intention was to surround it with an ambulatory on three sides, but this was changed in the reign of Demetré to an annex with a porch to the south and the so-called narthex to the west, and other annexes were added on the north side during the 13th century. However, care was taken to ensure that the essential integrity of the building was preserved.

The exterior mass of the church is relieved by the decorative arcading on all its facades, which emphasize the upward thrust of its forms. The interior, surmounted by the large dome, combines space and solemnity, with light streaming in from many windows. The main entrance, of three doors, is from the west; the eye is immediately caught by the famous 12th century mosaic in the conch of the apse, depicting the Virgin and Child with two archangels in colour against a gold background. The frescoes covering the walls are later: they depict Biblical scenes and historical personages, including David IV the Builder. An inscription records that the wall-paintings were renewed in the first half of the 16th century, but it is known that renovation work was carried out on them on more than one occasion subsequently.

The annexes also conserve decorative features, such as remains of the early 12th century wall paintings in the west annex, depicting the seven Ecumenical Councils, the 13th century royal portraits in the south annex, and 15th-17th century paintings showing a royal coronation in the north annex.

The Church of St George is a tall domed structure of the 13th century with three projecting apses. The dome is supported by two massive stone columns and the apse angles. It is well lit by many windows and there are fragments of the original wall paintings preserved in the west porch; those in the main church are from the 16th century.

The late 13th century Church of St Nicholas is an unusual structure. It is two-storeyed, and the ground floor is open on all sides through arches. The small domed church proper is on the upper floor, approached

by a stone stairway (added later - access was originally by wooden ladder). It is polyhedral in form and surmounts the massive lower section.

A stone vaulted canopy on four columns was built in the 12th century over the spring to the north of the main church. In the 13th century a room and open, arched bell-tower were added to this structure.

The academy building dates from the reign of David the Builder. It is a large structure lit by wide arched windows. A richly decorated porch was added in the 14th century to the centre of the three original entrances. It was also accessible from the south through a passage above a large arch. The walls were originally painted, and stone seats are arranged along the walls. When it ceased to operate as an academy in the later Middle Ages it was converted into a refectory.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery are protected under the provisions of the Law on the Protection of the Monuments of the Republic of Georgia.

Both are public property, but are administered by the Patriarchate of Georgia.

### *Management*

Formal administration of the two properties is the responsibility of the Patriarchate of Georgia. However, in practice this is shared with the Kutaisi-Gelati Museum Reserve and the Main Board for the Protection of Monuments of the Republic of Georgia. The latter body is responsible for restoration and conservation work.

The urban agglomeration of Kutaisi and its immediate surroundings are protected by a series of cumulative designated zones. The two properties proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List are located in "strict protection zones". The historic town is protected as a "culture-historical and natural landscape complex". Finally, the scenic area to the east of the town is a "historical-anthropogenic landscape restoration, protection, and suburban cultural-recreative zone" of the old town. This includes an area of karst landscape and caves and a natural forest park.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

A systematic programme of restoration and conservation began at Bagrati Cathedral in 1951. At the present time a fundamental scientific study of the monument is in progress. The piers supporting the dome and the walls have been partially restored, and other projects are planned. The work is being carried out by the Main Board for the Protection of Monuments of the Republic of Georgia.

A major restoration campaign has now been completed at Gelati Monastery. Its condition is now good and no further major work is planned.

### *Authenticity*

Bagrati Cathedral is ruined and may be considered *ipso facto* to be completely authentic. Gelati Monastery has been in continuous use since construction began and so it inevitably has certain elements that were introduced at a period before the modern philosophy of conservation had been formulated. However, much of its authenticity lies in its use and in its group integrity, neither of which can be challenged.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS evaluation mission visited the two properties in May 1994. The mission had high praise for the quality of the restoration and conservation work being carried out on them. It made recommendations regarding the removal of non-significant buildings from the Bagrati Cathedral buffer zone and the provision of interpretation and other infrastructural features. It expressed grave doubts about the projects being discussed for the reconstruction of the Cathedral and its reconsecration as a church and for the re-roofing of the Academy building at Gelati. Detailed maps showing the areas proposed for inscription and the buffer zones, which had been omitted from the nomination dossier, were supplied to the mission.

### *Qualities*

The two properties proposed in this nomination represent the flowering of feudal monarchy in medieval Georgia. By virtue of the location of this country, it developed its own distinctive stylistic idiom. The two properties are the highest expressions of this idiom, in the context of the royal capital.

### *Comparative analysis*

The nature of political and cultural development of this region of south-eastern Europe in the medieval period, coupled with the special geographical factors, was such that cultural evolution developed on national idiosyncratic and diverging trajectories in each country. This was a region of relatively small and distinct cultural areas. In the view of ICOMOS it is therefore unreasonable to apply comparative regional analysis to these monuments.

