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Oleksandr V. Kharlan, Candidate of Sciences in Architecture (Ph.D.), Associate Professor, Department of Design and Reconstruction of the Architectural Environment, Faculty of Architecture, Ukrainian State University of Science and Technology, Educational and Scientific Institute “Pridneprovsk State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture”. Dnipro, Ukraine.

E-mail: alexkharlan@pdaba.edu.ua

ORCID 0000-0003-1473-6417

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Experience in Developing the Nomination “Historic Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in the City of Bakhchisarai” for Inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List

Abstract:

The article examines the experience of developing the nomination “Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in the City of Bakhchisarai” for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The cultural heritage of Crimea is of great historical importance for world culture. The Ukrainian-Russian war has jeopardized the issue of preserving the unique cultural heritage, which is under threat of destruction during the bombing of the territory of Ukraine. Significant territories of Ukraine have been annexed since 2014. Since then, Ukrainian researchers have not had access to the cultural heritage sites of Crimea. The fate of world-class cultural heritage is of concern, since the aggressor has been violating the norms of international humanitarian law in the field of cultural heritage protection since the seizure of Crimea. A number of nominations to the UNESCO World Heritage List were submitted by Ukraine, among which a unique complex site within the city of Bakhchisarai is located. The Khan’s Palace complex with its surrounding urban and natural surroundings has significant historical and cultural value, contains valuable architectural, urban planning, natural and cultural components and attracted pilgrims and tourists from all over the world to the annexation. Currently, so-called “restoration work” and illegal archaeological excavations are being carried out in the occupied territories, and in particular in the city of Bakhchisarai. Architectural and urban planning activities in the protected area of the palace complex are of concern. The components of the Bakhchisarai site from the Preliminary List emphasized and proved the uniqueness of the small city, became its dominants. The process of preparing the nomination dossier contributed to detailed historical and urban planning studies of Bakhchisarai and cultural heritage sites within its borders and surrounding territories. The issue of preserving the unique cultural heritage of Bakhchisarai, which is under threat, is becoming extremely relevant. The subject of the study is a complex of monument protection measures for the preparation of the Bakhchisarai nomination in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The object of the study is the process of cooperation between the

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Ukraine in the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.

Keywords: cultural heritage, nomination to the World Heritage List, tangible cultural heritage site, historical and cultural reserve, UNESCO, Ukraine, Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Abbreviations:

GIS is geographical information system,

OUV is Outstanding Universal Value.

Introduction

According to ratified international conventions—in particular, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the European Landscape Convention, and the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe—Ukraine has undertaken obligations to preserve its national heritage at an appropriate level and to implement relevant measures for the protection of cultural heritage. The measures discussed below were performed within the framework of the state's international commitments to the global community and in line with the consistent policy of the state.

The tragic events of 2014 caused a series of problems that hindered further work on the nominations of the Crimean Peninsula's heritage sites. At present, it is impossible to monitor the situation surrounding the Bakhchisaray nomination or the nomination titled "*Crimean Gothia*" (*Cultural Landscape...*, 2021). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Ukraine has undertaken and continues to conduct substantial work in the pan-European context in cultural heritage protection. The study aims to highlight the process performed between 2011 and 2013 by Ukrainian specialists and international experts on the Bakhchisaray nomination.

Therefore, based on the purpose of the study, the following tasks were set:

- provide a concise description of the process of developing scientific and project documentation in the context of preparing the nomination dossier;
- present a brief list of its components with descriptions of selected elements;
- outline the uniqueness of the integrated Bakhchisarai nomination object based on the scientific and project documentation from 2011–2013.

Since 2014, researchers have focused on the issue of preserving cultural heritage following the occupation and the onset of the active phase of the war. Studies have addressed Ukraine's cooperation with UNESCO (*Balanyuk, 2016; Zorinets, 2015, pp. 71–82*), the relevance of studying Ukrainian cultural heritage (*Buychik & Tomanek, 2023*), and the impact of the Russian invasion on cultural heritage (*Reient & Denysenko, 2024, pp. 44–65*). General information on nominations can be found on the official website of the *Permanent Delegation of Ukraine to UNESCO* (*Permanent Delegation of Ukraine...*, n.d.; *Ukraine, 2023*) and the *Crimean Institute of Strategic Studies* "*Cultural Heritage*" (*Crimean Institute...*, n.d.). However, there is very limited data specifically concerning the Bakhchisarai nomination.

