
“Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Jordan) No 1446

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

Location

South Shunah District, Governorate of Al-Balqaa
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Brief description

The Baptism Site “Bethany beyond the Jordan” is located in the Jordan Valley, north of the Dead Sea. The site contains two distinct archaeological areas, Tell el-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar Elias, and the area of the Churches of St. John the Baptist. The property is believed the location where Jesus of Nazareth was baptised by John the Baptist and is a popular pilgrimage destination for Christians. Physical remains associated with the commemoration of this event include a water collection system and pools as well as later built churches, chapels, a monastery, hermit caves and pilgrim stations.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

18 June 2001

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

27 January 2014

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations

ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 21-25 September 2014.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 7 October 2014 requesting additional information with regard to development projects in the property, the management plan as well as monitoring procedures established. A second letter was sent on 19 December 2014 requesting further information on boundaries, a construction moratorium for the site, maintenance, visitor- and disaster management, as well as once again monitoring procedures.

The State Party responded by letters of 2 November 2014 and 4 February 2015, submitting additional information on all the requested items, including a management plan prepared for the site and revised maps of the property and buffer zone.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2015

2 The property

Description

The archaeological site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” is located on the eastern banks of the Jordan River, nine kilometres north of the Dead Sea. The property has a size of 533.7 hectares and includes two principal archaeological areas, Tell Al-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar Elias (Elijah’s Hill), and the area of the Churches of St John the Baptist near the Jordan River.

The property includes archaeological structures of Roman and Byzantine origin, such as churches and chapels, a monastery, hermit caves and pools in which the act of baptism was celebrated. The archaeological remains will be described in four parts, focusing on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill), the churches of the Zor area (Churches of St John the Baptist), the caves and the tombs.

The archaeological area of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) is located two kilometres east of the Jordan River. As the name indicates, according to tradition Elijah’s Hill is the place from which the Prophet Elijah ascended to heaven and hence a Byzantine monastery was built at the location, the Monastery of Rhetorios in the 5th century. The hill was occupied during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Excavations revealed three churches, three baptismal pools and a circular well in addition to an outer wall which surrounded the hill. Archaeological investigations also revealed the presence of ceramic pipes transporting water from springs further east to the baptism site, which continue to provide water to the property at present.

The churches of the Zor area includes the Pillared Hall, a basilica church referred to as the Church of St John the Baptist, the Lower Basilica Church, with geometrically patterned marble floors, the remains of the Upper Basilica Church, the Marble Steps, the four piers of the Chapel of the Mantle, the Small Chapel, the Laura of St Mary of Egypt and a large pool. Noteworthy are the marble steps,

including 22 authentic black marble steps, which were constructed around 570 CE and which lead from the Upper Basilica to a baptismal pool. This pool is surrounded by four piers, which are assumed to have once supported the Chapel of the Mantle.

A cluster of monk caves carved into the Qattara Hills, also called hermit cells, is located at 300 metres distance to the Jordan River. These caves were in the past accessible from the western and south-western sides by ropes, ladders or staircases which no longer exist. Semicircular niches are carved into the eastern wall of each cave, which was divided into two rooms, assumed to have been reserved for praying and for living.

A number of tombs were identified adjacent to or within the churches. They seem to be burial places of monks or individuals closely associated with the churches. Most graves are rectangular and adequate in size to receive a single outstretched body. The burials have been dated to the Byzantine and early Islamic periods (5th 7th century CE). The property revealed archaeological finds, including coins and ceramics and serves as an epigraphic reference.

History and development

Based on the archaeological evidence, the site was first inhabited in the Chalcolithic period (ca. 3500 BC) by a small farming community. The subsequent settlement remains date to Hellenistic times, but the key development of the site occurred during the Roman and Byzantine eras, in the 1st to 7th centuries CE, with the main structures dated to after the 4th century when Christianity was declared the official state religion. The site flourished as a pilgrimage site especially during the Byzantine period; however, all buildings of this time were destroyed as a result of earthquakes and floods and rebuilt multiple times in later periods until the site was abandoned by the late 15th century.

The Byzantine occupation clustered in two areas, along the east bank of the Jordan River and around the hill of Tell Al-Kharrar, often called Elijah's Hill. The first church of St John the Baptist was built by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius in the period 491-518 CE. It was destroyed by floods and earthquakes twice, until the third church reconstruction and the chapel on piers collapsed during a major flood in the 6th or 7th century CE. The main buildings on Elijah's Hill date to the 5th and 6th century CE.

Several of the Byzantine structures continued to be used during the early Islamic period. An Orthodox monastery was established in the 13th century on the remains of the earlier Byzantine but it is uncertain how long it continued to be used. The number of travellers dropped at the time and most elements of the property fell into disuse. A pilgrim visiting the site in 1484 reported it to be in ruins. It appears that the property was hardly visited between the 15th and the 19th centuries, when a small chapel dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt, a hermit from the

Byzantine period, was built but then again destroyed in the 1927 earthquake.

In the early 20th century the site was used by a local community of farmers, and after the Six-Day war in 1967 it became a closed military zone until the signing of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994. In the 1990s the archaeological excavation of the site started, and basic conservation and restoration works began in the early 21st century. Visitor structures and facilities were established outside the archaeological areas, which include a car park, a ticket office, management offices, a conference centre, a store, souvenir shops, a wastewater treatment plant and a desalination plant.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is divided into two main sections. The first section considers sites of relevance to historical events of Christianity as well as sites that have become pilgrimage destinations to Christian communities. This comparison is predominantly focused on the region and considers sites like Mount Nebo, according to tradition the place where Moses looked at the promised land, Deir ain Abbata, supposedly the cave where Lot and his two daughters stayed after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route in Bethlehem, Palestine, (2012, criteria (iv) and (vi)), Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai, Egypt (2002, criteria (i), (iii), (iv), and (vi)) and several other sites, especially in the Jordan Valley.

The State Party concludes in this section that several other sites are comparable or even superior in material remains but that "Bethany beyond the Jordan" has unique and exceptional significance in terms of its association with the baptism of Jesus. ICOMOS considers that the judgment concerning the lack of exceptionality of the physical remains is appropriate and that the site – in comparison to the places compared – gains its exceptionality through its association to the historic event and the practice of pilgrimage over two millennia. ICOMOS further notes that historical structures associated with the baptism of Jesus exist on the western banks of the Jordan River. However, it seems that pilgrimage of most churches is focused on "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" as the likely baptism site as a result of the wilderness character, described as the setting of the baptism, which seems lacking on the opposite banks.