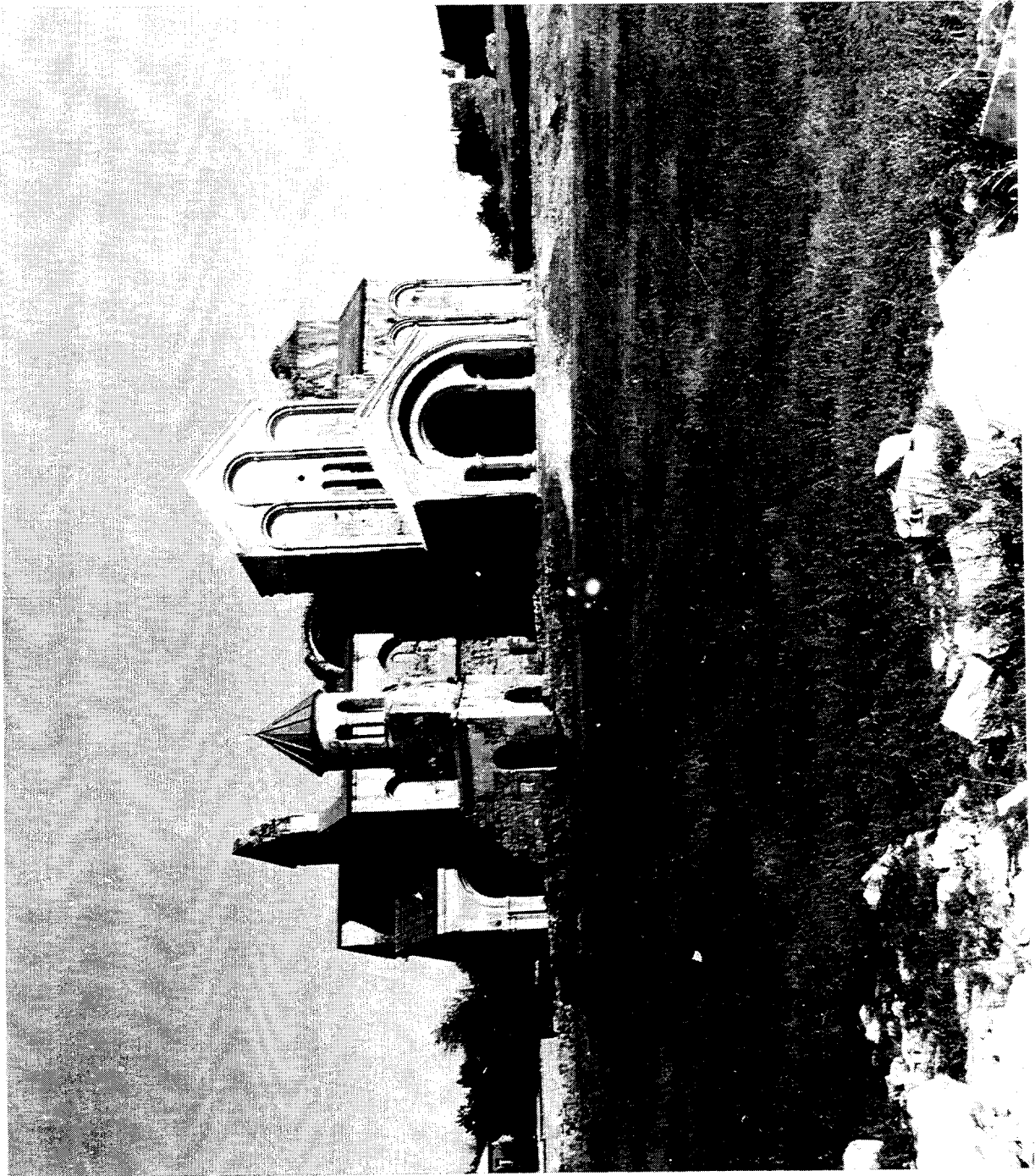
## **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion iv:

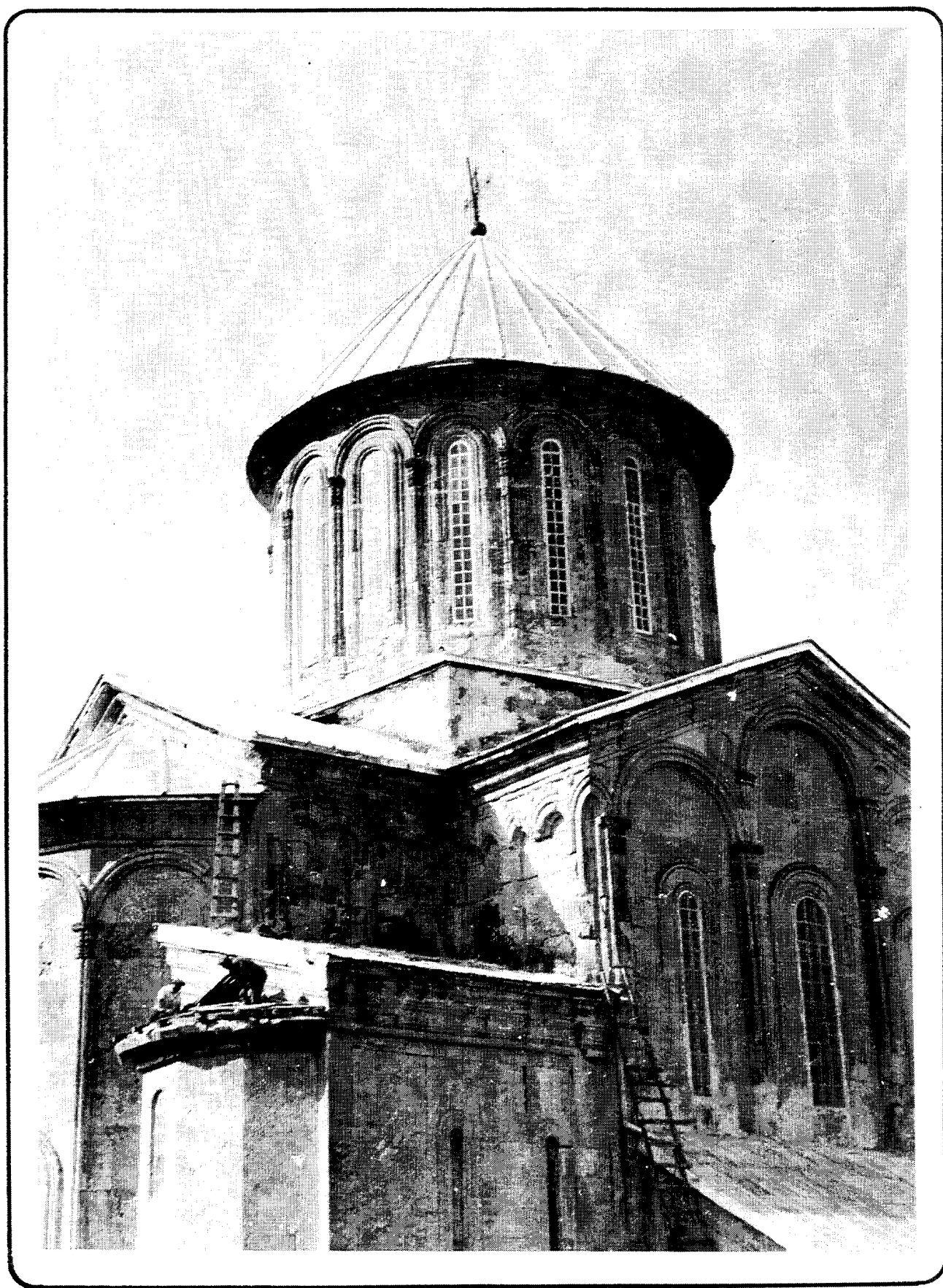
- **Criterion iv** Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery represent the highest flowering of the architecture of medieval Georgia.