Methods

The research employed a complex of general and specific scientific methods aimed at revealing the methodological foundations and practical experience of preparing the nomination dossier “Historic Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in the City of Bakhchisarai” for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The methodological basis was formed by the principles of historicism, scientific objectivity, system analysis, and an integrated approach to the preservation of tangible cultural heritage. The combination of historical and comparative analysis, documentary research, and urban-planning interpretation ensured the comprehensive character of the study.

At the general scientific level, the research was grounded in logical and historical analysis, which made it possible to trace the evolution of scientific approaches to the study of the Bakhchisarai heritage from the early 20th century to the present. Comparative analysis was used to identify analogies between the Bakhchisarai complex and other UNESCO-listed sites representing Islamic and multi-confessional cultural landscapes. The inductive–deductive method contributed to structuring the sequence of argumentation regarding the uniqueness of the cultural and natural ensemble and to the identification of the links between the individual architectural, archaeological, and natural components of the Khan’s Palace complex. The descriptive-analytical method facilitated the interpretation of archival materials, field documentation, and cartographic data, which were essential for determining the boundaries, zoning, and protection regimes of the site.

A significant methodological role was played by the documentary method, which involved analysing normative acts and official documents of UNESCO, such as the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2012). This approach ensured the correlation of national conservation practices with international heritage-protection standards. Logical structuring of the stages of work enabled the authors to reconstruct the chronological dynamics of the nomination development, beginning with the inclusion of the Khan’s Palace in Ukraine’s Tentative List in 2003 and culminating in the submission of the final nomination dossier in 2012–2013.

At the level of specific research techniques, monumentological and urban-morphological analyses were applied to study the structural composition of the Bakhchisarai valley and to define the visual and spatial dominants of the historic environment. Field investigations, topographic measurements, and architectural inventorying provided the empirical basis for determining the authenticity and integrity of the nominated components. Cartographic and graphic modelling were used to visualise the protective zones of the reserve, while GIS methods contributed to establishing the spatial interrelations among the cultural layers of Chufut-Kale, Salachik, and the Khan’s Palace.

Equally important were expert consultations, workshops, and UNESCO monitoring missions that allowed the results of national research to be synchronised with the international methodology of heritage evaluation. The interdisciplinary synthesis of historical, architectural, and archaeological data created the foundation for developing the *Management Plan for the Cultural Heritage Property “Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai”* (2012). The coordination of documentary and field evidence within this framework enabled the researchers to substantiate the Outstanding Universal Value of the property according to criteria (iii), (v), and (vi) of the World Heritage Convention.

Thus, the applied methodological system combined traditional academic research techniques with modern documentary, cartographic, and project-design instruments. This ensured both the historical depth and the practical relevance of the study, allowing the Bakhchisarai nomination to meet UNESCO's standards of authenticity, integrity, and representativeness as a unique cultural landscape of world significance.

Literature Review

The scholarly basis of the study rests on a broad corpus of Ukrainian and international sources dealing with cultural-heritage management, UNESCO nomination procedures, and the specific context of the Crimean Khanate's architectural legacy. The conceptual framework for interpreting the Bakhchisarai nomination is provided by Plamenytska (2007), who examined the formation principles of the World Heritage List and the methodological requirements for identifying Outstanding Universal Value. Her work laid the foundation for the subsequent theoretical understanding of nomination processes in Ukraine. Serdiuk (2007) expanded this discourse by systematising Ukrainian sites included in the Tentative List and analysing their compliance with UNESCO's selection criteria.

A valuable legal and institutional perspective was introduced by Balaniuk (2016), who investigated the political and legal mechanisms of forming and preserving UNESCO heritage objects in Ukraine. His research clarified the interaction between national legislative frameworks and international conventions, which was of direct relevance to the preparation of the Bakhchisarai dossier. Zorinets (2015) complemented this by analysing Ukraine's cooperation with UNESCO and outlining the prospects for further integration of Ukrainian cultural heritage into the global heritage system.