The second section of the comparative analysis considers on a global scale sites of religious significance and pilgrimage, with emphasis on properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. Properties compared on the basis of their religious significance include the island of Pátmos, Greece (1999 criteria (iii), (iv), and (vi)) and Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord

Buddha, Nepal (1997, criteria (iii) and (vi)). ICOMOS considers that other sites of religious pilgrimage, such as Mount Wutai, China (2009, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi)), the Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela, Ethiopia (1978, (i), (ii) and (iii)), the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya, India (2002, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), and (vi)), the Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex, Russian Federation (2014, criteria (ii) and (vi)) or the Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee, Israel, (2008, criteria (iii) and (vi)) could have been added for further comparison. However, ICOMOS considers that none of these would have led to a different result than that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is unique in its association to the sacrament of baptism in Christian faith.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is tangibly associated with the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus in the early 1st century.
- The site is also associated with the life and ascension of Elijah (also called Elias and Elisha), which is of common relevance to the monotheistic religions as well as the last years of the life of St Mary of Egypt.
- The special significance attributed to the baptism of Jesus encouraged generations of monks, hermits, pilgrims and priests to reside in and visit the site, and to leave behind testimonies of their devotion and religious activities, dating to between the 4th and the 15th century CE.
- The continuous reconstruction of churches destroyed by floods and earthquakes illustrates the enormous importance that was attributed to the site, despite the fact that the location was not suitable for permanent constructions.

ICOMOS considers that the evidence provided in the nomination dossier does not doubtlessly prove that the archaeological structures of Jabal Mar Elias and the churches near the Jordan River are indeed related to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth, while also noting that several locations along the Jordan River have historically made similar claims. However, ICOMOS notes that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is of immense religious significance to the majority of denominations of Christian faith, who have accepted this site as the location in which Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. The archaeological structures testify to the early beginnings of this attributed importance which initiated the construction of churches and chapels, habitation of hermit caves and pilgrimage activities.

ICOMOS considers that the above justification is appropriate in relation to the significance attributed by Christian believers.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The area proposed for inscription corresponds to the area administered by the Baptism Site Commission. It is maintained as a wilderness area and locates within all the known archaeological remains relevant to the significance proposed. The size of the property allows the whole valley to be viewed and appreciated by visitors and in most directions integrates the wider setting of the Jordan Valley, from the vista points established for such purpose. All the elements necessary to read and understand the values conveyed by the property are still present and are encompassed by the nominated area.

However, towards the north-east and south-west, the initially proposed property included areas, free of archaeological remains which have been designated for the establishment of religious, administrative and visitor infrastructure. At the request of ICOMOS these areas have been excluded from the property. The construction area is now located in the buffer zone of the property. ICOMOS requested the removal of the above areas to allow for a construction moratorium to be issued for the remaining site, which is yet to happen.

ICOMOS notes that despite the exclusion of the above named areas from the property scrutiny needs to be applied to the approval of any future projects envisaged in these. The planned pilgrimage village should further be considered through comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) before any approval is granted for its construction. The commitment of the State Party to present any plans to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies before approval is helpful in this context. ICOMOS further recommends the development of construction guidelines for the churches to provide a shared framework of scale, designs and construction schemes.

In the past the property has been prone to flooding, causing the architectural structures to be destroyed several times. Most recently flooding occurred when dams upstream on the Jordan were opened to relieve high water levels in the dam lakes. Agreements have been put in place to control and coordinate these releases to avoid flooding in the future. The flow of the Jordan is now controlled so that flooding due to natural climatic events is no longer possible.

Authenticity

The site of "Bethany Beyond The Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is considered by the majority of the Christian Churches to be the location where John the Baptist baptised Jesus. The continuing pilgrimage and veneration of the site is a credible expression of the spirit and feeling attributed to it and the atmosphere, which the property conveys to the

believers. As the location of Jesus' baptism is described as wilderness, the preservation of the Zor, the green wilderness along the Jordan River, is essential to maintain this attribution. Despite the large volume of visitors to the site, a wilderness feeling still exists, which is enhanced by the natural materials and simple local construction technology that are used to build the shelter structures and visitor rest areas.

As an important religious site, several Christian Churches desire to have their presence in places of veneration and accordingly locations just outside the property have been and continue to be allocated for the construction of churches. Although these recent structures could be seen as compromising the authenticity of the setting of the site, they do not presently impinge on or negatively impact the central area containing the archaeological remains.

The archaeological areas have been preserved in their original materials, but have in many places been restored adding similar materials from the area to allow for easier interpretation or use of the structures. In some cases archaeological fragments have been reassembled by means of anastylosis. ICOMOS considers that the restoration undertaken does in some places reduce the authenticity in material and workmanship. However, ICOMOS considers that this reduction of material authenticity does not affect the significance or credibility attributed to the site by Christian believers.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the condition of integrity has been met. ICOMOS further considers that although material authenticity is at times compromised, authenticity in relation to the property's associated significance as the location of Jesus' baptism and the cultural tradition of pilgrimage has been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the archaeological remains illustrate the continuous use of the site over millennia for pilgrimage and provides a unique testimony to the cultural and religious tradition of baptism and the importance it holds in the Christian belief system. The State Party further claims that recent discoveries demonstrate that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is the site of Jesus' baptism by John, and its association with the life of John the Baptist, with the ascension to Heaven of Prophet Elias/Elijah, and the life of St Mary of Egypt,

ICOMOS considers that the property best represents the tradition of baptism, an important sacrament in Christian faith, and with it the continuous practice of pilgrimage to the site. This tradition is illustrated by the archaeological

evidence, which references the practice of baptism since the 4th century, a practice that is continued again at present time. ICOMOS considers that the claims concerning the authenticity of the site as the baptism site of Jesus or the location of Elijah's ascension cannot be confirmed from an archaeological point of view but have been accepted by the majority of Christian connotations, which seems more relevant for the historic and present practice of the cultural tradition.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" exhibits outstanding examples of buildings and architectural ensembles which illustrate a fundamental event in the history of one of the world's great religions. The State Party explains that the buildings illustrate specific construction techniques, such as building on piers to protect churches from flooding or the use of marble staircases. These structures match the descriptions of early pilgrims and travellers who visited the baptism site of Jesus of Nazareth.

ICOMOS considers that the collection of historic structures which were added to the property over several centuries can hardly be described as a specific type of architectural ensemble. ICOMOS also considers that the archaeological evidence of the site as baptism site of Jesus remains questionable and that the ongoing practice of religious communities is better recognized under criteria (iii) and (vi).

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is directly associated with the Christian tradition of baptism as well as being associated with important individuals and events in the three monotheistic religions. These include the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the ascension of Elijah (also called Elias and Elisha) and the last years of life of St Mary of Egypt.

ICOMOS considers that the property is indeed of high significance to several Christian denominations as the baptism site of Jesus of Nazareth and for millennia has been a popular pilgrimage destination. ICOMOS considers that the associations to this historic event, believed to have taken place in the property, and the

contemporary beliefs still associated allow for justification of this criterion.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (vi) and the conditions of authenticity and integrity.