ICOMOS, October 1994



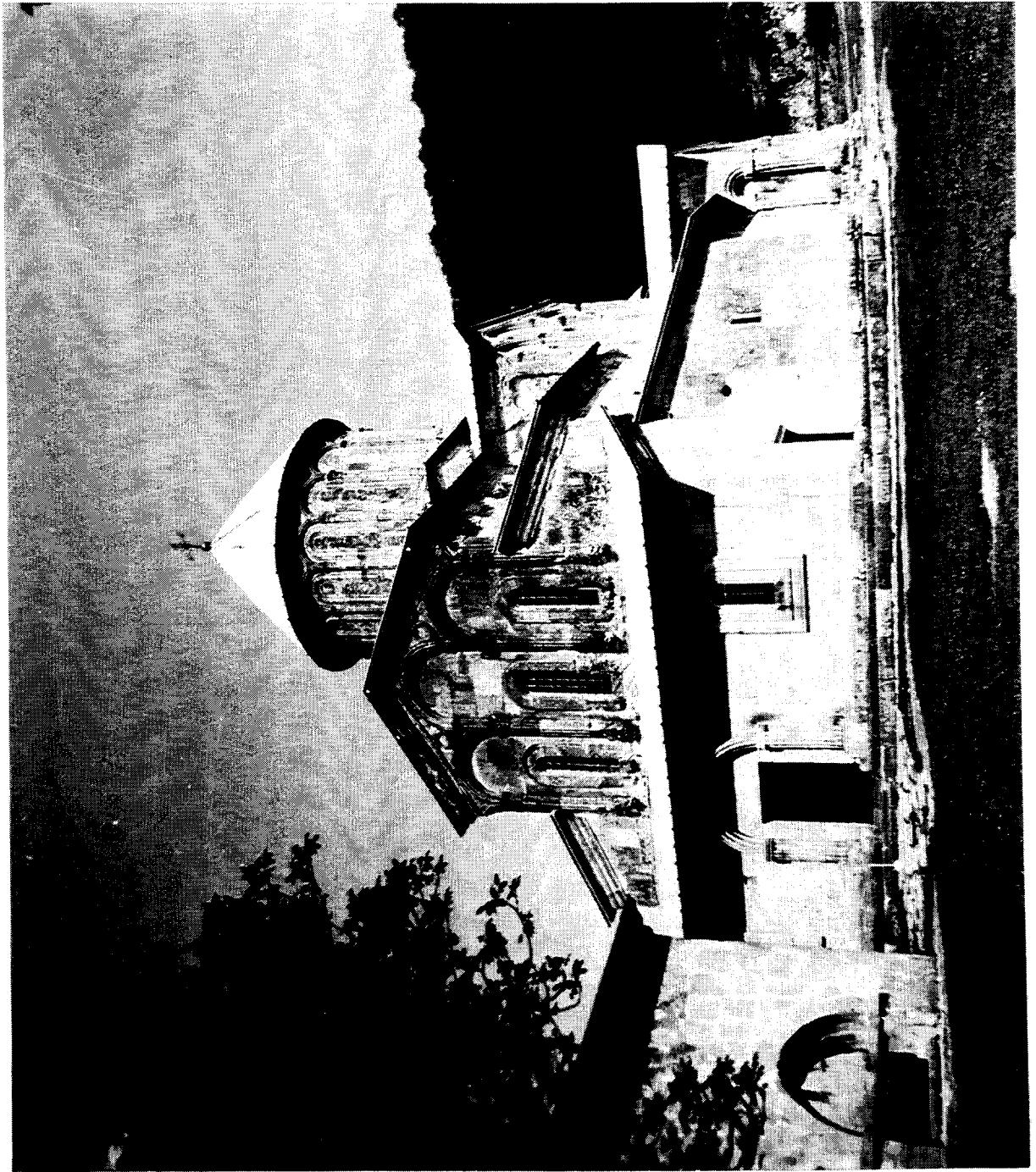


Bagrat : cathédrale, vue du sud-ouest /  
Bagrati : Cathedral, seen from the south-west