The applied dimension of monument protection is reflected in the *Scientific and Project Documentation on the Restoration of the Bakhchisarai Palace Complex* (2009–2010) and in the *Management Plan for the Cultural Heritage Property "Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai"* (2012). These documents, developed by the Research Institute for Monument Protection Studies, provide technical and organisational details regarding the protective zoning, architectural conservation, and monitoring of the site. They serve as a methodological model for other Ukrainian nominations.

The contextual and interpretative layers of the research draw on the works of Buychik and Tomanek (2023), who emphasised the importance of studying Ukrainian cultural heritage within the European framework and highlighted the interdisciplinary potential of cultural heritage as a field of scientific investigation. Reient and Denysenko (2024) explored the destructive impact of the Russian invasion on Ukraine's heritage and underscored the need for international solidarity in the protection of endangered cultural assets. Their findings directly support the relevance of re-evaluating the Bakhchisarai nomination amid the ongoing war.

Complementary information is provided by the official materials of the *Permanent Delegation of Ukraine to UNESCO* and the *UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Operational Guidelines..., 2012; Ukraine, 2023)*. These sources establish the normative and procedural framework within which all national nominations must operate. The *Cultural Landscape of "Cave Towns" of the Crimean Gothia* (2021) illustrates parallel approaches to the preparation of Crimean nominations, allowing for comparative assessment of methodology and structure. The *Crimean Institute of Strategic Studies*

“*Cultural Heritage*” provides updated analytical data and expert commentary on the preservation of monuments under conditions of occupation, further contextualising the Bakhchisarai case.

Kharlan (2011) and he with Naumenko (2012) contributed substantially to the methodological and documentary aspects of the nomination. Their works contain the conceptual foundations of the spatial-organisation plan and the textual structure of the nomination dossier, thus forming the empirical and procedural basis for this article. The *Nomination for Inscription on the World Heritage List “Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai”* (2014) represents the culmination of this research trajectory, integrating field data, historical analysis, and management strategies.

Taken together, the reviewed sources reveal a consistent scholarly evolution from the theoretical exploration of UNESCO mechanisms to the practical implementation of nomination projects in Ukraine. The integration of academic research, legal frameworks, and international cooperation demonstrates the maturity of Ukrainian heritage studies and provides a comprehensive background for understanding the scientific and methodological context of the Bakhchisarai nomination.

Results

Information Note

In developing the above-mentioned documentation, logical, historical, comparative, documentary, and deductive scientific methods were applied. Materials from the archives of the institutions listed below were used to achieve the research aim and objectives.

The formation of the UNESCO World Heritage List, in accordance with the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, is based on clearly established criteria, expert assessments, and carefully developed procedures (Plamenytska, 2007, p. 26). At present, several Ukrainian sites of various categories are included in the Tentative List. Among them is the object entitled “*Bakhchisaray Khan’s Palace*” (Serdiuk, 2007, p. 39).

The Khan’s Palace Complex, located within the Bakhchisaray Historical and Cultural Reserve, is one of the rarest heritage sites of the Crimea and Ukraine from the 16th–19th centuries and fully merits international recognition. The palace complex serves as the main architectural and urban landmark of the old part of modern Bakhchisaray.

It was from this monument that the development of the nomination “*Palace of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchisaray*” began in 2003. According to the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Operational Guidelines..., 2012), OUV signifies the cultural and natural significance of the nominated property as being so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and is of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.

To be included on the World Heritage List, properties must possess universal value and meet at least one of ten selection criteria. These criteria are defined in the Operational Guidelines, which, together with the text of the Convention itself, serve as the main working tool for preparing nominations to the UNESCO List.

The inclusion procedure in the World Heritage List requires a mandatory stage—entry in the Tentative List, which is officially registered by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris.

Since 2003, the Bakhchisaray Khan's Palace has been included in Ukraine's Tentative List (*Kharlan, 2011, p. 18*).