Description of the attributes

The attributes of Outstanding Universal Value are in the landscape features of the Jordan River and the natural vegetation perceived as wilderness which support the association of the location to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth by John the Baptist. The archaeological remains are attributes of the early practices of pilgrimage, hermit life and religious veneration that were responses to the associations of this location. In addition the continuing visits of Christian communities to the site highlight the continuation of the cultural tradition of baptism and pilgrimage to its place of origin.

4 Factors affecting the property

Development pressures are low due to the application of national and regional laws pertaining to land use and building development along with the bylaws of the Baptism Site Commission. Any threat to the site from planned or illegal development is extremely remote. The construction of religious buildings near the property is confined to specific areas in the buffer zone that is tightly controlled by the Baptism Site Authority, which has full control over all aspects of design, form and building consent. However, Heritage Impact Assessments should be conducted for any future development in the larger setting as well as for any visitor infrastructure added on site.

The main environmental factors affecting the site are large temperature fluctuations and salt crystallisation on the exposed archaeological materials. Conservation strategies have been designed to mitigate the impact of these environmental conditions and reduce the result of the deterioration processes. Flooding was a recurrent threat in the past, but analysis of flood damages allowed building small dikes around the archaeological remains to hold back flood water and reduce the impact of flooding. In view of natural disasters, earthquakes remain possible in the area and had negative impact on the site in the past. Wildfires could affect the vegetation in the Jordan Valley which retains the imagination of wilderness.

While the visitation of the site by pilgrims contributes to its significance, a massive increase of visitors and tourism activities could have negative impacts on the site. Based on past records of visitor numbers, the Baptism Site Commission undertook studies to determine the approximate carrying capacity of the site. The study highlighted that even a considerable visitor

increase would still remain within the limits of acceptable change. As the site is fenced and the entrance secured by ticket offices, the Baptism Site Commission has the ability to prevent visitors beyond the calculated benchmark amount.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are major floods, earthquakes, wildfires and uncontrolled visitor increase.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The boundaries of the property are clearly delineated and correspond in part to the perimeter of the designated site. The boundary also partly corresponds to tarmac and dirt roads that surround it and a barbed wire topped, chain-link fence which encloses the site. Sections of the initially designated site to the north-east and south-west have been designated for development of churches by the religious communities and other visitor infrastructure and have therefore been defined as buffer zone, to allow for a construction moratorium to be applied to the remaining parts of the site. The moratorium should prevent the construction of any architectural structures with a exceptions of structures created with the sole purpose of protection of archaeological elements. This legal commitment is yet to be issued. Sufficient archaeological research has been undertaken at the site and the extent of the relevant archaeological remains is well established.

ICOMOS is satisfied with the delineation of the boundaries in terms of inclusiveness. At the suggestion of ICOMOS the areas set aside for the establishment of modern church buildings, the proposed pilgrim village and the current administration centre have been designated as buffer zone and are now no longer within the property boundary. Archaeological excavations have shown that these areas contain no significant archaeological remains so that constructions can be permitted in the area according to guidelines which need to be drawn up.

The buffer zone surrounds the site towards the north, east and south with a distance of approximately 600 metres to each direction. It is zoned as either agricultural land or natural protected area in which no development is permitted. There is no buffer zone foreseen to the west, where the Jordan River defines the national border. Given the topography of the site and the importance of the Jordan River in its historical context, it appears that a number of important views and view sheds are towards the west pointing at the opposite banks of the Jordan River. ICOMOS acknowledges that these are not included in the buffer zone as they fall outside the Jordanian territory. However, ICOMOS considers that international cooperation for the protection of essential views across the River should be encouraged to ensure protection of the property's landscape character in all directions.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the property include all attributes of Outstanding Universal Value. ICOMOS further considers that the buffer zone is adequate but that protection of the western banks of the Jordan River would be desirable in the future to protect important view sheds across the River.

Ownership

The property ownership is divided between two parties. The key areas are defined as Christian Waqf (endowment) belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. The remainder of the surrounding area belongs to the management authority, the Baptism Site Commission.

Protection

Both the property and buffer zones enjoy legal protection at all levels. At state level the property is designated as an antique site according to Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par 8. This law prohibits destruction, damage or alteration of the antiquity itself and regulates development works around it, so as to avoid major impact on the antiquity and on its contextual perception. ICOMOS recommended to the State Party that a construction moratorium be issued for the nominated property, which is intended to prevent any structures except those exclusively dedicated to the protection of archaeological remains. The State Party's response accepted the boundary changes suggested to allow for the moratorium but did not indicate if or when this would be issued.

On a regional level the property and buffer zone are protected by the Jordan Valley Authority Laws and on the site level by the By-Laws of the Baptism Site Commission. The objective of these laws is to protect the property from potential future threats, focused mainly on development and tourism projects that might jeopardize the nature and character of the Site and its immediate surroundings. Irrespective of ownership indicated above, the Baptism Site Commission has full legal control of the site.

Although not indicated in the nomination dossier, the veneration of the place, the presence of several church communities and the continuing pilgrimage add a level of traditional protection. It is not in the interest of the Christian communities that the property changes its character and accordingly visitation is arranged with respect to the site's significance. The protection measures of both the national level and in particular the Baptism Site Commission are effective and will, if consistently implemented, prevent negative impacts to the property.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.

Conservation

The property has been well described, documented and inventoried in 2012, with records and archives available at the Baptism Site Commission archives and at the Department of Antiquities in Amman. The present state of conservation is good. The managers and staff at the

Baptism Site Commission are versed in current approaches to the conservation of archaeological sites, understand the processes of deterioration that occur on the site and are implementing conservation strategies to mitigate the effects.

The general approach to active conservation is based on minimal intervention focusing on consolidation and stabilization rather than reconstruction. Any stabilization designed to recreate a weather resistant condition for the archaeological remains is distinguished from the original fabric and completely reversible. This also includes the introduction of protective shelters which were constructed in three locations of the site. These shelters are designed to be self-supporting and clearly designed as new additions to the site rather than trying to mimic a historic architectural style.

Conservation projects are programmed on an annual basis and a maintenance team is present on site. Visitors access the property accompanied by guides, who are asked to report all problems they observe back to the conservation manager. The Department of Antiquities supplies conservation expertise whenever specialized knowledge is required. In such cases the site conservation and maintenance team receive on the job training from these experts as part of their work. At present, the site does not seem to require major conservation intervention and ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures in place are effective.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation approaches and expertise applied are adequate and effective.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The authority responsible for the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" is the Baptism Site Commission, which is directed by an independent board of trustees appointed by H.M. King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein and chaired by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad. The day-to-day management is guided by the Director-General of the Baptism Site Commission and his deputy, who is in charge of conservation. Both are based on site full time and guide a team of 55 employees.

The Board of Trustees meets at regular intervals and receives update information on all relevant issues on site. They have full decision-making authority without referring to any other government agency. All revenues generated on site are utilized for the administration and management of the property. As result of these adequate financial resources, the management team is well staffed and qualified.

