

WHC Nomination Documentation

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SITE NAME ("TITLE") Vilnius Historic Centre

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

STATE PARTY ("AUTHOR") LITHUANIA

CRITERIA ("KEY WORDS") C (ii)(iv)

DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:

18th Session

[The Committee made no statement]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Political centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 13th to the end of the 18th century, Vilnius has had a profound influence on the cultural and architectural development of much of Eastern Europe. Despite invasions and partial destruction, it has preserved an impressive complex of historic Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque buildings.

1.b. State, province or region: Lithuania, Vilnius

1.d Exact location: Long. 50°41' N ; Lat. 25°71' E

1. Specific location	
a) Country	Republic of Lithuania
b) State, Province or Region	The City of Vilnius (Capital of the Republic of Lithuania)
c) Name of property	The Old Town of Vilnius (a historical centre of Vilnius)
d) Exact location on map and indication of geographical coordinates	The Old Town of Vilnius is a part of the city situated on the left bank of the River Neris at the mouth of the River Vilnia. Geographical coordinates: 50° 41 N long., 25° 71 E lat. Scheme of the situation - appendix
e) Maps and/or Plans	See Annex .1.
2. Juridical data	
a) Owner	Vilnius City Council-Municipality, Vilnius City Board (Vilnius, Gedimino pr. 9), Seniūnija of the Vilnius Old Town (executive body of the city administrative unit).

2. Juridical Data
(cont'd)

b) Legal status

The Old Town of Vilnius is a municipal property. In the course of the process of privatization, part of the buildings and possessions are acquiring the status of the private property. Under the Church Restitution Act (1990) the sacral buildings are the property of the church of various confessions. In accordance with the Resolution of the Republic of Lithuania (August 17, 1994), on the territory, occupying Cathedral Square, the Lower and the Upper Castles as well as the territory on the right bank of the River Vilnia, there has been established the National Park of the Vilnius Castles, which as a legal person shall have its own exceptional legal status.

c) Responsible national agency

Monument Protection Department of the Vilnius City Board (Vilnius, Stiklių g. 4). Head of the Department - A. Gučas.

d) Collaborating national agencies and organizations

State institutions and organizations:
- Monument Protection Department under the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning of the Republic of Lithuania,
- Research Centre for the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage,
- Inspectorate of the Cultural Heritage under the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania,
- Directorate of the Vilnius Old Town Restoration,
- Institute of the Monument Restoration.
Public organizations:
- Union of Lithuanian Restorers,
- ICOMOS Lithuanian National Committee,
- Union of Lithuanian Architects.

3. Identification

a) History

See Annex **.2.**

b) Description and Inventory

See Annex **.3.**

c) Photographic and/or cinematographic documentation

See Annex **.4.**

**3. Identification
(cont'd)**

d) Public awareness

See Annex .5.

e) Bibliography

See Annex .6.

**4. State of
preservation/
conservation**

a) Diagnosis

See Annex .7.

4. State of
preservation/
conservation
(cont'd)

b) History of
preservation/
conservation

See Annex **8**.

c) Means for
preservation/
conservation

See Annex **9**.

d) Management plans

See Annex **10**.

5. Justification for inclusion in the World Heritage List

a) Cultural property

See Annex .11.

(i) reasons for which the property is considered to meet one or more of the World Heritage with, as appropriate, a comparative evaluation of the property in relation to properties of a similar type

The Vilnius Old Town as a historical city conforms to the category of the historical cities of the world cultural heritage (ii), as an exceptional universal cultural value which has accumulated in itself the peculiarities of the town's development since the 13th century up to the present days, the town, which has the population of nearly 27 ths. of inhabitants, and the attempts to preserve it during the period of forty years present a real possibility for its survival.

The Vilnius Old Town in respect to its historical and cultural value can be compared to the Old Town of the Polish city Cracow. Both towns in their historical past performed the functions of two capitals in the Rzeczpospolita. Vilnius is also one of the most significant consequences of the culture of the Balts and its interlacement with the traditions of other European countries. Besides, Vilnius has made a great impact on Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Poland and was highly important to them.

Features on the basis of which a value is considered to correspond to one or several criteria of the World Heritage, estimating the value and comparing it with the values of similar types

(ii) evaluation of the property's present state of preservation as compared with similar properties elsewhere
The Estimation of the Survival of the State of the Present Value in Comparison with Similar Values Elsewhere

The structure of the network of medieval streets has survived with the prevailing historical and architectural complexes of the castles, churches with monasteries, the University, the Town Hall and dwelling houses. Since the 15th up to the 19th centuries the state of the Vilnius Old Town was similar to that of the Cracow Old Town.

(iii) indications as to the authenticity of the property
Authenticity features of the value

The radial network of the streets formed in the Middle Ages, 324 historical buildings representing the Gothic, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Classical and the 19th century Romanticism periods of architecture together with historical spacial surroundings.

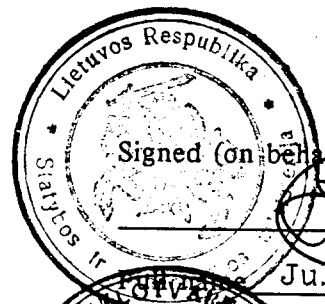
5. Justification for inclusion in the World Heritage List (cont'd)

b) Natural property

(i) reasons for which the property is considered to meet one or more of the World Heritage criteria with, as appropriate, a comparative evaluation of the property in relation to properties of a similar type

(ii) evaluation of the property's present state of preservation as compared with similar properties elsewhere

(iii) indications as to the integrity of the property



Signed (on behalf of State Party) from LITHUANIAN REPUBLIC

Julius Laiconas

Dainius Trinkūnas

Julius Laiconas

Dainius Trinkūnas

Prime Minister of Constructions and Urban developing Minister of Culture

Date 1994 09 01

1994 09 01



Jonas Glemža

Jonas Glemža

Director General of the Department of



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Production of all photographs made in July 1994

List of photographs see annex 4

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Vilnius, Lithuania

29 08 1994

Evaldas Zilinskas
Deputy-director of Scientific Centre
on Cultural Heritage of Lithuania

Place

date

Signature, title or function of the
person duly authorized.

List of plans and photographs

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3. Monument preservation zones of the central part of Vilnius (M 1:23000)
4. Monument preservation zones of old town (M 1:10000)
5. Possessions bounds and functions evolution plan
6. Historical planogramm of the old-town buildings' evolution
7. Scheme of the conception of the old town regeneration
8. The scheme the urgent works
9. The plan of possessions
10. Building management sketch
11. Additional plan with the names of Vilnius old town streets
12. Photographs of Vilnius old town (131 examples)

3. a)

The settlement, which was the embryo of the formation of Vilnius, was situated at the very confluence of the Rivers Neris and Vilnia. As early as the 5-th-6th centuries it was no longer a small settlement, because it had greatly expanded in the early second millenium. It had a fortified mound which later developed into a castle. Up to the middle of the 12th century some more castles and settlements sprang up at this location and on the neighbouring hills. They made up a non-compact but a well adapted to the locality town. Its main part - the settlement at the confluence of the rivers - became the nucleus of the town. In the 13th century the main castle was being even more intensively fortified, and the new bed of the River Vilnia turned it into an island.

This period also witnessed the construction of first brick structures. The first 13th century buildings were constructed from stone and baked clay bricks. The dimensions of the bricks and their Vandean (Baltic) manner of binding are characteristic of the buildings constructed on the East coast of the Baltic Sea at that period. The recent (1970-1994) data of archaeological and architectural researches (the fragments of the towers and walls of the castle, the fragments of the church in the late Roman style discovered under the present Cathedral, etc.) make it possible to guess that the residence of Duke Mindaugas, who consolidated Lithuania into a centralized state, was in Vilnius (in 1251 Mindaugas and his court adopted Catholic faith, in 1253 he was crowned the King of Lithuania and founded a Lithuanian Diocese which was directly subordinate to the Holy Throne).