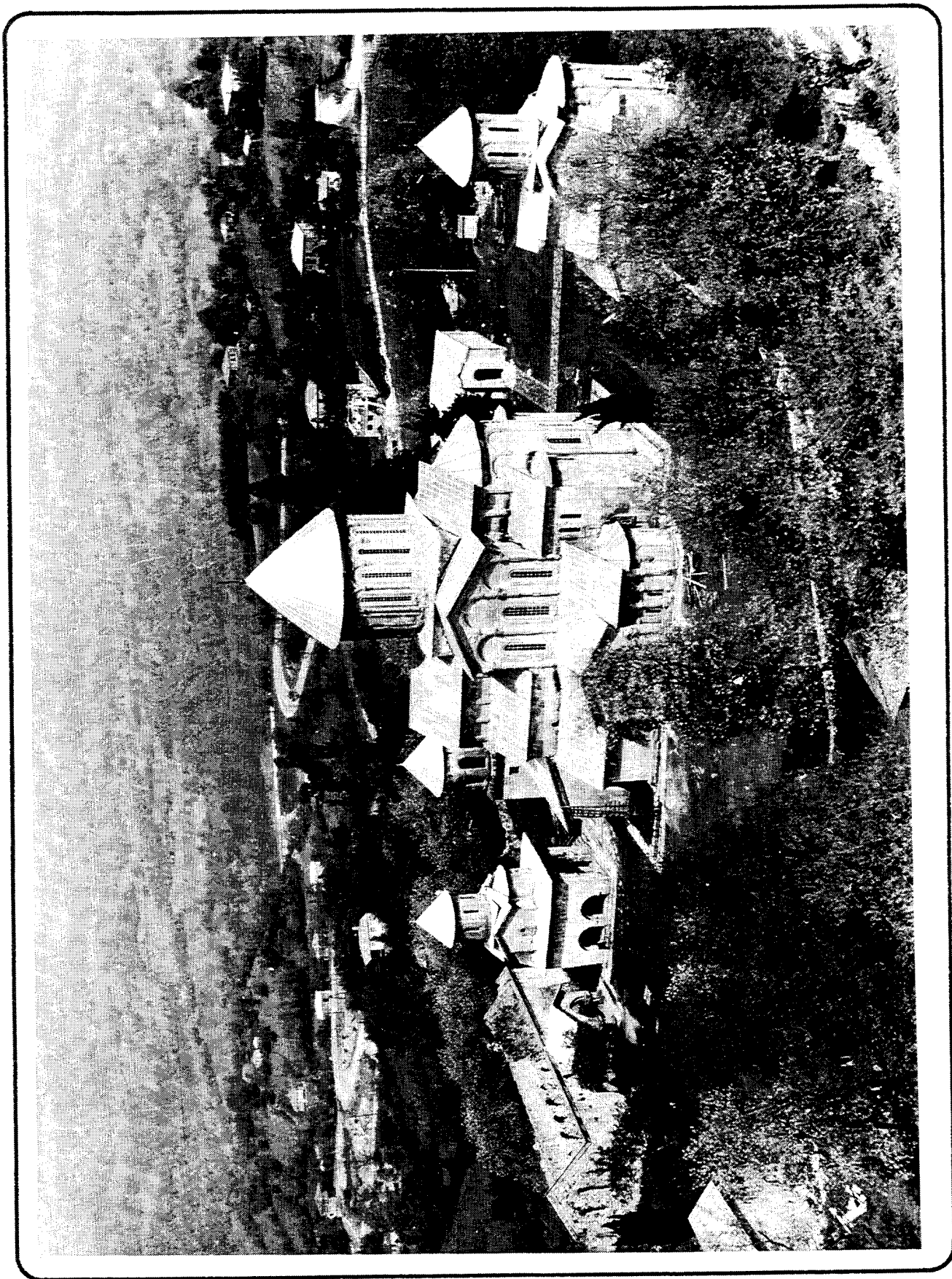


Ghélati : monastère, vu du nord-est /  
Gelati : Monastery, seen from the north-east





Ghélati : monastère, vu du sud-ouest /  
Gelati : Monastery, seen from the south-west



Ghélati : vue d'ensemble du monastère /  
Gelati : general view of the Monastery

**Identification**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Bien proposé</i> | Cathédrale de Bagrat et monastère de Ghélati |
| <i>Lieu</i>         | District de Tkibuli                          |
| <i>Etat partie</i>  | République de Géorgie                        |
| <i>Date</i>         | 28 octobre 1993                              |

**Justification émanant de l'Etat partie**

L'apparence extérieure de la cathédrale de Bagrat est monumentale, variée et élancée. Ses proportions parfaites, ses moulures artistiques, ses décorations, ses arcs, la légèreté de sa construction surprennent et fascinent le visiteur. La cathédrale prouve le rapide développement de la décoration architecturale en Géorgie en moins d'un demi-siècle. La très grande valeur artistique de la cathédrale de Bagrat dépasse largement les limites de la région, elle est l'un des monuments de l'architecture chrétienne médiévale les plus extraordinaires.

Le monastère de Ghélati est un ensemble historique bien préservé. Il est important en raison de ses mosaïques, de ses peintures murales et de ses ferronneries et émaux. Ghélati n'était pas simplement un monastère, il était aussi un centre de science et d'éducation ; l'académie installée dans le monastère était l'un des établissements culturels les plus importants de la Géorgie ancienne. En raison de sa grande qualité architecturale et de la richesse artistique des merveilles qu'il recèle, le monastère de Ghélati est un trésor culturel unique et un cas rare dans l'histoire de la culture mondiale.

**Histoire et Description***Histoire*

Les plus anciens éléments relatifs à Kutaïssi découverts à ce jour remontent au 6ème siècle de notre ère, période où l'Empire byzantin et la Perse combattirent pour conquérir la Géorgie. A cette époque, Kutaïssi était une ville typique du début du moyen âge avec une forteresse au sommet d'une colline surplombant une ville ceinte de murs et construite à l'endroit où un pont enjambait la rivière Rioni. Au cours de la première moitié du 8ème siècle, pendant le règne du roi Archil, la ville connut une très forte expansion. Elle fut choisie comme résidence royale au milieu du 8ème siècle quand la Géorgie orientale fut occupée par les Arabes ; elle connut son apogée aux 10 et 11èmes siècles.

La construction de la cathédrale de Bagrat, sur l'ordre de Bagrat III, premier roi de la Géorgie unifiée, commença pendant le dernier quart du 10ème siècle et fut terminée au tout début du 11ème siècle. Cette nouvelle étape de l'évolution architecturale de la ville symbolisa la fin des luttes engagées pour unifier le pays. La cathédrale fut consacrée en grande pompe en présence des représentants de toutes les régions de Géorgie.

Le monastère de Ghélati appartient à "l'Age d'or" de la Géorgie médiévale, période de solidité politique et de croissance économique qui dura pendant le règne du roi David IV (le Constructeur) et celui de la reine Tamar. David commença la construction du monastère en 1106 ; elle fut terminée en 1130 sous le règne de son fils et successeur Demétré. L'une de ses fonction fut de servir de lieu de sépulture à la famille royale de Géorgie. C'est pourquoi, il devint un domaine royal. Autre destination, le monastère abrita l'Académie, projet cher au coeur d'un roi érudit. L'Académie entre autres projets, traduisit en géorgien des textes religieux et séculiers et enseigna de nombreux sujets.

Des bâtiments furent ajoutés au monastère tout au long du 13ème et au début du 14ème siècle mais il

arriva une période d'invasions et de révoltes internes qui provoquèrent de nombreux dégâts jusqu'à ce qu'en 1510, les envahisseurs Turcs soient à l'origine d'un incendie qui détruisit l'église. Les travaux de restauration commencèrent dès le début du 16ème siècle quand le monastère devint la résidence du *katolicos* de Géorgie occidentale ; ils se poursuivirent aux 17ème et 18ème siècle.

En 1691, les Turcs envahirent à nouveau la Géorgie et firent sauter la cathédrale : les toits et le dôme s'effondrèrent. Les porches sud et ouest restèrent intacts jusqu'à la fin du 19ème siècle mais ils sont également en ruines aujourd'hui. Le monastère de Ghélati échappa à la destruction mais perdit son rôle épiscopal au début du 19ème siècle quand la Géorgie fut annexée par la Russie.

### *Description*

La *cathédrale de Bagrat* est située au centre de Koutaïssi, sur une colline sur la rive gauche de la rivière Rioni en surplomb de la vieille ville. On y accède par un long escalier sinueux.