Risk preparedness has not been a key focus of the management but the State Party has provided additional material on risk management and maintenance

procedures, which ICOMOS recommends to be integrated in the overall management system.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

At the request of ICOMOS the State Party submitted the management plan of the property. Although a voluminous document, large parts of it are repetitive of the nomination file. The management plan remains analytical and descriptive and gives little emphasis to maintenance schemes as well as future strategies, activities and actions. It does also not address the future risks and threats it has identified. As such, the management plan is a comprehensive analytical tool of the present state of conservation and services but does not qualify as a strategic management document.

Considering the adequate management arrangements already in place, ICOMOS in its letter requesting additional information suggested that the State Party may wish to give priority to documenting the present management system and developing plans for maintenance, visitor management and disaster response rather than revising the entire management plan. The State Party submitted additional information on aspects currently considered for visitor and disaster response management. ICOMOS recommends that these are formally integrated in the management system.

Visitor access is controlled at one single entrance gate, which allows not only for the control of visitor numbers but also for the distribution of information. Maps and information leaflets are available at the entrance and the site features an audio guide system. From the entrance gate visitors use a shuttle bus which transports them to the starting point of the walking path. Almost all visitors join guided tours, in which the guides convey all necessary information. Occasional information panels in English and Arabic are also available. Specific paths are laid out on site for the visitor walks and pilgrim processions.

Involvement of the local communities

The Baptism Site Commission is keen on spreading awareness and knowledge about the site and its significance to the local community and general public. They presented public lectures to different audiences and held training sessions on site. Furthermore, several workshops were held where invited local community members and general public discussed the topic of religious tolerance and coexistence between different religions in Jordan. A number of staff members of the administration team are from the local community which allows the site to be perceived as a source of income and support.

ICOMOS considers that the management system is well founded and able to address most of the current challenges. However, ICOMOS considers that the management plan presented does not qualify as a

strategic planning document and recommends that processes which are currently being prepared to address maintenance schemes, visitor management and disaster response strategies will be utilized to augment the management system.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property is mostly adequate but recommends that processes currently prepared for maintenance, visitor management and disaster response should augment the existing management system.

6 Monitoring

The nomination dossier presented a number of aspects that would be considered in monitoring but did not include specific measures or indicators. At the request of ICOMOS, the State Party submitted in two steps further information on the monitoring procedures including a set of indicators, methods of measurement and periodicity of review. The additional information further highlights that a full monitoring programme is developed as part of an annual maintenance plan.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators presented cover relevant areas and that the monitoring programme should be integrated in the annual maintenance plan.

7 Conclusions

ICOMOS considers that the Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) presents an exceptional testimony to Christian religious practice through its association with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and in general terms the Christian sacrament of Baptism. Although ICOMOS cannot follow the archaeological arguments presented to prove the authenticity of the exact location where the baptism of Jesus took place, ICOMOS notes that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is of immense religious importance to the large majority of Christians, who have accepted this site to be the very location from which the sacrament originated.

The archaeological remains testify to the beginnings of this importance which led to the construction of churches and other religious structures used for hermitage or pilgrimage. The topography of the Jordan River and the vegetation, perceived as a landscape of wilderness, support the association to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth by John the Baptist. The pilgrimage activities of Christian visitors highlight the continuation of the cultural tradition of baptism at its assumed place of origin. ICOMOS considers that the property justifies criteria (iii) and (vi) and meets the conditions of integrity and authenticity.

The site is well protected by its national designation as an antique site and appropriate development restrictions at a

regional and local level. Conservation measures follow current international standards for archaeological conservation and maintenance is undertaken according to annual planning tools. The state of conservation is adequate and no major conservation interventions seem required at present. Responsible for the management of the site is the Baptism Site Commission, guided by a board of trustees and managed on a day-to-day basis by its director and deputy who are both based on site. Since the site can directly utilize its revenues from ticketing, adequate financial resources are available.

The management plan presented remains descriptive and analytical but does not provide strategic guidance for future management. Following the recommendation of ICOMOS the State Party has prepared an initial overview of procedures in relation to maintenance, visitor management and disaster response. ICOMOS further recommends that the monitoring procedures be integrated in the annual maintenance schemes.

While the site boundaries are adequate in terms of inclusiveness of all archaeological remains, the State Party followed the recommendation of ICOMOS to exclude the areas in which construction of churches, administration offices and pilgrimage accommodation and other visitor infrastructure is foreseen. ICOMOS further recommended to apply a construction moratorium to the remaining parts of the site, which would prevent any construction except those exclusively dedicated to the protection of archaeological structures. However, the State Party has not yet provided indications as to if and when such moratorium might be formally issued. The buffer zone provides adequate protection towards the North, East and South, but no buffer zone is foreseen to the West across the Jordan River, which is the national boundary. Given the importance of the Jordan River in its historical context and significance, a number of important views are pointing at the opposite banks. ICOMOS acknowledges that these fall outside the Jordanian territory, however, ICOMOS considers that international cooperation for the protection of essential views across the river should be encouraged by the World Heritage Committee to ensure protection of the property's landscape character in all directions.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

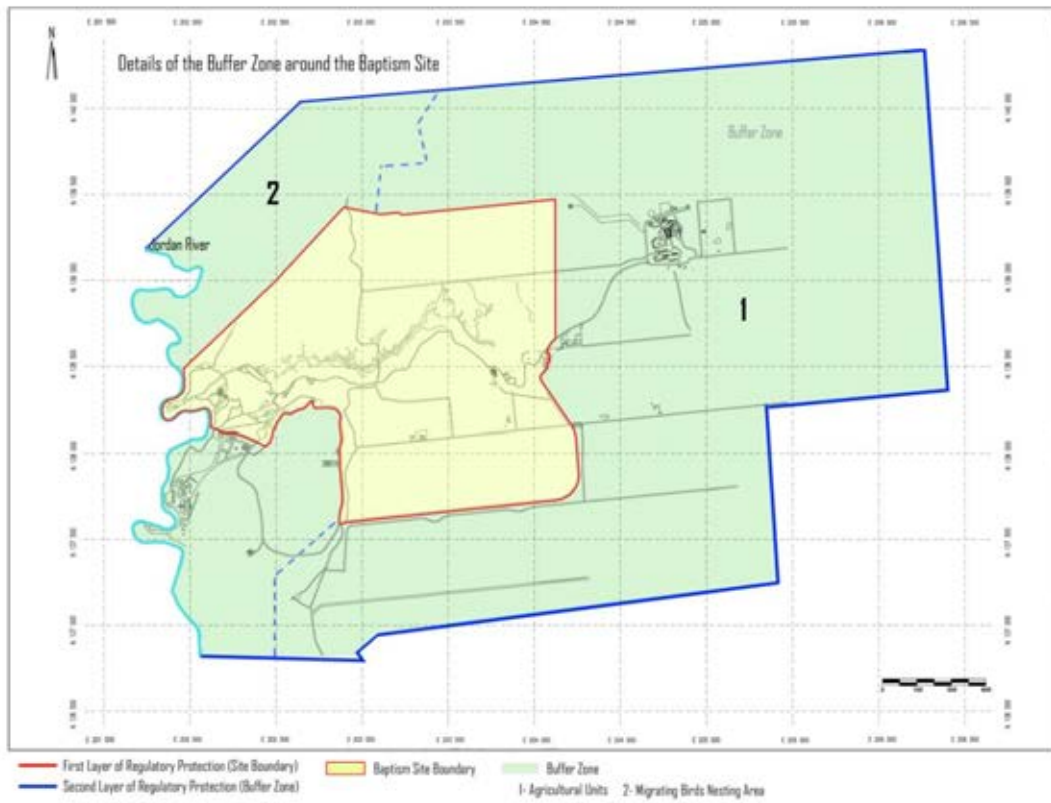
ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas), Jordan, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- Issue a construction moratorium for the property, which prevents any construction except for architectural structures created solely to protect archaeological remains;