The roads radially leading from the nucleus in all directions served as a framework for the formation of the town lay-out structure. The main road was leading from the Castle to the South and distances further branched off into the Polock, Trakai, Rūdininkai and Medininkai directions. Nearby one of these branches the first market-place appeared.

In 1323 during the reign of the Grand Duke Gediminas, Vilnius (Vilna) was mentioned for the first time in written sources as the capital of the State of Lithuania. Gediminas granted more rights to the towns folk, invited merchants and artisans from abroad (mainly from West Europe) as well as the Franciscan Order. Vilnius at that time was an administrative and religious centre of the last pagan European country. The churches of St. Nicholas and the Franciscans have survived from this period which were, however, later partly reconstructed.

The year 1387 witnessed the conversion of Lithuania in Christianity. The same year Vilnius was granted Magdeburg City Rights. The greater part of the town belonged to the Municipality, another - to the Castle (sovereign of the country) and one more - to the Bishop. On the site of the former pagan Temple and the first 13th century Cathedral a new Cathedral was being built as well as a new parish St. Joh's Church - at the main street of the Great Castle. In the 14th century the growth of the town was somewhat hampered by the frequent attacks of the Teutonic Order. However, the victory readred at the Battle of Grünwald created particularly favourable conditions for the further growth of the town. In this period the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas started to build a big Gothic Cathedral of a hall type as well as the new palace of the Lower Castle - Residence of Sovereigns. He also extended the Upper Castle as well as other buildings and equipment erected for the

state governing and defence. The 15th century was marked by a more rapid construction of buildings (brick Gothic construction of dwelling houses), the formation of the ensembles of the Franciscan, Dominican and Bernardine monasteries as well as the Great and Small Guilds which presented great significance to the prospect of the town. At this period Vilnius had its Town Hall and a few Gothic Orthodox churches.

After the fire of 1471 a number of new streets were laid out, and in 1503-1522 there was erected a defence wall of the town with five gates and thence girdled the most densely inhabited part of the town (approx 90 ha) and protected the town from the Tatar likely invasions.

The axonometric prospect of the Vilnius plan (in the Brown-Hogenberg's Atlas) drawn up in approximately 1530 testifies that two and three-storey brick buildings prevailed in the main Pilies, Traku and Vokiečių streets.

Following the fire of 1530, the restoration of the town gave rise to the emergence of more side streets, and the triangular market Town Hall Square acquired its final shape. Besides the mentioned market-place there were three more. The architecture of the town and its prospect were getting richer - nearby the late Gothic buildings (St. Ann's Church, etc) there sprang up some splendid Renaissance (more precisely of spontaneous mannerism) structures. Besides the houses of individual well-off townsmen, mention should be made of some gates in the town defence wall (only the Medininkai Gate survived) as well as of the extended and reconstructed Residential Palace of the Great Duke in the Lower Castle with its art gallery, library and theatre, and last but not least - of the Palace of Radvila, the Jesuit Monastery and Collegium as well as Alumnatus.

In the middle of the 16th century the suburbs of Vilnius occupied as much area as the old fenced part of the town. A natural zone of greenery was stretching from the Lower Castle gardens, embracing the private parks and gardens of the Palaces of the Bishop, Radvila, Sapieha and Olizar as well as the possessions of the Bonifratres Monastery.

The 16th century was marked by particularly strong contacts with Italy. With the spread of the ideas of the Renaissance humanism and the Reformation, the Lutheran parish with its church emerged (it survived in its reconstructed shape), but at the same time the first signs of confrontation manifested themselves and served as the main reason for the invitation of the Jesuit Order.

At that time Vilnius as the metropolis of a great state becomes one of the biggest cities in East Europe, it adopts and masters the values of European culture and re-creates them according to the needs of the peoples residing in the Great Duchy of Lithuania.

In 1522 the first P. Skorina printing house was opened and it had the honour to print the very first book in the old Slavic (Russian) language.

In the 16th century the Vilnius printing house printed books in the Latin, Lithuanian, old Slavic, Polish and Lettish (the first book in Lettish) languages. Vilnius becomes an important centre for the Jewish and Karaites cultures.

In 1579 on the initiative of the Jesuits Vilnius University was founded and later educated a great many of world-famous scientists and famous figures of culture of many nations.

While rebuilding the town after the new fire of 1610, the lay-out of the town did not suffer any changes, however, with the emergence of new streets, the blocks got smaller. In about 1630 the works connected with cobbling of the streets were greatly intensified. The first half of the 17th century witnessed a further dense building up as well as the construction of the significant churches, such as: St. Michael's, St. Josef's (has not survived), St Ignatius and St. Casimir's (the first Baroque church (1604) in Vilnius which was built after the architecture of Gesù Church in Rome).

This period can also boast of the architectural ensemble of the Basilian (Unnita^{rians} or East Catholic) Order in which a self-contained and particularly significant centre of the interaction of the Christian East and West cultures was formed. In the centre of the town there was built the Chief Jewish Synagogue in the late Renaissance-early Baroque style, and thus Vilnius became the most significant centre of the public thinking culture and the religious life of East European Jews even for three centuries. The mid - 17th century boasted of over forty buildings and their complexes of religions workshop.

The town greatly suffered during the war with Russia in 1654-1667. A great number of buildings were destroyed, burnt down or devastated. On the site of some of the burnt blocks, the new ones emerged. Quite a number of buildings lost their Gothic and Renaissance features, and their further reconstruction opened the way to the Baroque in the dawn architecture. Up to the end of the 17th century there had been built or reconstructed in the Baroque style the following churches: St. Teresa's Church, All Saints Church, the Dominicans Church, St. Casimir's Church (dome) and the Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit. The new palaces of noblemen were also being built in the same style. In the picturesque suburbs of the town new complexes of monasteries and noblemen's palaces were springing up - the Lutherans-Canons with St. Peter and Paul's Church, St. Stephen's Church, the Trinity and Visitation monasteries with their churches as well as the palaces of Sluzzka, Pac and Sapieha surrounded by parks and gardens.

The 1700 North War brought about new misfortunes, and then the fires of 1715, 1737, 1748, 1749 greatly devastated the town again. Restoration of the town did not alter the town lay-out, and while building new houses, quite a number of old houses were pulled down or while restoring them they were joined into bigger complexes (the palaces of Jelski, Pac, Oginski, Chodkiewicz and others). The late Baroque prevails in the church architecture - St. Catherine's Church, St. George's Church, the Missionary Church. A great many of earlier built churches acquire some of the features of the late Baroque: the Bell-Tower of the All Saints Church, the main facade of St. John's Church as well as the towers of the University buildings and others. The school of the Vilnius Baroque Architecture firmly establishes itself - architects Ch. Glaubitz, T. Žebrauskas and others.

At the end of the 18th century, regardless its expansion, Vilnius boasted of its charm and originality and the graceful Baroque towers greatly enriched its silhouette. The very end of the 18th century witnessed the emergence of some buildings in Classical style which greatly added to the prospect of the town: the wing of the University Observatory, the Cathedral, the Town Hall (both or only their parts reconstructed), built on the basis of the projects by L. Stuoka-Gucevičius, as well as the new Arsenal and the palaces of Tysenhaus, De Rens, Pac, Masalski and others.

Following the third final Partition of the Lithuanian-Polish State in 1795, Lithuania as well as its capital Vilnius were annexed to Russia and Vilnius became the centre of the Governor-General's province. The prospect of the town lost some of its charm when a greater part of the Lower Castle (the main Palace included) as well as nearly all the town defence wall with its gates were pulled down by the Russians in 1799-1805. The only gate that survived is the Aušros (Medininkai) Gate. Due to the mentioned reasons the structure of the town lay-out acquired some alterations at certain localities. Vilnius also suffered great losses during the Napoleon War in 1812. In the first half of the 19th century construction work was being intensively carried out. Construction projects were realized observing the local Classical traditions. In 1814 typical Russian projects were made use of - the houses were built following the Petersburg's Empire style (the former Palace of Bishops was reconstructed, expanded and housed the seat of the Governor-General). In 1837 the locality surrounding the Cathedral was enriched by the lay-out of St. George's (present Gedimino) Avenue leading to the West from it.