Le bâtiment est en ruines depuis 1691. Des chapiteaux richement décorés et des fragments de piles et de voûtes sont disséminés un peu partout à l'intérieur. Son plan est cruciforme ; les bras est, sud et nord se terminent par des absides semi-circulaires alors que le bras ouest est terminé par un côté droit. Le dôme central était porté par quatre piliers libres et le toit d'origine était voûté en berceau. Le côté ouest se prolongeait au-delà des murs principaux pour s'aligner avec les bras nord et sud du transept, créant une grande structure à deux étages et soulignant le plan cruciforme avec dôme quand on la regarde de l'extérieur. Différentes approches sont décelables quant au traitement des éléments décoratifs des façades, quant aux chapiteaux, et aux bases manifestant des choix successifs des divers maîtres d'oeuvre.

Peu de temps après la fin de la construction, une tour de trois étages fut édifée dans l'angle nord-ouest. Chaque étage consiste en une pièce unique avec un âtre et des niches. On pense qu'il s'agissait de la résidence de l'évêque de Koutaïssi. Des porches monumentaux furent ajoutés au sud et à l'ouest avec une forme d'un style nouveau avec des motifs représentant des animaux, des oiseaux et des plantes.

Le *monastère de Ghélati* est situé à 12 km de Koutaïssi. Le domaine est entouré d'un mur de pierres ouvert aujourd'hui sur le côté nord tandis qu'à l'origine on le franchissait par un porche au sud où est abritée la tombe de son fondateur, David le Constructeur. L'église principale est au centre de l'enceinte, elle est encadrée par l'église Saint-Georges à l'ouest et par l'église Saint-Nicolas avec ses deux étages tandis que l'Académie se trouve derrière elle. Un cours d'eau coule vers le nord-ouest avec un clocher sur la rive.

L'église de la Vierge est cruciforme et a un dôme. L'intention d'origine était de l'entourer d'un déambulatoire sur trois de ses côtés. Le projet initial fut modifié sous le règne de Demétré qui lui préféra une annexe avec un porche au sud, le narthex à l'ouest puis d'autres annexes furent ajoutées au nord au cours du 13ème siècle. Cependant de nombreuses précautions furent prises pour que l'intégrité du bâtiment soit préservée.

La masse externe de l'église est allégée par les arcades décoratives que l'on trouve sur toutes ses façades et qui renforcent sa forme élancée. L'intérieur surmonté d'un grand dôme associe espace et solennité avec des flots de lumière pénétrant par les nombreuses fenêtres. L'entrée principale avec trois portes est à l'ouest. L'oeil est immédiatement attiré par les mosaïques du 12ème siècle décorant la voûte de l'abside et qui représentent la Vierge à l'Enfant avec deux archanges en couleur sur un fond d'or. Les fresques couvrant les murs sont plus récentes, elles dépeignent des scènes bibliques et des personnages historiques dont David IV le Constructeur. Une inscription rappelle que les peintures murales ont été remises à neuf au cours de la première moitié du 16ème siècle mais l'on sait qu'à plusieurs reprises, elles ont fait l'objet de travaux de rénovation.

Les annexes ont aussi gardé des éléments décoratifs, dont par exemple les restes de peintures du début du 12ème siècle sur les murs de l'annexe ouest qui représentent les sept conciles oecuméniques et dans l'annexe sud, les portraits royaux du 13ème siècle ou encore dans l'annexe nord, les peintures des 15-17èmes siècles représentant un couronnement.

L'église Saint-Georges est une structure du 13ème siècle, haute avec un dôme et trois absides saillantes. Le dôme est soutenu par deux massives colonnes de pierre et les angles des absides. Elle est bien éclairée par un grand nombre de fenêtres. On trouve des fragments des peintures murales d'origine préservées dans le

porche ouest. Les peintures de l'église principale sont du 16ème siècle.

L'église Saint-Nicolas de la fin du 13ème siècle est une structure inhabituelle. Elle a deux étages et le rez-de-chaussée est ouvert sur les quatre côtés par des arcs. La petite église avec un dôme est au dernier étage ; on y accède par un escalier de pierres (ajouté postérieurement en remplacement de l'échelle de bois qui en permettait originellement l'accès). Cette église a la forme d'un polyèdre et surmonte une section inférieure massive.

Un baldaquin voûté en pierres porté par quatre colonnes a été construit au 12ème siècle au-dessus d'une source au nord de l'église principale. Au 13ème siècle, une pièce et un clocher ouvert ont été ajoutés à cette structure.

Les bâtiments de l'Académie datent du règne de David le Constructeur. Il s'agit d'une grande structure éclairée par de grandes fenêtres en arc. Un porche richement décoré a été ajouté au 14ème siècle au centre des trois entrées d'origine. On y accédait également au sud par un passage sous un grand arc. Initialement, les murs étaient peints et des sièges de pierre étaient disposés le long des murs. Quand, à la fin du moyen âge, elle perdit sa fonction d'académie, elle devint un réfectoire.

## **Gestion et Protection**

### *Statut juridique*

La cathédrale de Bagrat et le monastère de Ghélati bénéficient des dispositions de la loi pour la la Protection des Monuments de la République de Géorgie.

Tous deux appartiennent à l'Etat et sont administrés par le Patriarche de Géorgie.

### *Gestion*

L'administration formelle des deux biens est sous la responsabilité du Patriarche de Géorgie. Cependant, cette fonction est, en réalité partagée avec la Réserve-Musée de Kutaïssi-Ghélati et le Conseil pour la Protection des Monuments de la République de Géorgie. Ce dernier organe est chargé des travaux de restauration et de conservation.

L'agglomération urbaine de Kutaïssi et ses environs immédiats sont protégés par une série de zones complémentaires désignées. Les deux biens proposés pour inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial sont situés dans une "zone de protection stricte". La ville historique est protégée en sa qualité "d'ensemble paysage culturel, historique et naturel". Enfin, les environs à l'est de la ville sont une "zone sub-urbaine culturelle et récréative et un paysage historique et anthropogénique de protection et de restauration". Cette dénomination porte aussi sur une zone de paysage et de grottes karstiques et sur un parc forestier naturel.

## **Conservation et Authenticité**

### *Historique de la conservation*

Un programme systématique de conservation et de restauration portant sur la cathédrale de Bagrat a commencé en 1951. A présent, une étude scientifique du monument est en cours. Les piles soutenant le dôme ainsi que les murs ont été partiellement restaurés tandis que d'autres projets sont à l'étude. Les travaux sont réalisés par le Conseil Supérieur pour la Protection des Monuments de la République de Géorgie.

