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The UNESCO program on preservation of the historical and cultural heritage in Kazakhstan

The main purpose of this article is to point on the wide range of diverse threats to a conservation of the Kazakhstani cultural monuments inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List. For a better explanation of the conservational issues of the cultural heritage in Kazakhstan, the State historical, cultural and natural Museum-Reserve «Tanbaly» (Tamgaly) was selected as a case study. Actuality of this article is confirmed with the recent events that had a place within the Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Talgar and Tamgaly World Heritage properties and that may lead even to the exception of those properties from the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Key words: conservational issues, cultural property, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, monument, convention.

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Қазақстанның тарихи-мәдени мұрасын сақтаудағы ЮНЕСКО бағдарламалары

Мақалада ЮНЕСКО-ның Бүкіләлемдік мұралар тізіміне енгізілген Қазақстанның мәдени ескерткіштер сақтау үшін әр түрлі тәуекелдер мен қауіп-қатерлер кең спектрі қарастырылады. Қазақстанда мәдени мұраны сақтау мәселелерді жақсы түсіну үшін, «Таңбалы» Мемлекеттік тарихи-мәдени және табиғи қорық-мұражайы зерттеу мақсатында таңдалған болатын. Осы мақаланың өзектілігі Қазақстандағы Дүниежүзілік мұра ескерткіштерін (Қожа Ахмет Ясауи кесенесі, Талғар ежелгі қаласы, Таңбалы қорығы) сақтау барысында туындайтын қиындықтармен және осы объектілерді ЮНЕСКО-ның Бүкіләлемдік мәдени мұра тізімінен жойылуы мүмкіндігімен расталады.

Түйін сөздер: сақтау мәселелері, мәдени объект, ЮНЕСКО-ның Бүкіләлемдік Мұра Орталығы, ИКОМОС, ескерткіш, конвенция.

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Программа ЮНЕСКО по сохранению памятников историко-культурного наследия в Казахстане

Основная цель статьи состоит в том, чтобы обозначить широкий спектр рисков и различных угроз для сохранения культурных памятников Казахстана, включенных в список Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО. Для лучшего понимания вопросов сохранения культурного наследия в Казахстане, в качестве примера для тематического исследования был выбран Государственный историко-культурный и природный музей-заповедник «Таңбалы» (Тамгалы). Актуальность данной статьи подтверждается сложностями, возникающими в процессе консервации на базе памятников Всемирного наследия – Мавзолея Ходжи Ахмеда Ясауи, городища Талгар и заповедника Тамгалы, которые могут привести даже к исключению этих объектов из списка Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО.

Ключевые слова: проблемы сохранения, культурный объект, Центр Всемирного Наследия ЮНЕСКО, ИКОМОС, памятник, конвенция.

THE UNESCO PROGRAM ON PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN KAZAKHSTAN

Introduction

The Kazakh people have a long history and they own cultural values that are part of the world civilization treasury. The number and variety of Kazakhstani cultural monuments does not concede to a many of the Central Asian, Mediterranean and the Middle East countries. Archaeological findings confirm the high level of development of the settled agricultural and nomadic civilization cultures.

Economic, political and social changes that took place in the Republic of Kazakhstan after acquisition of independence reflected on to modifications in the state's attitude to the historical and cultural heritage. Protection of historical and cultural heritage, creation of the legal guarantees for preservation of historical heritage of the Kazakhstani people and ethnic diasporas – are some of the main principles of the state policy in cultural sphere.

Current state of cultural heritage in Kazakhstan

Not by chance, the loss of cultural and spiritual heritage of the Kazakhs was indicated as one of the main threats in the Law on «National Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan», adopted in 2012.

The current state of the cultural heritage in Kazakhstan characterized by the complex of measures that were undertaken to develop the ancient traditions, to discover new historical and cultural monuments, to create new cultural and historical museums, to restore of mausoleums and ancient mosques, to identify archive documents of historical importance on cultural heritage of Kazakh nation.