Construction work got particularly intensive in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. The newly built "brick style" eclectic and modern buildings did not radically change the prospect of the Vilnius Old Town. In the early 20th century Vilnius became the centre of the Lithuanian national revival. In 1906 the first Lithuanian opera was produced and in 1907 the first Lithuanian art exhibition was held. Societies of Lithuanian science and art were established and the political activities related to the restoration of the state were showing their first signs, especially during the World War I. This period witnessed the erection of the Three Crosses Monument (arch. A. Vivulskis) on one of the hills adjacent to the Old Town. On February 16, 1918 the restoration of the independent State of Lithuania was proclaimed in Vilnius (house in Pilies St. 26) and the new government started to function.

In 1920-1939 Vilnius and its region were occupied by the Poland and the town lost its significance as an administrative centre. During this period very few houses were built in Vilnius and in its Old Town. However, mention should be made of some conservation and restoration works of significant architectural monuments carried out in the Vilnius Castle, the Cathedral, St. Teresa's Church, St. Casimir's Church, St. Ignacius Church, St. Michael's Church and in other churches as well as in the University ensemble and in the buildings in Bernardine side-street. The streets of the Old Town were provided sufficient amenities.

During the period from 1940 to 1990 (except the years of World War II when Vilnius was occupied by Germany 1941-1944) Vilnius - the capital of Lithuania (occupied by the Soviet Union) and of the new Soviet republic. Vilnius became the seat of the Lithuanian Parliament and the Government, which enjoyed rather limited powers, as well as the main centre of the public, political, scientific and cultural life of the Lithuanian nation.

During World War II the Old Town suffered great losses. Entire blocks were burnt down, especially in the area of the Jewish ghetto. However, a majority of the most valuable monuments survived: all the Catholic and the Orthodox churches, the Lutheran and Reformed Evangelical Churches as well as nearly all the palaces of the noblemen. After the war, part of the buildings underwent repairs and part of them, which had mostly suffered, were pulled down. When

the last debris was cleared up, there emerged some spaces which were not characteristic of the Old Town's prospect. They were the sites for the construction of the new "Stalinist Empire Style" buildings.

Since 1960 there have been built few new buildings of modern architecture and they were more successfully arranged and better suited the historical surroundings of the town. They were first attempts to re-create the lost spaces of the Old Town. The process of the systematic reconstruction of the Old Town displayed its first results. The revival of a great many of significant architectural monuments and some of the complexes revealed quite a few faded or damaged architectural historical values. Besides, part of valuable buildings (churches, palaces, etc.) were being used not for their proper purpose - it only belittled the quality of environment, though in a physical sense they have survived. In the Soviet period, however, the government did not allot enough resources for the maintenance and repairs of dwelling houses, therefore part of them reached the year 1990 - the period of the restoration of independence of the Lithuanian State - completely delapidated.

Vilnius is again the capital of the State and part of its functions have to be performed by the Old Town. A greater part of the town's cultural and spiritual life is getting concentrated here. The Old Town is being taken care of observing much more strict monument protection requirements. For that purpose a new (a this one conceptual project for its regeneration has been drawn up (1988-1992)). The private capital of the city residents as well as that of various corporations starts gradually participating in the process of the Old Town's restoration. The restitution of the original purpose to the churches and part of the monasteries makes it possible to gradually re-create the features of their surroundings.

3. b)

At present the Old Town is the main part of the capital of the State of Lithuania - the City of Vilnius. It is the cradle and centre (since the 13th c.) of independence of the Lithuanian nation and in the past (14th-18 th. c.) - one of the most significant political, administrative, cultural and religious centres in East Europe. On the basis of a great number of parameters, Vilnius can be compared to the Polish city Cracow, though its natural conditions, the origin of the city lay-out and the prevailing constructions of the buildings display great differences.

The following features determine the value of the Old Town as of the urban and architectural ensemble:

A. The harmony (synthesis) and integrity of the city as the result of the people's creative activities and its natural environment.

B. The structure of the city lay-out and space as the reflection of its evolution - from an embryo and the establishment of the State of Lithuania till the beginning of the 20th century.

C. A great density of old individual valuable architectural and art structures (objects) as well as that of the whole complexes and their reciprocity.

D. The wealth of structures and localities significant for the State of Lithuania as well as for the big East European region, the history of culture and the spirit of the nation and society.

E. The historically formed accumulation of important administrative, cultural, religious and the townfolks everyday objects belonging to the alive State's capital and to the city centre.

F. An exceptional value of the Vilnius Old Town is its universality - a harmonious whole of the wealth of different peculiarities.

The city has established itself at the confluence of the Rivers Neris and Vilnia and is situated at the juncture of their valleys which distinguish themselves by a great variety of landscape types as well as by their complex genesis. The valleys are broad with distinct terraces and the slopes cracked by erosion. Along the slopes there are stretching gravelled planes deposited by the icy water - in the South-East, in the direction of Byelorussia - the Medininkai Hills which emerged at the end of last but one ice formation. The landscape here distinguishes itself by big plane hills and broad gullies.

The opposite side of the Neris valley in the North-West borders on the Aukštaičių (Byelorussian) Hill which was formed in the period of the last ice formation. It distinguishes itself by a fine relief structure - a great abundance of hills, ridges, small ravines, lakes and the labyrinth of swamps.

In this landscape the Vilnius Old Town is composed of three urban zones which demonstrate their different character and origin as well as their different natural environment.

They are as follows:

A. The Vilnius Castle zone, to which the territories of the Lower and Upper Castles as well as those of the former Crooked Castle with their surroundings are attached.

B. The central part of the Vilnius Old Town which in older times had been girdled by the town defence wall (historical nucleus).

C. The Vilnius suburban zone dating back to the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It embraces the city area, the urban structure of which had been formed by the late 18th century (i.e.

by the 3rd Partition of the Rzeczpospolita) and on the basis of this structure the sites of these suburbs were built up in the 19th century and the early 20th century. The Old Town as the urban monument under review is associated only with those blocks which have preserved the three main elements of its structure reaching the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: streets (roads), the possession structure of sites with the built up lines as well as the buildings or their separate parts. If a block lacks one of the mentioned elements or if such a block does not solidly border on the rest part of the Old Town - it is not considered to be a block of the Old Town (area of the Old Town). The Old Town is surrounded from all its sides by other historical urban areas or the sites of limited building up, or protected natural zones (Pavilnių regional park).

Thus, the Old Town is comprised of 112 blocks, the 5 of which form the zone of castles, 49 - a historical nucleus and 58 - the zone of historical suburbs. The Old Town can boast of 10 squares as well as of several bigger spaces at the crossroads and in front of some buildings. The main functional and compositional axis of the Old Town - the route of Pilies, Didžiosios and Aušros streets linking the complex of the North Castles, the Town Hall and the only survived southern Aušros (Medininkai) Gate. Other main streets of the Old Town - Užupio-Polocko, Subačiaus, Rūdininkų-Sv. Stepono, Sv. Jono-Dominikonų, Trakų-J. Basanavičiaus, Vokiečių-Vilniaus, Liejyklos-Tilto, Pylimo-Jogailos (a majority of them are leading in the direction of the town defence wall) as well as T. Vrublevskio, Arsenalo-Goštautų and the Eastern part of Gediminas Avenue.

The Vilnius Old Town, besides the ordinary historical dwelling houses, can also boast of 20 Catholic churches, 4 Orthodox churches, one Lutheran and one Reformed Evangelical churches, one Unnits (East Catholic) church, one Jewish Synagogue (a number of smaller synagogues have also survived), 21 monasteries, over 20 palaces of the ~~then~~ noblemen as well as of the buildings of the Town Hall, the Small Guild as well as other significant structures belonging to a later (19th-early 20th c.) period.

The buildings of the Old Town display different architectural styles: the late Roman (only some fragments have survived), the early and late Gothic, Renaissance (mannerism), the early, mature and late Baroque, Classical, Empire as well as the "brick" Eclecticism, Historicity and Modernism.