- Integrate the management procedures on maintenance, visitor management and disaster response in the management system;
- Develop design and construction guidelines for the Churches which are to be constructed in the buffer zone.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the World Heritage Committee encourages all concerned State Parties to ensure the protection of the western banks of the Jordan River to preserve important vistas and sightlines of the property.



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of the Baptism Site and the Jordan River



The Church of Saint John the Baptist, remains of the first church



Visitors and pilgrims



Zor area with Churches of St. John the Baptist and baptism pool

“Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Jordan) No 1446

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Baptism Site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” (Al-Maghtas)

Location

South Shunah District, Governorate of Al-Balqaa
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Brief description

The Baptism Site “Bethany beyond the Jordan” is located in the Jordan Valley, north of the Dead Sea. The site contains two distinct archaeological areas, Tell el-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar Elias, and the area of the Churches of St. John the Baptist. The property is believed the location where Jesus of Nazareth was baptised by John the Baptist and is a popular pilgrimage destination for Christians. Physical remains associated with the commemoration of this event include a water collection system and pools as well as later built churches, chapels, a monastery, hermit caves and pilgrim stations.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

18 June 2001

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

27 January 2014

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations

ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 21-25 September 2014.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 7 October 2014 requesting additional information with regard to development projects in the property, the management plan as well as monitoring procedures established. A second letter was sent on 19 December 2014 requesting further information on boundaries, a construction moratorium for the site, maintenance, visitor- and disaster management, as well as once again monitoring procedures.

The State Party responded by letters of 2 November 2014 and 4 February 2015, submitting additional information on all the requested items, including a management plan prepared for the site and revised maps of the property and buffer zone.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2015

2 The property

Description

The archaeological site “Bethany Beyond the Jordan” is located on the eastern banks of the Jordan River, nine kilometres north of the Dead Sea. The property has a size of 533.7 hectares and includes two principal archaeological areas, Tell Al-Kharrar, also known as Jabal Mar Elias (Elijah’s Hill), and the area of the Churches of St John the Baptist near the Jordan River.

The property includes archaeological structures of Roman and Byzantine origin, such as churches and chapels, a monastery, hermit caves and pools in which the act of baptism was celebrated. The archaeological remains will be described in four parts, focusing on Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill), the churches of the Zor area (Churches of St John the Baptist), the caves and the tombs.

The archaeological area of Tell Al-Kharrar (Elijah’s Hill) is located two kilometres east of the Jordan River. As the name indicates, according to tradition Elijah’s Hill is the place from which the Prophet Elijah ascended to heaven and hence a Byzantine monastery was built at the location, the Monastery of Rhetorios in the 5th century. The hill was occupied during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Excavations revealed three churches, three baptismal pools and a circular well in addition to an outer wall which surrounded the hill. Archaeological investigations also revealed the presence of ceramic pipes transporting water from springs further east to the baptism site, which continue to provide water to the property at present.

The churches of the Zor area includes the Pillared Hall, a basilica church referred to as the Church of St John the Baptist, the Lower Basilica Church, with geometrically patterned marble floors, the remains of the Upper Basilica Church, the Marble Steps, the four piers of the Chapel of the Mantle, the Small Chapel, the Laura of St Mary of Egypt and a large pool. Noteworthy are the marble steps,

including 22 authentic black marble steps, which were constructed around 570 CE and which lead from the Upper Basilica to a baptismal pool. This pool is surrounded by four piers, which are assumed to have once supported the Chapel of the Mantle.

A cluster of monk caves carved into the Qattara Hills, also called hermit cells, is located at 300 metres distance to the Jordan River. These caves were in the past accessible from the western and south-western sides by ropes, ladders or staircases which no longer exist. Semicircular niches are carved into the eastern wall of each cave, which was divided into two rooms, assumed to have been reserved for praying and for living.

A number of tombs were identified adjacent to or within the churches. They seem to be burial places of monks or individuals closely associated with the churches. Most graves are rectangular and adequate in size to receive a single outstretched body. The burials have been dated to the Byzantine and early Islamic periods (5th 7th century CE). The property revealed archaeological finds, including coins and ceramics and serves as an epigraphic reference.

History and development

Based on the archaeological evidence, the site was first inhabited in the Chalcolithic period (ca. 3500 BC) by a small farming community. The subsequent settlement remains date to Hellenistic times, but the key development of the site occurred during the Roman and Byzantine eras, in the 1st to 7th centuries CE, with the main structures dated to after the 4th century when Christianity was declared the official state religion. The site flourished as a pilgrimage site especially during the Byzantine period; however, all buildings of this time were destroyed as a result of earthquakes and floods and rebuilt multiple times in later periods until the site was abandoned by the late 15th century.

The Byzantine occupation clustered in two areas, along the east bank of the Jordan River and around the hill of Tell Al-Kharrar, often called Elijah's Hill. The first church of St John the Baptist was built by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius in the period 491-518 CE. It was destroyed by floods and earthquakes twice, until the third church reconstruction and the chapel on piers collapsed during a major flood in the 6th or 7th century CE. The main buildings on Elijah's Hill date to the 5th and 6th century CE.

Several of the Byzantine structures continued to be used during the early Islamic period. An Orthodox monastery was established in the 13th century on the remains of the earlier Byzantine but it is uncertain how long it continued to be used. The number of travellers dropped at the time and most elements of the property fell into disuse. A pilgrim visiting the site in 1484 reported it to be in ruins. It appears that the property was hardly visited between the 15th and the 19th centuries, when a small chapel dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt, a hermit from the

Byzantine period, was built but then again destroyed in the 1927 earthquake.