Therefore, the law «On Culture» was adopted in December 1996 and its new edition was published on 15 December 2006, the Law «On preservation and utilization of the objects of historical and cultural heritage» from June 2, 1992 is currently in effect, subject to certain changes.

The cultural heritage of the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan presents a set of cultural values of national importance, belonging exclusively to the Republic of Kazakhstan without the right to transfer to other states. This definition is given in paragraph 3 of the Article 1 of the Law «On culture».

Cooperation between Kazakhstan and UNESCO

In April 1994, Kazakhstan joined the UNESCO 1972 Convention «Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage» and expressed the willingness to meet all obligations in the framework of conservation of the national cultural heritage.

In terms of cultural significance, all the monuments are divided into following 3 groups, corresponding to the conventional classification:

1st group – historical and cultural properties of international importance, that possess the historical, scientific, architectural, artistic or memorial value, inscribed to the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Lists.

For example, the unique historical and cultural properties of Kazakhstan – «*Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi*» in the city of Turkestan, «*Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly*» in Almaty oblast and the transnational serial nomination of the «*Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*» were inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List;

2nd group – historical and cultural monuments of national significance, represent the historical, scientific, architectural, artistic and memorial value of particular significance for the history and culture of the country;

3rd group – historical and cultural monuments of local importance, represent the historical, scientific, architectural, artistic and memorial value of particular significance for the history and culture of the area (capital cities or those of republican significance) and district (cities of regional significance).

No matter what kind of the monument it is, there is always a wide range of diverse threats to its protection. One of the most widespread issues of conservation of the Kazakhstani properties inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List – is interruption into the extensive grounds of the property that includes a monument itself and the surrounding territories of the buffer zone.

Any of the 1st group properties obtain their own buffer zone that is to be determined by the national experts or special invited international experts while the nomination dossier is being written for the further application to and examination by the World Heritage Committee.

Afterwards, when the property has been successfully inscribed, it does already have a buffer zone in its description with corresponding maps, and the state-party – owner of the property takes

the full responsibility for this property providing infrastructure and other facilities development, protection and maintenance of any constructions of the monument, as well as the guidelines for national legislation for cultural landscapes, including transboundary areas and buffer zones.

Cultural Landscapes became one of the hot topics during the past years of World Heritage work and beyond. They represent the combined works of man and nature. Moreover, they are the places of peoples' livelihoods, identities and belief systems all over the world.

Cultural landscapes have been rendered more biologically diverse through human intervention over centuries. They are the foundations of food production systems and living gene banks for the food crops of tomorrow. These areas are home to local populations and indigenous groups, and are rich in cultural diversity and intangible values, to be conserved as a whole for a sustainable future. [1]

World Heritage in Kazakhstan

That is why it is extremely important to respect the boundaries of the World Heritage properties and that is what Kazakhstan has a problem with. For a better explanation of the conservational issues of the cultural heritage in Kazakhstan, the property of Tamgaly was selected as a case study.

Tamgaly is a set around the lush Tamgaly Gorge, amidst the vast, arid Chu-Ili mountains, is a remarkable concentration of some 5,000 petroglyphs (rock carvings) dating from the second half of the second millennium BC to the beginning of the 20th century. Distributed among 48 complexes with associated settlements and burial grounds, they are testimonies to the husbandry, social organization and rituals of pastoral peoples. Human settlements in the site are often multilayered and show occupation through the ages. A huge number of ancient tombs are also to be found including stone enclosures with boxes and cists (middle and late Bronze Age), and mounds (kurgans) of stone and earth (early Iron Age to the present). The central canyon contains the densest concentration of engravings what were believed to be altars, suggesting that these places were used for sacrificial offerings. [2]

Petroglyphs of Tamgaly (Tanbaly) were opened by Semirechensky group of the Southern Kazakhstan Expedition of Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan for the Soviet Socialist Republic under the leadership of Anna Maximova in September, 1957. Further A. G. Medoyev, A. N. Maryashev, A. E. Rogozhinsky and other researchers were engaged in studying of

monuments of the Tamgaly. By the resolution of the Kazakhstan Government of October 14, 2003 – the State historical and cultural and natural Reserve-Museum of «Tamgaly» was created and authorized in protection and presentation of a monument.