During the consideration of the proposal for inclusion, attention was paid to preparing the property summary (dossier), which provided a comprehensive description and justification of the criteria supporting its inclusion. In preparing this documentation, the criteria of Outstanding Universal Value were refined and specified by a team of experts from the respective institute. The object was entered into the Tentative List (*Baggesaray Palace..., 2003*), but for certain well-known reasons, work in this direction was discontinued, and the Research and Design Institute for Theory and History of Architecture and Urban Planning ceased to exist.

In early 2011, specialists from the Research Institute for Monument Protection Studies resumed work on the nomination after the issue of developing the relevant documentation had been raised at the Public Humanitarian Council on 22 December 2010 (*Scientific and Project Documentation, 2009–2010; Management Plan..., 2012*). Experts from the reserve, the Research Institute for Monument Protection Studies, and independent EU specialists addressed the question of reassessing the site's compliance with the established criteria, noting the absence of appropriate protection documentation. To strengthen the nomination, it was proposed to expand the property by incorporating several additional sites. Following research, it became evident that these measures required adjusting the nomination's title and developing appropriate conservation documentation.

To ensure the preservation of the traditional character of the environment and regulate ongoing urban transformation processes in the surrounding area, and taking into account the recommendations of UNESCO monitoring mission expert Professor von Droste (June 2011) and his assistant Dr Ricarda Schmidt, project proposals were developed to establish the boundaries of the protective zones of the Bakhchisaray Historical and Cultural Reserve complex, considering its integration with the adjacent territory. Valuable resources for this work were found in the project "*Concept for the Organisation Plan of the Territory of the Historical and Cultural Reserve in Bakhchisaray, Defining the Boundaries and Use Regimes of Heritage Protection Zones*" (Research Institute for Monument Protection Studies, 2011; Director O.M. Serdiuk, Scientific Supervisor O.V. Kharlan), which had been developed earlier. The zoning system in this project was based on contemporary studies of immovable cultural heritage and the traditional character of the old city of Bakhchisaray. Areas were defined according to their historical and cultural value: monument territories, the reserve's protection zone in the historic city centre, protection zones of dispersed monuments, the controlled development zone, and the protected landscape zone, each with specific usage regulations (approved by Order No. 814 of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, 31 July 2012).

As a result of field studies, analysis, and expert discussions, and taking into account the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's criteria, the working group of specialists recommended continuing the nomination process for the following Bakhchisaray heritage sites: the Khan's Palace, the cave city of Chufut-Kale, and the Salachik area with its ancient monuments. Consequently, the object's title was revised to "*Cultural and Historical Landscape of the Bakhchisaray Valley: Chufut-Kale, Salachik, Khan's Palace*".

The natural framework of the Churuk-Su River valley was identified as the organising factor for the historical urban complex of Bakhchisaray. The *Justification of Outstanding Universal Value*

was formulated, *Criteria* were defined, and the submission to the Tentative List was prepared. After numerous discussions and revisions—particularly following the expansion of the nomination's components—it was decided to change the title once again. The final name of the property in the Tentative List submission was *“Historic Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in the City of Bakhchisaray.”* Under this title, the submission was sent to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre within the designated timeframe.

During 2011–2012, several UNESCO expert missions took place, organised with the support of the EU Delegation to Ukraine. These missions resulted in a series of analytical reports: O.V. Kharlan's report *“Development of the Concept of a Spatial Organisation Plan for the Bakhchysarai State Historical and Cultural Reserve, including the Determination of Boundaries and Protection Zones”* (presented at the International Scientific Conference *“Methodological Problems of Monument Protection Research”* dedicated to the memory of P.T. Tronko, 19–20 April 2012, Kyiv); and the report by O.V. Kharlan and V.Y. Naumenko *“Protective Zoning of the Bakhchysarai Historical and Cultural Reserve”* for the working session *“Promotion of Nominated Sites for Inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List”* (Sevastopol, Chersonesos, 18–19 July 2012).

Further contributions were made by T.A. Bobrovskyi (Candidate of Historical Sciences, Kyiv), O. H. Hertsen (Candidate of Historical Sciences, Simferopol), R. Schmidt (Candidate of Historical Sciences, EU expert on cultural heritage, Munich), B. von Droste (Professor, Senior EU Expert on Cultural Heritage, Paris), and O.V. Kharlan (Candidate of Architecture, Kyiv–Dnipro) during the seminar *“On the Nomination of the Site ‘Historic Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai’ for Inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List”* held at the V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University on 27 July 2012.