The main buildings and their complexes historically form six big groups: 1. Castle-Cathedral; 2. Bernardines-St. Ann s-St. Michael's-Virgin Mary's Cathedral; 3. St. John's-University- the Palace of the Governor-General's residence; 4. Aušros Gate-St. Teresa's - the Church of Holy Spirit-Basilians-Philharmonic Society; 5. St. Nicholas - Franciscans-Lutherans; 6. Visitation-Missionaries.

To architectural ensembles belong Pilies, Aušros Gate, St. John's, Dominicans, Vilniaus, University, Skapo, Bernardines, St. Michael's and Stiklių streets as well as Gediminas Avenue; the Town Hall, Daukanto and University Squares.

The Old Town and its surroundings offer a lot of natural panoramic spots of observation - the hill of the Upper Castle and the Tower, the Hill of Three Crosses and Bekešo Hill, the Arsenal in Bokšto street, Mindaugo st., the right bank of the River Neris. One can mainly observe the silhouettes of the panorama and buildings against the background of the adjacent hills but not against the one of the sky.

The area of the Old Town - 359,5 ha.

Among them:

The zone of the Vilnius castles - 82,5 ha.

The nucleus of the Old Town - 98,0 ha. (Within the boundaries of the defence wall)

The aggregate space of the Old Town's buildings (inhabited and uninhabited premises) in ths. m² - 1497,6.

Among it:

In the zone of castles - 45,6.

In the nucleus of the Old Town - 804,8.

In the former historical suburbs - 847,2.

The amount of population (1989 data) - 30700.

Among it:

In the zone of castles - 360.

In the nucleus of the Old Town - 12600.

In the former historical suburbs - 17740.

3. c)

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24. Dominikonų street
25. Švento Jono street
26. Universiteto street (A)
27. Universiteto street (B)
28. Skapo street (A)
29. Skapo street (B)
30. Bernardinų street (A)
31. Bernardinų street (B)
32. Švento Mykolo street (A)
33. Švento Mykolo street (B)
34. Savičiaus street
35. Stiklių street (A)
36. Stiklių street (B)
37. Stiklių street (C)

38. M. Antokolskio street
39. Švento Ignoto street (A)
40. Švento Ignoto street (B)
41. Karmelitu street
42. Arkliu street
43. Švento Kazimiero street
44. View from Vilnia river to the Bernardine Church
45. Užupio street - former Old Town suburb (A)
46. Užupio street - former Old Town suburb (B)
47. Užupio street - former Old Town suburb (C)
48. Užupio street - former Old Town suburb (D)
49. Užupio street - former Old Town suburb (E)
50. Paupio street - former Old Town suburb
51. Lapu street - former Old Town suburb
52. Tilto street - former Old Town suburb
53. Gedimino awe - former Old Town suburb
54. The courtyard in Didžioji street
55. The courtyard in Aušros Vartu street
56. The courtyard in Aušros Vartu street
57. The courtyard in Aušros Vartu street
58. The courtyard in Dominikonu street
59. The courtyard in Švento Jono street
60. The courtyard in Rūdininku street
61. The courtyard in Subačiaus street
62. The courtyard in Stikliu street
63. The courtyard in Bernardinu street
64. The courtyard in Malūnu street
65. The courtyard in Užupio street
66. The courtyard in Užupio street
67. The courtyard in Užupio street
68. The courtyard in Paupio street
69. The Upper Castle tower
70. The Lower Castle excavations
71. The Lower Castle - the Old Arsenal
72. The Lower Castle - the New Arsenal
73. The artillery bastion (A)
74. The artillery bastion (B)
75. The defensive wall of the town in Subačiaus street
76. The defensive wall of the town in Šventosios Dvasios street

77. Aušros-Medininkų Gate of the defensive wall of the town
78. Town Hall
79. University - northern elevation
80. University - the Great courtyard
81. University - the M.Sarbievijus courtyard
82. University - Observatory
83. The Oginsky palace
84. The Chodkevičiai palace
85. The Generalgubernatory Palace
86. The Generalgubernatory Palace - the courtyard (A)
87. The Generalgubernatory Palace - the courtyard (B)
88. The Alumnatum courtyard
89. The Public Hall
90. Dwelling-house in Pilies str. N 12
91. St. Stanislaus and Vladislaus Cathedral
92. St. Stanislaus and Vladislaus Cathedral with bell tower
93. St. Stanislaus and Vladislaus Cathedral - interior (A)
94. St. Stanislaus and Vladislaus Cathedral - interior (B)
95. St. Nicolaus Church (A)
96. St. Nicolaus Church (B)
97. St. Nicolaus Church (C)
98. St. Nicolaus Church - interior
99. Franciscanes Church
100. St. John's Church (A)
101. St. John's Church (B)
102. St. John's Church - interior
103. Ensemble of St. Ann's Church and the Bernardine Church
104. Bernardine Church
105. Bernardine Church - interior
106. St. Ann's Church (A)
107. St. Ann's Church (B)
108. St. Ann's Church - interior
109. St. Michael Church
110. St. Michael Church - courtyard
111. St. Michael Church - interior
112. St. Casimir Church
113. St. Ignatius Church
114. Jesuits Noviciatum

115. Prechistaia ortodox Church
116. Basilian Church bell tower
117. Basilian Church (A)
118. Basilian Church (B)
119. Basilian Monastery Gate (A)
120. Basilian Monastery Gate (B)
121. Dominican Church of the Holy Spirit
122. The Holy Spirit ortodox Church
123. The Holy Spirit ortodox Church - interior
124. St. Theresa Church
125. St. Theresa Church - interior
126. Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of Mercy
127. All Saints Church
128. All Saints Church - interior
129. Visitians Church
130. Missionaries Church of the Assumption
131. St. Bartholomeum Church

3. d)

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4. State of Protection and Restoration

a) Diagnosis (present state)

The general depreciation of the Old Town's buildings equals 47 %. The majority of significant historical buildings - architectural monuments have already been restored and repaired and another part of them is in the repair - restoration process: this year (1994) the churches of Bernardines and St. Catherine's as well as the Franciscan Monastery and the church are under restoration. Besides, the most significant architectural and archaeological excavations are being carried out on a wide scale: the uncovering of the remains of the Lower Castle Palace and part of its defence wall as well as the restoration and rebuilding of two other buildings, making use of the financial funds allotted by the state.

The greatest problems are posed by the Old Town's dwelling houses both historical and non-historical, left without proper maintenance and timely repairs, which nevertheless form the historical background of the Old Town. By 1990 there were completely regenerated (revived) nine blocks and eight more blocks were in the process of restoration.

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990 our State is going through a transitional period due to the changes in the forms of property. As much as 80 % of flats have already been privatized, and the authorities provide for the prerequisites for the establishment of the communities of flat owners. In the sphere of the repairs and restoration of the buildings, the system of centralized state economic planning is no longer functioning, and certain prerequisites emerge which will enable the national economy to go over to the system of free economic market. With the purpose of the preservation of the Old Town, the authorities have started to create new legal and economic conditions. In 1992 the 3rd regeneration project of the Old Town was drawn up which presents itself as a new historic and architectural conception of regeneration. The project was financed by the Municipality.

Private owners and firms, using their own resources, have begun some repair and restoration works of individual buildings, particularly on their ground floors which perfectly suit for commerce purposes (Pilies, Aušros Gate, Stiklių, Didžioji streets).

The City Municipality and its Monument Protection Department (head-arch. Augis Gučas) are directly responsible for the protection of the Old Town.

4. b) History of Protection and Restoration

Individual buildings - monuments in the Old Town underwent restoration on the basis of scientific principles as early as 1901-1906 (St. Ann's and St. Michael's Churches). The same works were being carried out in the 20s and 30s of the present century in the Upper Castle, University, the Town Hall, the Chapel of the Aušros Gate, St. Teresa's, Trinity, Missionary Churches. The facades of the buildings in Bernardine street were also being restored and a greater care was taken of the Old Town's streets.