The Tamgaly Natural Boundary is widely known by unique petroglyphs the most valuable of which are concentrated in a small picturesque canyon, in the mouth of the gorge. Five main rocky massifs (groups I-V) with petroglyphs of different historical eras here, and also other monuments that located further from the gorge which are dated till the Modernity.

Annually a large number of tourists from the different cities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as well as from other foreign countries are visiting Tamgaly complex. Tourists can see five groups of petroglyphs and also some burials of the Bronze Age.

It is well known that Tamgaly is the big complex of archaeological monuments representing huge scientific interest, which is the fullest, in comparison with other monuments of the region. This property characterizes the development of spiritual and material culture of the population of the region in the wide chronological range that continued for more than three millennia. Petroglyphs of Tamgaly which main part was carved on rocks of the gorge in the Bronze Age, mark similar flash of the graphic culture which reflected changes in the religious and mythological sphere of local population.

In spite of the fact that the nature of these cultural interactions isn't clear yet, it is possible to speak with confidence that at that time the territory of the Chu-Ile Mountains served in the shortest way from the Central Kazakhstan to the upper lands of Chu River Valley, roads to the countries the consuming copper and bronze from this mining region where opened. This way was especially brisk during the Middle Bronze, but also later the environment of low Chu-Ile Mountains which were favorably differing from the semidesertic plain adjoining from the North to Tien Shan Mountains attracted nomads of the Early Iron Age and Middle Ages.

However petroglyphic art of the Tamgaly has, certainly the local roots that are traced in development of local tradition in which, Tamgaly – important and bright, but nevertheless only one of stages of development of petroglyphic art. It is considered that the tradition of (cultic representations) petroglyphic art gained special development in the historical societies which didn't have writing. By other opinion, its development stops (or sharply slowed down) in the societies getting a state system,

with giving the official status to religion, with construction of temples, by architectural canons, issued by religious painting. Especially this process amplified with adoption of monotheist religions by the population. [3]

On 30 June 2004, the nomination of «Petroglyphs within the archaeological landscape of the Tamgaly» was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List. To be inscribed, any of the properties must be of outstanding universal value (OUV) and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria.

Following the Criterias for selection, the «Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly» World Heritage property was selected for inscription to the List in 2004 on a basis of cultural Criterion (iii): The dense and coherent group of petroglyphs, with sacred images, altars and cult areas, together with their associated settlements and burial sites, provide a substantial testimony to the lives and beliefs of pastoral peoples of the central Asian steppes from the Bronze Age to the present day.

The main regulations for protection of the cultural properties

The Petroglyphs within Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly is a Property of National Significance, inscribed on the List of Monuments of History and Culture in 2001. It is owned by the State and protected under the 1992 Law on the Protection and Use of Historical and Cultural Heritage. The property and its buffer zone lay to the territory of the State Archaeological Reserve of Tamgaly, a reserve-museum established under the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2003, as a permanent management agency for the property.

The activities of the reserve-museum staff are focused on ensuring proper protection and conservation of the property and buffer zone, and its cultural and natural components. These activities are based on the property's Management Plan, which is updated every five years and the General Concept for the State Reserve-Museums Development (2009). The activities are also focused on developing cooperation between all interested institutions in the fields of conservation, scientific research, tourism, education, among others.