The seminar featured thematic reports such as *“General Description of the Nomination: Boundaries and Protection Regimes”* (V.Y. Naumenko, O.V. Kharlan), *“Cultural Value and Nomination Criteria”* (O.H. Hertsen, R. Schmidt), *“Threats, Risks and Other Factors Affecting the Preservation, Safety and Accessibility of the Site”* (T.A. Bobrovskyi), *“Key Issues in Site Management”* (O.V. Kharlan), and *“Future Perspectives”* (B. von Droste), as well as the report *“Tourism Flow Management”* by A. Bruders (EU Project Expert “Support and Diversification of Tourism in Crimea”).

Numerous television appearances, press publications, and online releases of statements and decisions by international experts followed—among them many interviews given by former Director-General V.Y. Naumenko and Bern von Droste.

Meanwhile, the working group continued to refine the text of the nomination dossier. Collaborative meetings were held between the reserve's staff and specialists from the Research Institute of Monument Protection Studies in Bakhchysarai and Kyiv, during which each nominated area and individual site was discussed in detail. Expert recommendations were also considered, particularly the need to consider additional cultural heritage sites located within the buffer zones surrounding the main nominated objects in the old part of Bakhchysarai—sites that illustrate the historical development of the area and emphasise the uniqueness of its preserved natural and cultural ensemble (including Mousterian-period cave dwellings, Early Byzantine necropolises and settlements in the Maryam-Dere ravine associated with the Goth-Alan period of the south-western Crimea, the Assumption Monastery, the cemetery in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Zincirli Medrese, and the mausolea—dürbes and mosques of the Golden Horde and Crimean Khanate eras).

It is worth noting that the concentration of diverse and chronologically layered archaeological and architectural monuments within the relatively small Churuk-Su River valley—demonstrating the area’s long-standing multicultural and multiconfessional character—represents a distinctive advantage of the proposed nomination, unmatched among existing or potential UNESCO World Heritage properties.

Unfortunately, the condition of some monuments raised concern among the experts. For instance, the sites of Salachik lost a significant degree of authenticity after restoration, and due to intensive modern construction, the Assumption Monastery was removed altogether from the list of sites proposed for nomination.

By the end of 2012, the full nomination dossier had been submitted. It included the *Management Plan for the Territories and Objects of the Reserve* and the nomination file itself (two volumes, translated into English). The volume *Management Plan for the Cultural Heritage Property “Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai”* was completed as a scheduled project of the Research Institute of Monument Protection Studies.

The main volume, *Nomination for Inscription on the World Heritage List “Historical Environment of the Capital of the Crimean Khans in Bakhchysarai”*, complied with UNESCO’s structural requirements (Kharlan & Naumenko, 2012, p. 4). Specialists from various disciplines participated in the comprehensive preparation and provided informational and organisational assistance throughout the research: Bern von Droste, Ricarda Schmidt, T.A. Bobrovskiy, O.M. Serdiuk, O.H. Hertsen, O.O. Voloshynov (Head of Department of the Reserve), V.M. Borysov (former Chief Architect of the Reserve), O.Y. Haivoronskyi (former Deputy Director for Research), Y.V. Petrov (former Director-General of the Reserve), and I.V. Yertzina (Academic Secretary of the Research Institute of Monument Protection Studies), under the methodological supervision of the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine. Special mention should be made of the work of Margarita Mykolaichyk, a professional translator from the V.I. Vernadsky Taurida National University, whose expertise and understanding of key issues ensured fruitful and well-coordinated collaboration with the international experts.

Constituent Elements of the Nomination

The individual components of the nomination include: Chufut-Kale (Figure 1) and Salachik (Figure 2), the Khan’s Palace in Bakhchysarai (Figure 3), the tomb of Eski-Dürbe (Figure 4), the Dürbe of Muhammad II Giray (Figure 5), the Dürbe of Ahmed Bey (Figure 6) and the Minbar at Aziz (Figure 7), the Dürbe of Mehmed Bey (Figure 8), and the Mausoleum of Bey-Yude-Sultan (Figure 9).