The first ideas on the preservation and reconstruction of the Old Town were presented in "Reconstruction Plan of the City of Vilnius till 1655", worked out by Polish experts residing at that time in Vilnius (Moreliovskis, J.Katoszynska). The project presents itself as a theoretical, research study. In 1949 the USSR Committee for Architecture included Vilnius in the list of historical cities together with other 20 cities.

In 1950 the Soviet Lithuanian Government established in Lithuania a state organization of restoration - Scientific Restoration Production Centre, the objective of which was the drawing up of typical projects and their realization (later on three institutes of the monument preservation and restoration and nine restoration firms were set up on the basis of the mentioned Centre).

In 1944 during the war period the Vilnius Old Town suffered great losses, particularly a rather big area of the ghetto, the burnt down parts of the buildings of which were not repaired, part of them were pulled down and Vokiečių street (former Muziejaus) broadened. On the one side of the street there was constructed a foreign body and on the other tall dwelling-houses with shops. It caused much anxiety among the Lithuanian architects and provoked the protest of intellectuals. Due to the expressed great concern, a project for the reconstruction of the Old Town was drawn up (head arch. prof. K.Šešelgis) in 1956-1958, the main purpose of which was the preservation of the Old Town (the first project of this type in Lithuania and the USSR). The project raised a highly progressive idea (at that time) to protect and reconstruct the Old Town as an integral architectural urban complex: to protect a network of streets, the principles of building up, historical buildings and their surroundings. Thus, the first principles of combination of the old and new architecture were formed.

On the basis of this project, approved by the Government; the buildings were protected, some of them were under repairs; the fragments of the town defence wall were uncovered and the idea of the Old Town's preservation and of the all-round works took root and found great support of society. In 1961, the architects started to draw up a project for the regeneration of individual blocks, and after the restoration of the first block, the international ICOMOS symposium "Protection of the Centres in Historical Cities and the Problems Concerning their Adaptation for New Purposes" was held in Vilnius in 1973. The works carried out in Vilnius received international recognition and support.

In 1969, the Lithuanian Government proclaimed the Old Town of Vilnius as a urban monument of a republican significance.

In 1970-1974 the 2nd project for the regeneration of the Old Town was drawn up (head - arch. docent A.Pilypaitis) which supplemented and extended the 1st project in respect to the preservation of the Old Town. In 1988-1992 the 3rd regeneration project (conception) was drawn up (head - arch. A.Gučas). Both projects were drawn up by the Vilnius Institute of the Monument Restoration

(the present joint-stock company). Without additional research data, the project presents the lay-out of the Old Town's sites with the regulations on the construction and architectural activities, taking into account the historical evolution of the sites and buildings. There have been also worked out regulations on the protection and development of the Old Town and its individual parts (construction, rebuilding, etc.).

Preliminary works of economic and legal conditions for the preservation and management of the Old Town were started in 1992. In 1993 Danish specialists joined in, and in 1994 specialists began to draw up a joint program of the works in this sphere, getting assistance from the Edinburg Old Town Trust and its specialists (United Kingdom).

Since 1966 there has been functioning in the Old Town "Inspection of the Protection of Cultural Monuments", which in 1990 was integrated into the Municipality Department of Monument Conservation.

4. c) Means of Protection and Restoration

The projects of the Old Town's reconstruction and later those of regeneration were the main preservation plans on the basis of which the activities of the protection of cultural heritage as well as those of construction were carried out.

Since 1966 all the works related to the analysis of the buildings, repairs, restoration and construction activities as well as projecting have been coordinated with the Municipality Department of Monument Protection and the Board of Experts under it. In 1987 the Municipality established the Directorate of the Vilnius Old Town's Restoration which performs the functions of the client of the Old Town's projecting, repairs and restoration works and is able to respond and take into consideration the objectives concerning the preservation of the Old Town.

4. d) Program of Works

The execution of the Old Town's protection shall be guided by: the Law on the Protection and Utilization of the Lithuanian Historic and Cultural Monuments (1977), the Provisional Law on the Cultural Heritage Inspection (1990) and the By-Laws on Historical Old Towns (approved by the Government in 1969) as well as by the Project for the Old Town's regeneration and protection (approved by the Government in 1974). At present the 3rd regeneration project (conception) has been presented for approval (1992). The latter project is intended to be promoted and detailed, associating it with the creation of economic programs and funds.

The Old Town has been estimated and the protection has been taken into consideration in the functioning long-term plan of Vilnius (1984) which at the present time is being reviewed, making it even more favourable for the needs of the Old Town.

In 1993 a program of the Old Town's regeneration urgent works was drawn up, and in 1994 the Municipality considered the problem of the empty houses in the Old Town, making an attempt to find investors, new tenants or prospective owners. At present new By-Laws of the repairs and restoration of the buildings and construction in the Old Town are being worked out (up to now old By-Laws of 1969 existed). The idea of the formation of the Old Town's Fund is soon going to be realized. The mentioned idea has been supported by the Lithuanian Government which has agreed to allot resources from the state budget starting in 1995.

In 1993 restoration works were carried out in Aušros street which is a part of the main street of the Old Town. The works are intended to be continued on the basis of the drawn up plan. The authorities are looking for resources and they expect to get some assistance from the mentioned Fund. The restoration of individual objects at the expense of the state budget is supported by the Department of Monument Conservation.

In 1995 a program for the realization of the next year's plans and the search for financing resources and investment is going to be worked out on the basis of the experience of the Edinburg Old Town's Trust, making an attempt to speed up the realization of the 3rd regeneration project (conception) of the Vilnius Old Town.

5. Motivation for the Inclusion into the World Heritage List

a) Cultural value

Since the 13th century up to the end of the 18th century the Old Town of Vilnius was a political centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It has remained a political centre in the present day independent State of Lithuania and since the 16th it has become the seat of science and culture; on the basis of the town layout since the 14th-16th centuries - a historical town which has sprung up in an original historical natural surroundings among the valleys of the Rivers Neris and Vilnia with the localities of castles. This town is a fine specimen of the interlacement of the East and West cultures as well as one of the most remote regions of the medieval European architecture (Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque) in East Europe.



Vilnius old town regeneration p
(3rd plan)

Additional plan with the names of Vilnius old town st







Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Old Town of Vilnius
<i>Location</i>	City of Vilnius
<i>State Party</i>	Lithuania
<i>Date</i>	17 October 1989

Justification by State Party

From the 13th century to the end of the 18th century the Old Town of Vilnius was the political centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a role that it retains in the present-day independent Republic of Lithuania. It has been a centre of learning and culture since the 16th century. The town, which grew up at the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia rivers, is an outstanding example of the blending of the cultures of eastern and western Europe, and also constitutes one of the most easterly examples of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture in Europe. It played an important role in cultural developments in Belarus, Poland, and Ukraine.

It is proposed for inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion ii.

History and Description*History*

On a site that had been intermittently occupied from the Neolithic period onwards, a wooden castle was built around AD 1000 to fortify Gedimino Hill, at the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia rivers. The settlement did not develop as a town until the 13th century during the struggles of the Baltic peoples against their German invaders. By 1323, when the first written reference to *Vilnia* occurs, it was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, founded by Prince Gedymis, ancestor of the Galitzin family. At this time some brick structures had apparently been erected on a small island formed when the Vilnia changed its course.

Lithuania was the last great pagan state in eastern Europe to be converted to Christianity, in 1387, when Grand Duke Jagaila was baptized. This opened Vilnius to the western world, since in the same year it adopted the Magdeburg Statutes. However, it was not until 1410 when the Teutonic Order was destroyed at the battle of Tannenberg that it became safe from marauders and invaders.

The rapidly expanding town was struck by a disastrous fire in 1471, when the first religious establishments (the cathedral, the parish church of St John, and the Franciscan and Cistercian monasteries) were destroyed. The only surviving remains from the earliest period are therefore the walls, some sections of which survive beneath the defences built in 1503-22 against Tatar incursions. The town was partially reconstructed after another major fire in 1530, when an attempt to rationalize the medieval street pattern was largely unsuccessful. This was a period of commercial and cultural development. Close trading links were established with both western and eastern Europe, and these trading links led to the spread of western culture into Byelorussia and the Ukraine. A printing works was set up in 1522 and a university in 1579.