In the early 20th century the site was used by a local community of farmers, and after the Six-Day war in 1967 it became a closed military zone until the signing of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994. In the 1990s the archaeological excavation of the site started, and basic conservation and restoration works began in the early 21st century. Visitor structures and facilities were established outside the archaeological areas, which include a car park, a ticket office, management offices, a conference centre, a store, souvenir shops, a wastewater treatment plant and a desalination plant.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is divided into two main sections. The first section considers sites of relevance to historical events of Christianity as well as sites that have become pilgrimage destinations to Christian communities. This comparison is predominantly focused on the region and considers sites like Mount Nebo, according to tradition the place where Moses looked at the promised land, Deir ain Abbata, supposedly the cave where Lot and his two daughters stayed after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route in Bethlehem, Palestine, (2012, criteria (iv) and (vi)), Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai, Egypt (2002, criteria (i), (iii), (iv), and (vi)) and several other sites, especially in the Jordan Valley.

The State Party concludes in this section that several other sites are comparable or even superior in material remains but that "Bethany beyond the Jordan" has unique and exceptional significance in terms of its association with the baptism of Jesus. ICOMOS considers that the judgment concerning the lack of exceptionality of the physical remains is appropriate and that the site – in comparison to the places compared – gains its exceptionality through its association to the historic event and the practice of pilgrimage over two millennia. ICOMOS further notes that historical structures associated with the baptism of Jesus exist on the western banks of the Jordan River. However, it seems that pilgrimage of most churches is focused on "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" as the likely baptism site as a result of the wilderness character, described as the setting of the baptism, which seems lacking on the opposite banks.

The second section of the comparative analysis considers on a global scale sites of religious significance and pilgrimage, with emphasis on properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. Properties compared on the basis of their religious significance include the island of Pátmos, Greece (1999 criteria (iii), (iv), and (vi)) and Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord

Buddha, Nepal (1997, criteria (iii) and (vi)). ICOMOS considers that other sites of religious pilgrimage, such as Mount Wutai, China (2009, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi)), the Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela, Ethiopia (1978, (i), (ii) and (iii)), the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya, India (2002, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), and (vi)), the Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex, Russian Federation (2014, criteria (ii) and (vi)) or the Bahá'í Holy Places in Haifa and the Western Galilee, Israel, (2008, criteria (iii) and (vi)) could have been added for further comparison. However, ICOMOS considers that none of these would have led to a different result than that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is unique in its association to the sacrament of baptism in Christian faith.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is tangibly associated with the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus in the early 1st century.
- The site is also associated with the life and ascension of Elijah (also called Elias and Elisha), which is of common relevance to the monotheistic religions as well as the last years of the life of St Mary of Egypt.
- The special significance attributed to the baptism of Jesus encouraged generations of monks, hermits, pilgrims and priests to reside in and visit the site, and to leave behind testimonies of their devotion and religious activities, dating to between the 4th and the 15th century CE.
- The continuous reconstruction of churches destroyed by floods and earthquakes illustrates the enormous importance that was attributed to the site, despite the fact that the location was not suitable for permanent constructions.

ICOMOS considers that the evidence provided in the nomination dossier does not doubtlessly prove that the archaeological structures of Jabal Mar Elias and the churches near the Jordan River are indeed related to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth, while also noting that several locations along the Jordan River have historically made similar claims. However, ICOMOS notes that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is of immense religious significance to the majority of denominations of Christian faith, who have accepted this site as the location in which Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. The archaeological structures testify to the early beginnings of this attributed importance which initiated the construction of churches and chapels, habitation of hermit caves and pilgrimage activities.

ICOMOS considers that the above justification is appropriate in relation to the significance attributed by Christian believers.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The area proposed for inscription corresponds to the area administered by the Baptism Site Commission. It is maintained as a wilderness area and locates within all the known archaeological remains relevant to the significance proposed. The size of the property allows the whole valley to be viewed and appreciated by visitors and in most directions integrates the wider setting of the Jordan Valley, from the vista points established for such purpose. All the elements necessary to read and understand the values conveyed by the property are still present and are encompassed by the nominated area.

However, towards the north-east and south-west, the initially proposed property included areas, free of archaeological remains which have been designated for the establishment of religious, administrative and visitor infrastructure. At the request of ICOMOS these areas have been excluded from the property. The construction area is now located in the buffer zone of the property. ICOMOS requested the removal of the above areas to allow for a construction moratorium to be issued for the remaining site, which is yet to happen.

ICOMOS notes that despite the exclusion of the above named areas from the property scrutiny needs to be applied to the approval of any future projects envisaged in these. The planned pilgrimage village should further be considered through comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) before any approval is granted for its construction. The commitment of the State Party to present any plans to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies before approval is helpful in this context. ICOMOS further recommends the development of construction guidelines for the churches to provide a shared framework of scale, designs and construction schemes.

In the past the property has been prone to flooding, causing the architectural structures to be destroyed several times. Most recently flooding occurred when dams upstream on the Jordan were opened to relieve high water levels in the dam lakes. Agreements have been put in place to control and coordinate these releases to avoid flooding in the future. The flow of the Jordan is now controlled so that flooding due to natural climatic events is no longer possible.

Authenticity

The site of "Bethany Beyond The Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is considered by the majority of the Christian Churches to be the location where John the Baptist baptised Jesus. The continuing pilgrimage and veneration of the site is a credible expression of the spirit and feeling attributed to it and the atmosphere, which the property conveys to the

believers. As the location of Jesus' baptism is described as wilderness, the preservation of the Zor, the green wilderness along the Jordan River, is essential to maintain this attribution. Despite the large volume of visitors to the site, a wilderness feeling still exists, which is enhanced by the natural materials and simple local construction technology that are used to build the shelter structures and visitor rest areas.

As an important religious site, several Christian Churches desire to have their presence in places of veneration and accordingly locations just outside the property have been and continue to be allocated for the construction of churches. Although these recent structures could be seen as compromising the authenticity of the setting of the site, they do not presently impinge on or negatively impact the central area containing the archaeological remains.

The archaeological areas have been preserved in their original materials, but have in many places been restored adding similar materials from the area to allow for easier interpretation or use of the structures. In some cases archaeological fragments have been reassembled by means of anastylosis. ICOMOS considers that the restoration undertaken does in some places reduce the authenticity in material and workmanship. However, ICOMOS considers that this reduction of material authenticity does not affect the significance or credibility attributed to the site by Christian believers.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the condition of integrity has been met. ICOMOS further considers that although material authenticity is at times compromised, authenticity in relation to the property's associated significance as the location of Jesus' baptism and the cultural tradition of pilgrimage has been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the archaeological remains illustrate the continuous use of the site over millennia for pilgrimage and provides a unique testimony to the cultural and religious tradition of baptism and the importance it holds in the Christian belief system. The State Party further claims that recent discoveries demonstrate that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is the site of Jesus' baptism by John, and its association with the life of John the Baptist, with the ascension to Heaven of Prophet Elias/Elijah, and the life of St Mary of Egypt,

ICOMOS considers that the property best represents the tradition of baptism, an important sacrament in Christian faith, and with it the continuous practice of pilgrimage to the site. This tradition is illustrated by the archaeological

evidence, which references the practice of baptism since the 4th century, a practice that is continued again at present time. ICOMOS considers that the claims concerning the authenticity of the site as the baptism site of Jesus or the location of Elijah's ascension cannot be confirmed from an archaeological point of view but have been accepted by the majority of Christian connotations, which seems more relevant for the historic and present practice of the cultural tradition.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" exhibits outstanding examples of buildings and architectural ensembles which illustrate a fundamental event in the history of one of the world's great religions. The State Party explains that the buildings illustrate specific construction techniques, such as building on piers to protect churches from flooding or the use of marble staircases. These structures match the descriptions of early pilgrims and travellers who visited the baptism site of Jesus of Nazareth.