A representative's office for the reserve-museum is housed in the regional administrative centre of Usyn-Agash. The management authority offices have to be located at the Visitors centre that is to be built in the near future. But since 2004, there

were no construction works have been started, even the plan of the «Visitors Centre» was adopted and confirmed by the Minister of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The main problem is that the plan says to build the Visitors Centre at the territory close to the monument and burials inside the buffer zone, but not adjacent to it, which is actually contradicts the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. [4]

The repeated negotiations on the State of Conservation of Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly took place between the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Government representatives of Kazakhstan (Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan to UNESCO, Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

On 20 July 2015 the information on proposed project of the construction of a Visitor Centre was sent by the Ministry of Culture and Sports via the Permanent Delegation of Kazakhstan to UNESCO to the World Heritage Centre.

On 21 October 2015 the H. E. Mr. N. Danenov – Ambassador of the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan to UNESCO received the letter from Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre regarding the proposed project of the construction of a Visitor Centre in proximity to the World Heritage property of the Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly.

It was said in the letter, that the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS recommend the State Party of Kazakhstan to suspend all actions concerning the start of the construction of the Visitor Centre within the World Heritage property of Tamgaly and further recommend that before any irreversible commitments are made, submit the following for a detailed examination by ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre.

ICOMOS is International Council on Monuments and Sites and is one of the three formal advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee. ICOMOS is in particular responsible for the evaluation of all nominations of cultural properties against the basic criterion of «outstanding universal value,» and the other criteria as specified in the Convention. [5]

ICOMOS has informed, that the location of the planned Visitor Centre is situated in the core zone of the property. It is understood that according to the national legislation, any kind of construction within the property is prohibited. It is worth noting that the territory of the Tamgaly State Cultural and Natural Reserve covers the entire buffer zone of the World Heritage property.

At national level, the whole of this territory is recognized as part of the site and inscribed on the List of monuments of culture and history of State significance. Thus under national legislation, all interventions within the whole territory of the Reserve-museum are prohibited.

Initially the location of the future Visitor Center was foreseen near Karabastau Village, outside the buffer zone of the property, before the property has been inscribed to the WH List in 2004. The location was chosen with respect to the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WH property by top national experts together with Norwegian colleagues during the nomination process. This location was also approved by national authorities, and later was approved and adopted by ICOMOS experts and by the World Heritage Committee. After inscription on the WH List, the administration of the Reserve-Museum of Tamgaly endeavored to impose a legal status and to obtain a National Land Use Act for this territory.

No justification has been provided yet for a change in location of the Visitor Center. The whole of the inscribed area is a highly sensitive and coherent archaeological zone and needs to be considered as such. Construction of a visitor center within this zone would be highly undesirable from an archaeological point of view in relation to negative impact on Outstanding Universal Value and from the point of view of visitor management.

Anyways, the funds have already been allocated from the Kazakhstan State budget for the construction of the Visitor Centre in Tamgaly and the money must be used by the end of 2018. It is supposed that the project design is to be elaborated by the winner and, as planned, could be implemented directly in 2017, without any further considerations.

ICOMOS still recommends Kazakhstan to immediately halt all actions towards the start of the construction of the Visitor Centre.

Conclusion

In conclusion, every each side stands by its position. The idea of construction of the abovementioned building on the territory of the monument may be understood from the point of making the property more accessible and attractive for the tourists. Because the last part of the road to Tamgaly is unrepaired (approximately 5 kilometers).

It seems that for Kazakhstani side it is cheaper to build the Visitors Centre on the territory of the monument, than to set aside the money for construction of the road and organizing the transfer

(may be shuttle-buses or horse-rides) for the distance between the Visitors Centre and the Monument.

However, cheaper way is not always the right way. These kind of actions led to the forced mission of the ICOMOS representatives, that will be undertaken in March-April 2016.

If the ICOMOS will release the negative report on this mission, it may cause the further movement of the Property to the World Heritage in Danger List,

which is considered as a shame list and even threatens with removal of the property from the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Among the current priorities of the Tamgaly reserve-museum is updating the management plan developed by the joint UNESCO-Norwegian-Kazakhstan project for the 2012-2017 period. The most important issues affecting the property's protection and conservation will be considered in the context of this project.

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