Formulation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site

The historical space of the Crimean Khanate’s capital in Bakhchysarai emerged as a result of developing a series of settlements that arose within the diverse and distinctive landscape of the Churuk-Su River canyon, together with its adjacent valleys and mountain plateaus. The natural defensibility of this area, combined with its position on the boundary between the Steppe and the Mountains, favoured its settlement by bearers of various cultural traditions—Taurian, Scythian, Gothic, Alanian, Greek, Armenian, and Karaite. In the 14th–16th centuries, the Tatars used this territory to establish the administrative centre of the Crimean Khanate.

Each of the peoples who inhabited this territory at different times left distinct traces of their presence—residential, economic, and fortification structures; cave constructions serving various purposes; burial sites; and religious complexes, as well as numerous remains preserved in the archaeological strata. The nominated properties, which arose at different stages within the ethnocultural process of interaction and mutual influence, embody historical memory and bear witness to the diverse ethnic groups of different origins and cultural characteristics. They convey an important understanding of the enduring values of human labour harmoniously united with nature and represent a unique example of the long and fruitful coexistence of communities guided by differing spiritual orientations (*Nomination for inscription...*, 2014, pp. 115–116).

Identified Criteria

Criterion (iii):

The monuments of Chufut-Kale, Salachik, Eski-Yurt, and the Old City of Bakhchysarai represent a unique testimony to a multitude of cultures: those that have already vanished (Mousterian, Tauric, Gothic, Alan), those on the verge of disappearance (Karaim), and those that continue to evolve (Crimean Tatar). These monuments are embedded within an exceptionally beautiful landscape, the principal features of which have remained unaltered for millennia. The architectural ensembles of Hansaray, Chufut-Kale, Salachik, and Eski-Yurt are the only surviving palace, religious, and funerary complexes in the world that embody the architectural traditions of the Crimean Tatars. The settlement of Chufut-Kale, with its kenassas and Jewish necropolis, has largely preserved its authenticity and stands as a witness to the fading cultural tradition of the Karaims.

Criterion (v):

The cave city of Chufut-Kale, a traditional settlement that emerged when the territory was inhabited by Goths and Alans (6th century), and later (in the 16th–19th centuries) was rebuilt by Tatars and Karaims, has survived in remarkable authenticity and integrity. It developed harmoniously, taking into account its strategic location and surrounding landscape. The Karaim necropolis at Chufut-Kale represents an outstanding example of medieval and early modern funerary practice.

Criterion (vi):

The various settlements and historical monuments that shaped the historical space of the Bakhchysarai Valley (Chufut-Kale, Salachik, the Old City, and Eski-Yurt) continue to hold exceptional associative value for diverse peoples owing to their unique multicultural character. The Bakhchysarai Khan's Palace is regarded as the spiritual sanctuary of the Crimean Tatars—a symbol of their statehood, pride, unity, and cohesion throughout the ages. For centuries, the palace and its historical and natural surroundings have inspired eminent artists from many national cultures to create outstanding literary and artistic works. As the residence of the Crimean khans, Bakhchysarai exerted a decisive influence on the fate of Eastern Europe for over 250 years. Chufut-Kale and the adjoining valleys developed as a sacred landscape symbolising, for Crimean Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, the holy sites of Jerusalem.

The textual section also examined and analysed the following parts: “State of Preservation and Factors Affecting the Site”, “Protection and Management of the Territory”, “Monitoring”, and “Documentation” (photographs, drawings, bibliography). These section titles comply with

UNESCO requirements, and their content and depth required extensive processing of a vast amount of information scattered across documentation and sources from various fields. Such work was carried out for the first time in relation to the territories of the Bakhchisaray Reserve. Its value lies in the fact that, for the first time, a wide range of issues related to conservation, legal, scientific, and economic aspects of the activities of the Bakhchisaray Historical and Cultural Reserve were explored and brought to light.