Yet another fire in 1610 saw the destruction of the newly built Lower Castle and the new cathedral. The subsequent reconstruction included extensive church building: the churches of St Michael, St Stephen, St Casimir, All Saints, and St Theresa all date from this period. At the beginning of the war with Russia (1654-

67) Vilnius had no fewer than forty-one religious buildings, though many were lost during the conflict. Most of the older buildings in wood were lost in a series of fires (in 1715, 1737, 1748, and 1749), but it was the successive reconstructions that gave the town many of the buildings which give it its special character, including the Cathedral, the Town Hall, the Arsenal, and the Tyzenhauzai, Rensai, Pacai, and Masalskiai Palaces. Many of the surviving earlier buildings were rebuilt or refurbished in Baroque style.

Annexation by Russia in 1795 led to the Lithuanian capital gradually losing some of its distinctive character. The fortified enceinte and the Lower Castle were demolished in 1799; in 1837 Cathedral Square was laid out in strict academic style and St George Avenue was constructed, cutting across the old town fabric.

In World War II over eighty old houses were destroyed but reconstruction was put in hand with the end of hostilities. Major rehabilitation projects for the historic town centre were drawn up in 1956-58 and 1970-74.

Description

The historic centre comprises the areas of the three castles (Upper, Lower, and Curved) and the area that was encircled by a wall in the Middle Ages. The plan is basically circular, radiating out from the original castle site. The street pattern is typically medieval, with small streets dividing it up into irregular blocks, but with large squares inserted in later periods.

The historic buildings are in Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical style (with some later additions). Nearly 40% of them are adjudged to be of the highest category of architectural and historical importance. They constitute a townscape of great diversity and yet at the same time one in which there is an overarching harmony.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Protection of the Old Town of Vilnius is governed by the Law on the Protection and Utilization of the Lithuanian Historical and Cultural Monuments (1977), the Provisional Law on the Inspection of Cultural Monuments (1990), and the Byelaws on Historic Towns (1969)

The buildings in the historic centre are in public, ecclesiastical, and private ownership. The area that is the subject of the nomination was designated the National Park of the Vilnius Castles by a Resolution of the Republic of Lithuania on 17 August 1994. The whole area is enclosed by a viable buffer zone.

Management

Practical town planning control is handled by the Monument Protection Department of the Vilnius City Board. The Department has the support of a number of state and public organizations, including the Monument Protection Department of the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning, the Research Centre for Lithuanian Heritage, the Inspectorate of Cultural Heritage, the Institute for Monument Restoration, the Lithuanian National Committee of ICOMOS, and the Union of Lithuanian Architects.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The earliest restoration projects were carried out at the Upper Castle at the end of the 19th century. In the early years of the 20th century the churches of St Anne and St Michael were restored, followed in the 1930s by work at the University, the Town Hall, and several other churches. However, the first systematic

restoration and protection programme based on scientific analysis of the surviving structures was not drawn up until 1940-3.

The first post-war reconstruction plan began in 1958, as a reaction to the driving of a new road through badly damaged parts of the Old Town without respecting the historic town fabric. This resulted in protection being extended to the entire street pattern and a programme of restoration and reconstruction of certain important buildings.

The second regeneration plan was prepared by the Institute for Monument Conservation in 1972-4 and was based on further scientific studies of the surviving historic buildings and the needs of the residents in the area. It aimed at the reduction of the population within the historic area from 30,000 to 20,000 (the current figure is c. 26,000).

Some modifications were introduced in the third plan, developed in 1988-90, influenced by further archaeological and historical studies. This defined the historic centre (see above, "Legal status") and the buffer zone and prepared a programme of progressive restoration, reconstruction, and (in the case of certain buildings of inferior quality) demolition and replacement by modern structures that harmonize with the historic townscape.

A programme of urgent regeneration work was prepared in 1993. It is proposed to develop a programme for the implementation and funding of these programmes during 1995, based on the experience of the Edinburgh Old Town Trust.

Authenticity

The overall authenticity of the historic urban fabric and surviving historic buildings is high, in terms of design, materials, techniques, and setting. It represents the often turbulent history of the Lithuanian capital and its evolution, in political and cultural terms, over several centuries.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

At the request of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS nominated an expert to visit Vilnius in January 1994. Professor Panu Kaila (President, ICOMOS Finland) spent a week there, holding many discussions with those responsible for management, conservation, and restoration as well as carrying out a detailed examination of the historic centre.

Qualities

To quote Professor Kaila's report, "the historic centre of Vilnius is a rich collection of buildings from different ages and full of everyday life ... Personally I am convinced that [it] has an outstanding universal value, that it sufficiently meets the test of authenticity, and that it merits to be nominated to the World Heritage List." Having studied the documentation provided by the State Party and Professor Kaila's report, ICOMOS fully concurs with this view.

Comparative analysis

Vilnius forms part of the extensive network of medieval and early modern trading towns that stretch from Ireland to Russia. It is of especial importance in that it is situated in the pivotal trading area of the Baltic states. The only comparable towns in this region are Tallinn (Estonia) and Cracow (Poland). However, Tallinn is significantly different, in that it is a seaport, and also because of its important role in the Hanseatic League. It thus followed a different historical and cultural trajectory from Vilnius, which is manifest in its present-day form. Cracow has more similarities with Vilnius, but its history and urban fabric demonstrate significant differences, due to its divergent historical and cultural evolution.

Additional comments

At its 14th Meeting in June 1990 the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee referred this nomination back to the Soviet authorities to provide additional information on the town planning schemes which exist in the immediate vicinity of the historic centre and called upon ICOMOS to provide an additional evaluation of the property. This information has been provided and has been evaluated by ICOMOS (see above, "Action by ICOMOS"). ICOMOS has also had the opportunity to study the additional data provided by the Lithuanian authorities in September 1994.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

In his report Professor Kaila draws attention to the lack of a tradition of continuous maintenance of non-monumental historic buildings in Vilnius, a situation that has been exacerbated by a change from collective ownership to private ownership of individual apartments following the recent political changes in Lithuania. As a result there is no obligation on the new owners to carry out repairs or maintenance. ICOMOS recommends that the State Party should be requested to examine this anomaly as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria ii and iv:

- ***Criterion ii*** Vilnius is an outstanding example of a medieval foundation which exercised a profound influence on architectural and cultural developments in a wide area of eastern Europe over several centuries.
- ***Criterion iv*** In the townscape and the rich diversity of buildings that it preserves, Vilnius is an exceptional illustration of a central European town which evolved organically over a period of five centuries.

ICOMOS, October 1994



Monument preservation zones of old town

- 1. Piliu (Castles) park
- 2. Zone of the old town. Historical kernel of the old town (area surrounded by the fortification wall in the past)
- 3. Zone of the old town. Historical suburbs (formed during the epoch of the Grand Lithuanian principality) located close to the historical kernel of Vilnius

Vilnius : zones de conservation des monuments de la vieille ville /
 monument preservation zones of Old Town



Vilnius : vue panoramique de la vieille ville depuis le château haut
panorama of Old Town from Upper Castle



Vilnius : Eglise Saint-Michel , Church of St Michael

Identification

<i>Bien proposé</i>	Vieille ville de Vilnius
<i>Lieu</i>	Ville de Vilnius
<i>Etat partie</i>	Lituanie
<i>Date</i>	17 octobre 1989

Justification émanant de l'Etat partie

La vieille ville de Vilnius a été le centre politique du grand-duché de Lituanie à partir du 13^{ème} siècle et jusqu'à la fin du 18^{ème} siècle, rôle qu'elle conserve aujourd'hui maintenant que la Lituanie est une république indépendante. Elle a été un centre intellectuel et culturel dès le 16^{ème} siècle. La ville qui a grandi au confluent des rivières Nérís et Vilnia est un exemple exceptionnel du mélange des cultures de l'Europe de l'est et de l'ouest. Elle constitue aussi un des exemples de l'architecture gothique, Renaissance et baroque situé le plus à l'est de l'Europe. Elle a joué un rôle important dans le développement culturel de la Biélorussie, de la Pologne et de l'Ukraine.