Une grande campagne de restauration concernant le monastère de Ghélati a maintenant pris fin. Le monastère est maintenant en bon état et aucun projet de travaux n'est prévu.

### *Authenticité*

La cathédrale de Bagrat est en ruines et doit être considérée *ipso facto* comme complètement

authentique. Le monastère de Ghélati a été utilisé en permanence depuis sa construction et contient, de toute évidence, des éléments qui ont été ajoutés à une époque où les critères modernes de conservation n'étaient pas encore formulés. Cependant, une grande partie de son authenticité tient à son utilisation et à son intégrité de groupe dont rien ne peut être contesté.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action de l'ICOMOS*

Une mission d'évaluation de l'ICOMOS a visité les deux biens en mai 1994. La mission a beaucoup apprécié la qualité des travaux de restauration et de conservation entrepris sur ces biens. Elle a recommandé que des constructions de peu d'intérêt situées dans la zone tampon de la cathédrale de Bagrat soient supprimées. Des recommandations ont aussi été faites pour les mesures d'interprétation des biens et d'autres infrastructures. La mission a exprimé de sérieux doutes au sujet des projets en cours de discussion concernant la reconstruction de la cathédrale, sa reconsécration comme église et la reconstruction de la toiture du bâtiment de l'Académie à Ghélati. Des cartes détaillées indiquant les zones proposées pour inscription et les zones tampon qui manquaient dans le dossier d'inscription ont été remises aux membres de la mission.

### *Caractéristiques*

Les deux biens proposés pour inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial représentent l'épanouissement de la monarchie féodale dans la Géorgie du moyen âge. En raison de la situation dans ce pays, ils ont développé leur propre identité stylistique. Les deux biens sont la plus parfaite expression de cette identité dans le contexte d'une capitale royale.

### *Analyse comparative*

La nature du développement politique et culturel de cette région du sud-est de l'Europe pendant la période médiévale ainsi que les facteurs géographiques particuliers étaient tels que l'évolution culturelle s'est manifestée sur des trajectoires nationales idiosyncratiques et divergeantes dans chaque pays. L'ICOMOS pense donc qu'il est déraisonnable de soumettre ces monuments à une analyse comparative.

### *Recommandations de l'ICOMOS pour des actions futures*

Pour les deux monuments, des cartes ont été fournies précisant les "zones de protection strictes" déterminées par les dispositions légales. Ces zones couvrent des régions relativement grandes qui cependant, semblent correspondre à des zones tampon (dans quelle mesure sont-elles efficaces). L'Etat partie devrait produire des cartes qui montreraient avec précision les limites des monuments proposés pour inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial.

## **Recommandation**

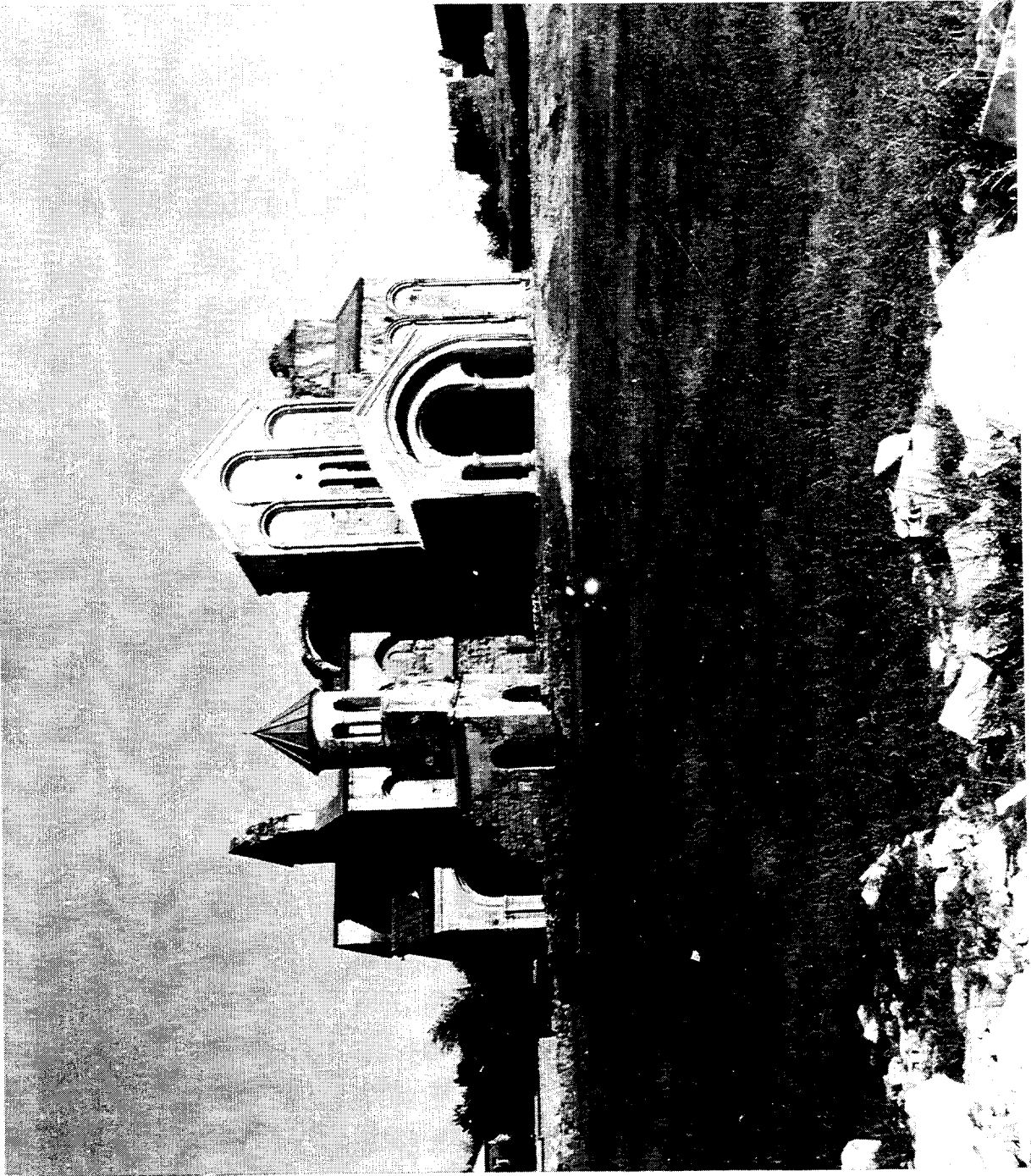
Que ce bien soit inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial sur la base du critère iv:

- *Critère iv* La cathédrale de Bagrat et le monastère de Ghélati représentent l'épanouissement de l'architecture médiévale de Géorgie.