ICOMOS considers that the collection of historic structures which were added to the property over several centuries can hardly be described as a specific type of architectural ensemble. ICOMOS also considers that the archaeological evidence of the site as baptism site of Jesus remains questionable and that the ongoing practice of religious communities is better recognized under criteria (iii) and (vi).

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) is directly associated with the Christian tradition of baptism as well as being associated with important individuals and events in the three monotheistic religions. These include the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the ascension of Elijah (also called Elias and Elisha) and the last years of life of St Mary of Egypt.

ICOMOS considers that the property is indeed of high significance to several Christian denominations as the baptism site of Jesus of Nazareth and for millennia has been a popular pilgrimage destination. ICOMOS considers that the associations to this historic event, believed to have taken place in the property, and the

contemporary beliefs still associated allow for justification of this criterion.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (vi) and the conditions of authenticity and integrity.

Description of the attributes

The attributes of Outstanding Universal Value are in the landscape features of the Jordan River and the natural vegetation perceived as wilderness which support the association of the location to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth by John the Baptist. The archaeological remains are attributes of the early practices of pilgrimage, hermit life and religious veneration that were responses to the associations of this location. In addition the continuing visits of Christian communities to the site highlight the continuation of the cultural tradition of baptism and pilgrimage to its place of origin.

4 Factors affecting the property

Development pressures are low due to the application of national and regional laws pertaining to land use and building development along with the bylaws of the Baptism Site Commission. Any threat to the site from planned or illegal development is extremely remote. The construction of religious buildings near the property is confined to specific areas in the buffer zone that is tightly controlled by the Baptism Site Authority, which has full control over all aspects of design, form and building consent. However, Heritage Impact Assessments should be conducted for any future development in the larger setting as well as for any visitor infrastructure added on site.

The main environmental factors affecting the site are large temperature fluctuations and salt crystallisation on the exposed archaeological materials. Conservation strategies have been designed to mitigate the impact of these environmental conditions and reduce the result of the deterioration processes. Flooding was a recurrent threat in the past, but analysis of flood damages allowed building small dikes around the archaeological remains to hold back flood water and reduce the impact of flooding. In view of natural disasters, earthquakes remain possible in the area and had negative impact on the site in the past. Wildfires could affect the vegetation in the Jordan Valley which retains the imagination of wilderness.

While the visitation of the site by pilgrims contributes to its significance, a massive increase of visitors and tourism activities could have negative impacts on the site. Based on past records of visitor numbers, the Baptism Site Commission undertook studies to determine the approximate carrying capacity of the site. The study highlighted that even a considerable visitor

increase would still remain within the limits of acceptable change. As the site is fenced and the entrance secured by ticket offices, the Baptism Site Commission has the ability to prevent visitors beyond the calculated benchmark amount.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are major floods, earthquakes, wildfires and uncontrolled visitor increase.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The boundaries of the property are clearly delineated and correspond in part to the perimeter of the designated site. The boundary also partly corresponds to tarmac and dirt roads that surround it and a barbed wire topped, chain-link fence which encloses the site. Sections of the initially designated site to the north-east and south-west have been designated for development of churches by the religious communities and other visitor infrastructure and have therefore been defined as buffer zone, to allow for a construction moratorium to be applied to the remaining parts of the site. The moratorium should prevent the construction of any architectural structures with a exceptions of structures created with the sole purpose of protection of archaeological elements. This legal commitment is yet to be issued. Sufficient archaeological research has been undertaken at the site and the extent of the relevant archaeological remains is well established.

ICOMOS is satisfied with the delineation of the boundaries in terms of inclusiveness. At the suggestion of ICOMOS the areas set aside for the establishment of modern church buildings, the proposed pilgrim village and the current administration centre have been designated as buffer zone and are now no longer within the property boundary. Archaeological excavations have shown that these areas contain no significant archaeological remains so that constructions can be permitted in the area according to guidelines which need to be drawn up.

The buffer zone surrounds the site towards the north, east and south with a distance of approximately 600 metres to each direction. It is zoned as either agricultural land or natural protected area in which no development is permitted. There is no buffer zone foreseen to the west, where the Jordan River defines the national border. Given the topography of the site and the importance of the Jordan River in its historical context, it appears that a number of important views and view sheds are towards the west pointing at the opposite banks of the Jordan River. ICOMOS acknowledges that these are not included in the buffer zone as they fall outside the Jordanian territory. However, ICOMOS considers that international cooperation for the protection of essential views across the River should be encouraged to ensure protection of the property's landscape character in all directions.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the property include all attributes of Outstanding Universal Value. ICOMOS further considers that the buffer zone is adequate but that protection of the western banks of the Jordan River would be desirable in the future to protect important view sheds across the River.

Ownership

The property ownership is divided between two parties. The key areas are defined as Christian Waqf (endowment) belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. The remainder of the surrounding area belongs to the management authority, the Baptism Site Commission.

Protection

Both the property and buffer zones enjoy legal protection at all levels. At state level the property is designated as an antique site according to Antiquities Law 21/1988, art. 3, par 8. This law prohibits destruction, damage or alteration of the antiquity itself and regulates development works around it, so as to avoid major impact on the antiquity and on its contextual perception. ICOMOS recommended to the State Party that a construction moratorium be issued for the nominated property, which is intended to prevent any structures except those exclusively dedicated to the protection of archaeological remains. The State Party's response accepted the boundary changes suggested to allow for the moratorium but did not indicate if or when this would be issued.

On a regional level the property and buffer zone are protected by the Jordan Valley Authority Laws and on the site level by the By-Laws of the Baptism Site Commission. The objective of these laws is to protect the property from potential future threats, focused mainly on development and tourism projects that might jeopardize the nature and character of the Site and its immediate surroundings. Irrespective of ownership indicated above, the Baptism Site Commission has full legal control of the site.

Although not indicated in the nomination dossier, the veneration of the place, the presence of several church communities and the continuing pilgrimage add a level of traditional protection. It is not in the interest of the Christian communities that the property changes its character and accordingly visitation is arranged with respect to the site's significance. The protection measures of both the national level and in particular the Baptism Site Commission are effective and will, if consistently implemented, prevent negative impacts to the property.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.