La vieille ville de Vilnius est proposée pour inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial sur la base du critère ii.

Histoire et Description*Histoire*

Sur un emplacement qui avait été occupé de façon intermittente depuis le néolithique, au confluent des rivières Neris et Vilnia, un château de bois a été édifié vers l'an 1000 de notre ère pour fortifier la colline Gedimino. Le village n'est devenu une vraie ville qu'au 13^{ème} siècle à l'occasion des conflits entre les peuples baltes et leurs envahisseurs germaniques. La première référence écrite à *Vilnia* date de 1323 alors que la ville est capitale du grand-duché de Lituanie fondé par le prince Gedymin, ancêtre de la famille Galitzine. A cette époque, quelques structures de briques ont été construites sur une petite île qui était apparue quand la rivière Vilnia avait changé le tracé de son cours.

Jusqu'au baptême du grand-duc Jagaila en 1387 et la christianisation du pays, la Lituanie a été le dernier grand état païen d'Europe orientale. Cet événement ouvre Vilnius à l'Occident, d'autant que la même année, elle adopte les statuts de Magdebourg. Ce n'est cependant qu'en 1410 avec l'anéantissement de l'ordre Teutonique à la bataille de Tannenberg que la ville est à l'abri des maraudeurs et des envahisseurs.

L'expansion rapide de la cité est frappée par un incendie en 1471 ; c'est dans ces circonstances désastreuses que disparaissent les premiers établissements religieux (cathédrale, église paroissiale Saint-Jean, monastères cistercien et franciscain) dont les rares vestiges sont des pans de murs qui survivent sous les défenses construites entre 1503 et 1522 pour résister à l'invasion des Tartares. Après un autre grand incendie en 1530, la ville a été partiellement reconstruite ; à cette occasion, une tentative pour rationaliser le schéma urbain médiéval a largement échoué. Cette époque enregistre une importante expansion commerciale et culturelle. Les liens commerciaux étroits lient la ville tant avec l'Europe orientale qu'avec l'Europe occidentale, liens qui permettent à la culture occidentale d'atteindre la Biélorussie et l'Ukraine. Une imprimerie est construite à Vilnius en 1522 et une Université en 1579.

Un autre incendie survenu en 1610 détruit le Château bas tout nouvellement construit et la nouvelle cathédrale. La reconstruction qui s'ensuivit inclue un grand nombre de bâtiments religieux : les églises Saint-Michel, Saint-Etienne, Saint-Casimir, de Tous les Saints, et Sainte-Thérèse datent de cette époque. Au commencement de la guerre contre la Russie (1654-1667), Vilnius comptait 41 édifices religieux dont un grand nombre fut détruit pendant le conflit. La majorité des structures en bois disparurent dans une série d'incendies (1715, 1737, 1748 et 1749) mais les reconstructions successives ont apporté à la ville de nombreux bâtiments qui lui confèrent son caractère très particulier et parmi lesquels on peut citer la cathédrale, l'Hôtel de Ville, l'Arsenal et les palais Tyzenhauzai, Rensai, Pacai et Masalskiai. Un grand nombre des édifices plus anciens ont été reconstruits ou réaménagés en style baroque.

L'annexion par la Russie en 1795 a fait progressivement perdre à la ville quelques uns de ses caractères distinctifs. L'enceinte fortifiée et le Château bas ont été démolis en 1799. En 1837, la place de la cathédrale a été reconçue en pur style académique et l'avenue Saint-Georges a été construite coupant à travers le tissu urbain ancien.

Au cours de la seconde guerre mondiale, plus de 80 maisons ont été détruites puis reconstruites à la fin des hostilités. La plupart des projets de réhabilitation du centre historique de la ville ont été établis entre 1956-58 et 1970-74.

Description

Le centre historique comprend les zones des trois châteaux (haut, bas et courbe) et la zone qui au moyen âge était entourée d'un mur. Le plan de ce centre est circulaire avec au centre le premier château. Le schéma urbain est typiquement médiéval avec de petites rues délimitant des pâtés de maisons irréguliers mais des grandes places ont été intégrées à des époques plus récentes.

Les bâtiments historiques sont de styles gothique, Renaissance, baroque et classique (avec certains ajouts plus modernes). Près de 40% d'entre eux ont été jugés de la plus grande qualité architecturale et historique ; ils constituent un paysage urbain d'une grande diversité et néanmoins d'une parfaite harmonie.

Gestion et Protection

Statut juridique

La protection de la vieille ville de Vilnius est régie par la Loi sur la protection et l'utilisation des monuments historiques et culturels lituaniens (1977), par la Loi provisionnelle sur l'inspection des monuments culturels (1990) et par l'Arrêté sur les villes historiques (1969).

Les bâtiments du centre historique appartiennent soit à l'administration, à l'église, soit à des propriétaires privés. La zone qui fait l'objet de la proposition d'inscription a été désignée comme Parc national des châteaux de Vilnius à la suite d'une résolution adoptée par la République de Lituanie le 17 août 1994. Une zone tampon viable entoure l'entière zone proposée pour inscription.

Gestion

Dans la pratique, le contrôle de l'urbanisme est assuré par le Département pour la protection des monuments du Conseil d'administration de la ville de Vilnius. Le Département bénéficie de l'appui de plusieurs organismes d'état et publics parmi lesquels le Département pour la protection des monuments du Ministère de la construction et de l'urbanisme, le Centre de recherche du patrimoine lituanien, l'Inspection du patrimoine culturel, l'Institut de restauration des monuments, le Comité national lituanien de l'ICOMOS et l'Union des architectes lituaniens.

Conservation et Authenticité

Historique de la conservation

Les plus anciens projets de restauration ont été entrepris au Château haut à la fin du 19ème siècle. Dans les premières années du 20ème siècle, les églises Sainte-Anne et Saint-Michel ont été restaurées ; en 1930, des travaux ont été réalisés à l'Université, à l'Hôtel de Ville et sur plusieurs églises. Le premier programme de restauration et de protection systématiques basé sur une analyse scientifique des structures survivantes n'a pas été lancé avant 1940-43.

Le premier programme de reconstruction d'après-guerre n'a été entrepris qu'en 1958 en réaction à la construction d'une nouvelle route à travers les quartiers sévèrement endommagés de la vieille ville et qui défigurait le tissu urbain historique. La protection s'est alors étendue à la totalité du réseau urbain et un programme de restauration et de reconstruction de certains bâtiments importants a été décidé.

Le deuxième plan de régénération a été préparé par l'Institut pour la Conservation des Monuments entre 1972 et 1974 ; il reposait sur de nouvelles études scientifiques des bâtiments historiques survivants et tenait compte des besoins des résidents de la zone. Ce plan décidait de la réduction de la population qui devait passer de 30.000 à 20.000 habitants (la population actuelle est d'environ 26.000 habitants).

Quelques modifications ont été apportées au troisième plan en 1988-90, influencées par de nouvelles études archéologiques et historiques. Elles ont porté sur une nouvelle définition du centre historique (voir plus haut "Statut juridique") et de la zone tampon. Elles présentaient aussi un programme de restauration et de reconstruction progressive et, dans le cas de certains éléments de qualité médiocre, de démolition et remplacement par des structures modernes qui s'harmonisent avec le paysage historique.

Un programme de régénération d'urgence a été préparé en 1993. Il a été proposé de développer un programme pour la mise en oeuvre et le financement de ces programmes au cours de l'année 1995. Il sera basé sur l'expérience du "Old Town Trust" d'Edimbourg.

Authenticité

L'authenticité générale du tissu urbain et des bâtiments historiques survivants est importante du point de vue de la conception, des matériaux, des techniques et de l'environnement. Elle illustre l'histoire souvent mouvementée de la capitale lituanienne ainsi que son évolution politique et culturelle au cours de plusieurs siècles.