ICOMOS, octobre 1994

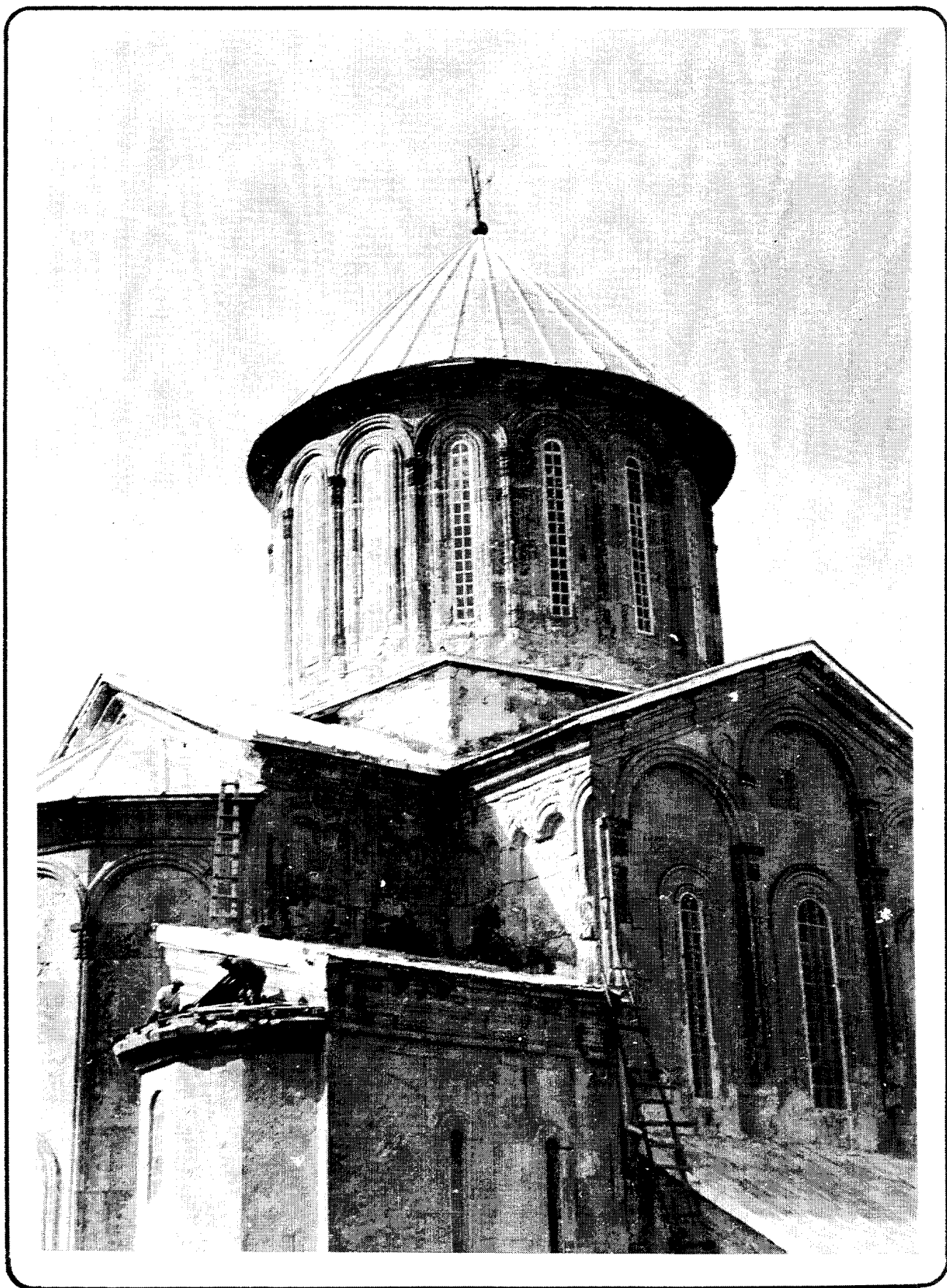




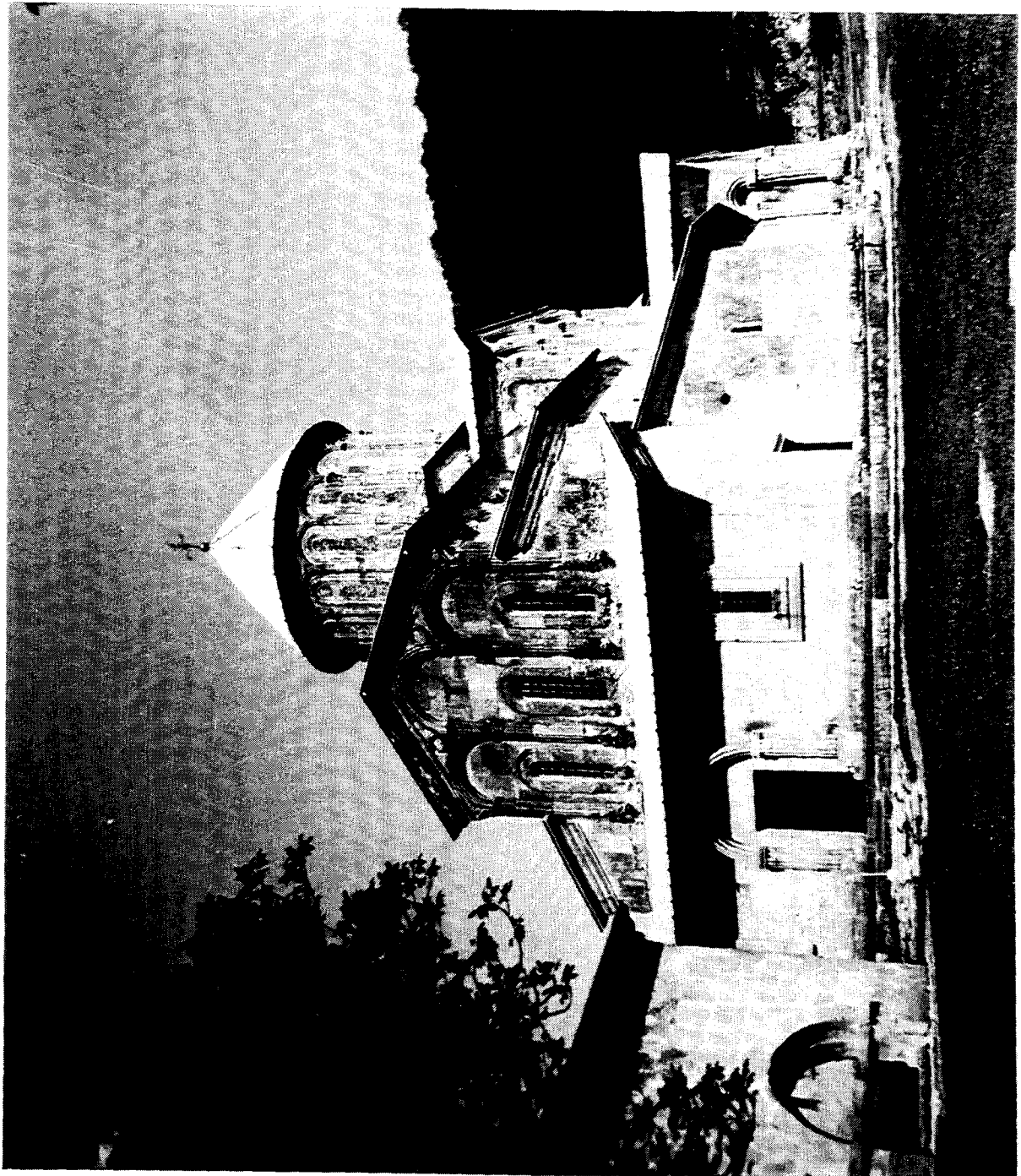


Bagrat : cathédrale, vue du sud-ouest /  
Bagrati : Cathedral, seen from the south-west

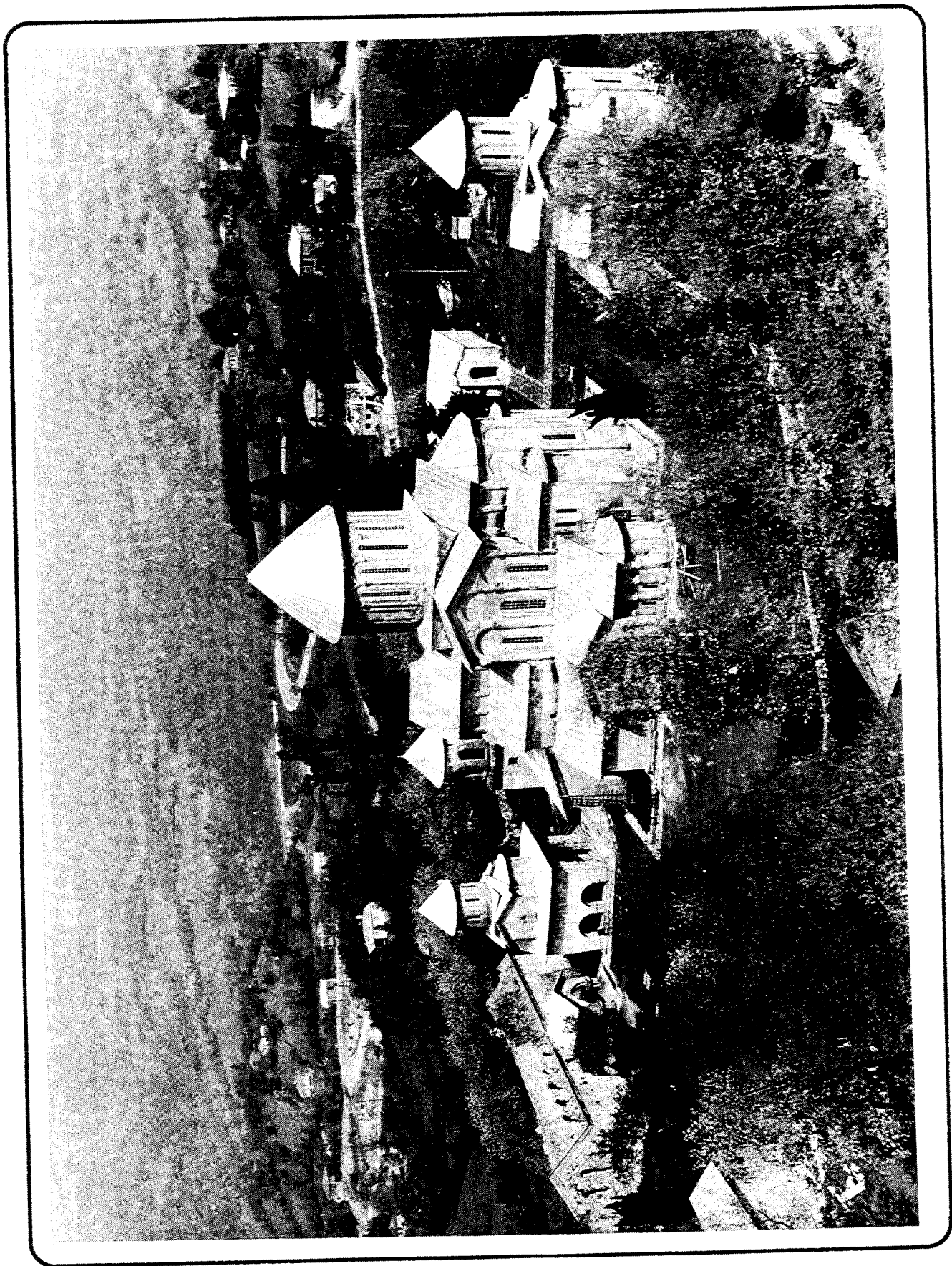




Ghélati : monastère, vu du nord-est /  
Gelati : Monastery, seen from the north-east



Ghélati : monastère, vu du sud-ouest /  
Gelati : Monastery, seen from the south-west



Ghélati : vue d'ensemble du monastère /  
Gelati : general view of the Monastery