In 2013, this work continued, and a number of proposals, remarks, and additional comments and clarifications were received from experts of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. It appeared that the submission would be approved and that Ukraine's cultural heritage would once again gain the long-awaited recognition at the international level. However, unforeseen tragic events occurred in Crimea. For well-known reasons, European experts were unable to visit the site. Unfortunately, the political situation had a detrimental impact on this valuable initiative, preventing the support of the nomination and indefinitely postponing its consideration.

Experts in monument preservation, historians, and all those who care deeply about our cultural heritage continue to hope that this significant site of global importance will not be forgotten and will, in due course, receive the international recognition and status it truly deserves.

Discussion

When discussing the relevance of measures aimed at developing Ukraine's cultural potential, as well as the preservation, promotion, and effective use of its national cultural heritage, it is essential to continue cooperation with international heritage protection organisations. The wide coverage of problematic issues related to architectural and urban planning activities at World Heritage sites located in temporarily occupied territories, particularly in the city of Bakhchysarai, highlights the depth of discrepancies between ethnic representations and geopolitical ambitions, adding new dimensions to the discussion on Ukraine's identity in both cultural and national contexts.

The dimension of the conflict in the occupied territories lies in the need to protect heritage that belongs not only to Ukraine but also to the international community. At this stage, the Ukrainian state is unable to ensure the protection of UNESCO-designated sites. The Ukrainian–Russian conflict raises questions before the international community regarding the preservation of cultural assets under conditions of military action and annexation.

Conclusion

The events unfolding during the Ukrainian-Russian war draw the attention of the international community to the struggle for cultural identity and historical truth in the occupied territories. Through Ukraine's cooperation with UNESCO, there is hope for monitoring the situation, as well as for the publication, documentation, and recording of events surrounding heritage sites located in the occupied Crimea. Developing nomination dossiers for UNESCO World Heritage List sites constitutes an essential stage in studying the corpus of Ukraine's tangible cultural heritage objects. These materials record the state of the heritage prior to the military events and occupation, and represent on the international stage a nation with a centuries-long history and a rich cultural legacy.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Appendix



Figure 1. Medieval city of Chufut-Kale (photo by O. Kharlan, 2012)



Figure 2. Monuments of Salachik at the foot of Chufut-Kale (photo by O. Kharlan, 2011)



Figure 3. Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai (photo by O. Kharlan, 2011)



Figure 4. Tomb of Eski-Dürbe (photo by O. Kharlan, 2011)



Figure 5. Tomb "Large Octagonal Dürbe" (Dürbe of Mehmed II Giray) (photo by V. Ievlieva, 2011)



Figure 6. Tomb "Cuboid Dürbe" (Dürbe of Ahmed Bey) (photo by V. Ievlieva, 2011)



Figure 7. Minbar at Azizi (photo by R. Osadchyi, 2011)



Figure 8. Mausoleum “Small Octagonal Dürbe” (Dürbe of Mehmed Bey) (photo by O. Kharlan, 2011)



Figure 9. Mausoleum “Ancient Dürbe” (Mausoleum of Bey-Yude-Sultan) (photo by V. Ievlieva, 2011)

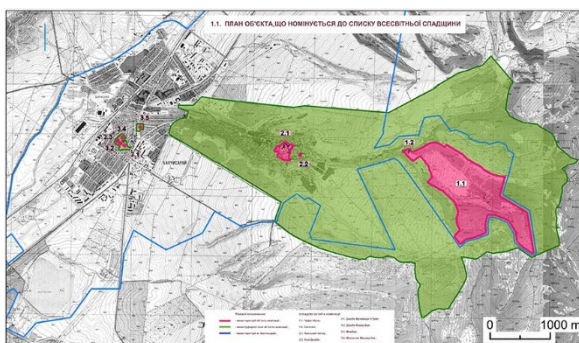


Figure 10. II Plan of the property nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List:
1.1—Chufut-Kale, 1.2—Salachik, 2.1—Khan’s Palace, 2.2—Eski-Dürbe,
3.1—Dürbe of Mehmed II Giray,
3.2—Dürbe of Ahmed Bey, 3.3—Minbar,
3.4—Mausoleum of Mehmed Bey,
3.5—Mausoleum of Bey-Yude-Sultan.