Evaluation

Action de l'ICOMOS

A la demande du Centre du Patrimoine mondial, l'ICOMOS a désigné un expert qui s'est rendu à Vilnius en janvier 1994. Le Professeur Panu Kaila (Président d'ICOMOS Finlande) a passé une semaine sur place au cours de laquelle il a rencontré de nombreux responsables de la gestion, de la conservation et de la restauration de la ville et entrepris un examen détaillé du centre historique.

Caractéristiques

Pour reprendre les mots du rapport du Professeur Kaila, le centre historique de Vilnius "est une riche collection de bâtiments de différentes époques qui restent grouillant de vie... Je suis personnellement convaincu qu'il (le centre ville) est doté d'une valeur universelle exceptionnelle qui répond de façon tout à fait satisfaisante

aux critères d'authenticité et qui mérite d'être inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial". Après avoir étudié le dossier fourni par l'Etat partie et le rapport du Professeur Kaila, l'ICOMOS soutient ces conclusions.

Analyse comparative

Vilnius fait partie du réseau important de villes de commerce du moyen âge et du début de l'époque moderne qui s'étend d'Irlande jusqu'en Russie. Elle revêt une importance particulière car elle est située dans la zone charnière que constituent les pays baltes. Les seules villes comparables de la région sont Tallinn (Estonie) et Cracovie (Pologne). Toutefois, Tallinn est tout à fait différente car c'est un port maritime et elle joue un rôle important au sein des pays de la Hanse. Tallinn a donc suivi un itinéraire historique et culturel différent de Vilnius qui transparaît très clairement sous sa forme actuelle. Cracovie présente plus de similitudes avec Vilnius mais son histoire et son tissu urbain témoignent de différences significatives qui résultent d'une évolution historique et culturelle autre.

Commentaires supplémentaires

Lors de sa 14^{ème} réunion en juin 1990, le Bureau du Comité du Patrimoine mondial a renvoyé le dossier aux autorités soviétiques pour informations complémentaires relatives au plan d'urbanisme concernant les abords immédiats du centre historique et a demandé à l'ICOMOS de faire une évaluation complémentaire du bien.

Ces informations sont été fournies par les autorités et l'évaluation a été faite par l'ICOMOS (voir "Action de l'ICOMOS"). L'ICOMOS a eu la possibilité d'étudier les informations complémentaires qui ont été fournies par les autorités lituaniennes en septembre 1994.

Recommandations de l'ICOMOS pour des actions futures

Dans son rapport, le Professeur Kaila attire l'attention sur l'absence d'une tradition d'entretien continu des bâtiments historiques vernaculaires de Vilnius, situation exacerbée par le passage du régime collectiviste au régime de la propriété privée faisant suite aux récents bouleversements politiques en Lituanie. Il en résulte que les nouveaux propriétaires n'ont aucune obligation de procéder à quelques travaux de réparation ou d'entretien. L'ICOMOS recommande que l'Etat partie pallie cette anomalie de façon urgente.

Recommandation

Que ce bien soit inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial sur la base des critères ii et iv :

- *Critère ii* Vilnius est un exemple exceptionnel de fondation médiévale qui a exercé une profonde influence sur le développement culturel et architectural d'une grande partie de l'Europe orientale pendant plusieurs siècles.
- *Critère iv* Le paysage urbain et la riche diversité des édifices que renferme Vilnius font de cette ville une illustration exceptionnelle de ville d'Europe centrale qui a évolué organiquement pendant cinq siècles.

ICOMOS, octobre 1994



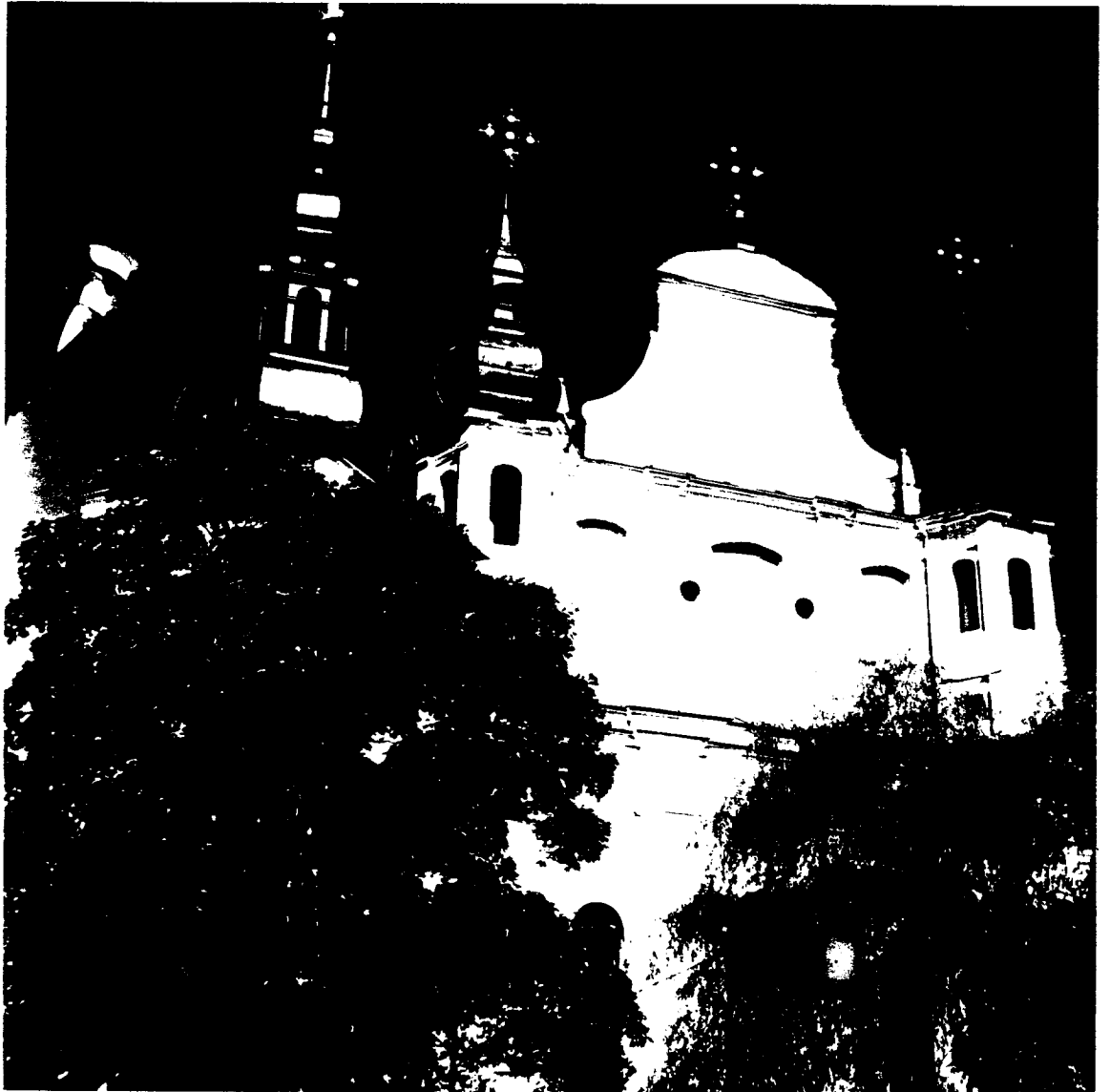
Monument preservation zones of old town

1. Piliu (Castles) park
2. Zone of the old town. Historical kernel of the old town (area surrounded by the fortification wall in the past)
3. Zone of the old town. Historical suburbs (formed during the epoch of the Grand Lithuanian principality) located close to the historical kernel of Vilnius

Vilnius : zones de conservation des monuments de la vieille ville /
monument preservation zones of Old Town



Vilnius : vue panoramique de la vieille ville depuis le château haut
panorama of Old Town from Upper Castle



Vilnius : église Saint-Michel / Church of St Michael