Conservation

The property has been well described, documented and inventoried in 2012, with records and archives available at the Baptism Site Commission archives and at the Department of Antiquities in Amman. The present state of conservation is good. The managers and staff at the

Baptism Site Commission are versed in current approaches to the conservation of archaeological sites, understand the processes of deterioration that occur on the site and are implementing conservation strategies to mitigate the effects.

The general approach to active conservation is based on minimal intervention focusing on consolidation and stabilization rather than reconstruction. Any stabilization designed to recreate a weather resistant condition for the archaeological remains is distinguished from the original fabric and completely reversible. This also includes the introduction of protective shelters which were constructed in three locations of the site. These shelters are designed to be self-supporting and clearly designed as new additions to the site rather than trying to mimic a historic architectural style.

Conservation projects are programmed on an annual basis and a maintenance team is present on site. Visitors access the property accompanied by guides, who are asked to report all problems they observe back to the conservation manager. The Department of Antiquities supplies conservation expertise whenever specialized knowledge is required. In such cases the site conservation and maintenance team receive on the job training from these experts as part of their work. At present, the site does not seem to require major conservation intervention and ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures in place are effective.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation approaches and expertise applied are adequate and effective.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The authority responsible for the Baptism Site, "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" is the Baptism Site Commission, which is directed by an independent board of trustees appointed by H.M. King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein and chaired by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad. The day-to-day management is guided by the Director-General of the Baptism Site Commission and his deputy, who is in charge of conservation. Both are based on site full time and guide a team of 55 employees.

The Board of Trustees meets at regular intervals and receives update information on all relevant issues on site. They have full decision-making authority without referring to any other government agency. All revenues generated on site are utilized for the administration and management of the property. As result of these adequate financial resources, the management team is well staffed and qualified.

Risk preparedness has not been a key focus of the management but the State Party has provided additional material on risk management and maintenance

procedures, which ICOMOS recommends to be integrated in the overall management system.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

At the request of ICOMOS the State Party submitted the management plan of the property. Although a voluminous document, large parts of it are repetitive of the nomination file. The management plan remains analytical and descriptive and gives little emphasis to maintenance schemes as well as future strategies, activities and actions. It does also not address the future risks and threats it has identified. As such, the management plan is a comprehensive analytical tool of the present state of conservation and services but does not qualify as a strategic management document.

Considering the adequate management arrangements already in place, ICOMOS in its letter requesting additional information suggested that the State Party may wish to give priority to documenting the present management system and developing plans for maintenance, visitor management and disaster response rather than revising the entire management plan. The State Party submitted additional information on aspects currently considered for visitor and disaster response management. ICOMOS recommends that these are formally integrated in the management system.

Visitor access is controlled at one single entrance gate, which allows not only for the control of visitor numbers but also for the distribution of information. Maps and information leaflets are available at the entrance and the site features an audio guide system. From the entrance gate visitors use a shuttle bus which transports them to the starting point of the walking path. Almost all visitors join guided tours, in which the guides convey all necessary information. Occasional information panels in English and Arabic are also available. Specific paths are laid out on site for the visitor walks and pilgrim processions.

Involvement of the local communities

The Baptism Site Commission is keen on spreading awareness and knowledge about the site and its significance to the local community and general public. They presented public lectures to different audiences and held training sessions on site. Furthermore, several workshops were held where invited local community members and general public discussed the topic of religious tolerance and coexistence between different religions in Jordan. A number of staff members of the administration team are from the local community which allows the site to be perceived as a source of income and support.

ICOMOS considers that the management system is well founded and able to address most of the current challenges. However, ICOMOS considers that the management plan presented does not qualify as a

strategic planning document and recommends that processes which are currently being prepared to address maintenance schemes, visitor management and disaster response strategies will be utilized to augment the management system.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property is mostly adequate but recommends that processes currently prepared for maintenance, visitor management and disaster response should augment the existing management system.

6 Monitoring

The nomination dossier presented a number of aspects that would be considered in monitoring but did not include specific measures or indicators. At the request of ICOMOS, the State Party submitted in two steps further information on the monitoring procedures including a set of indicators, methods of measurement and periodicity of review. The additional information further highlights that a full monitoring programme is developed as part of an annual maintenance plan.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators presented cover relevant areas and that the monitoring programme should be integrated in the annual maintenance plan.

7 Conclusions

ICOMOS considers that the Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas) presents an exceptional testimony to Christian religious practice through its association with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and in general terms the Christian sacrament of Baptism. Although ICOMOS cannot follow the archaeological arguments presented to prove the authenticity of the exact location where the baptism of Jesus took place, ICOMOS notes that the Baptism Site "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is of immense religious importance to the large majority of Christians, who have accepted this site to be the very location from which the sacrament originated.

The archaeological remains testify to the beginnings of this importance which led to the construction of churches and other religious structures used for hermitage or pilgrimage. The topography of the Jordan River and the vegetation, perceived as a landscape of wilderness, support the association to the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth by John the Baptist. The pilgrimage activities of Christian visitors highlight the continuation of the cultural tradition of baptism at its assumed place of origin. ICOMOS considers that the property justifies criteria (iii) and (vi) and meets the conditions of integrity and authenticity.

The site is well protected by its national designation as an antique site and appropriate development restrictions at a

regional and local level. Conservation measures follow current international standards for archaeological conservation and maintenance is undertaken according to annual planning tools. The state of conservation is adequate and no major conservation interventions seem required at present. Responsible for the management of the site is the Baptism Site Commission, guided by a board of trustees and managed on a day-to-day basis by its director and deputy who are both based on site. Since the site can directly utilize its revenues from ticketing, adequate financial resources are available.

The management plan presented remains descriptive and analytical but does not provide strategic guidance for future management. Following the recommendation of ICOMOS the State Party has prepared an initial overview of procedures in relation to maintenance, visitor management and disaster response. ICOMOS further recommends that the monitoring procedures be integrated in the annual maintenance schemes.

While the site boundaries are adequate in terms of inclusiveness of all archaeological remains, the State Party followed the recommendation of ICOMOS to exclude the areas in which construction of churches, administration offices and pilgrimage accommodation and other visitor infrastructure is foreseen. ICOMOS further recommended to apply a construction moratorium to the remaining parts of the site, which would prevent any construction except those exclusively dedicated to the protection of archaeological structures. However, the State Party has not yet provided indications as to if and when such moratorium might be formally issued. The buffer zone provides adequate protection towards the North, East and South, but no buffer zone is foreseen to the West across the Jordan River, which is the national boundary. Given the importance of the Jordan River in its historical context and significance, a number of important views are pointing at the opposite banks. ICOMOS acknowledges that these fall outside the Jordanian territory, however, ICOMOS considers that international cooperation for the protection of essential views across the river should be encouraged by the World Heritage Committee to ensure protection of the property's landscape character in all directions.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

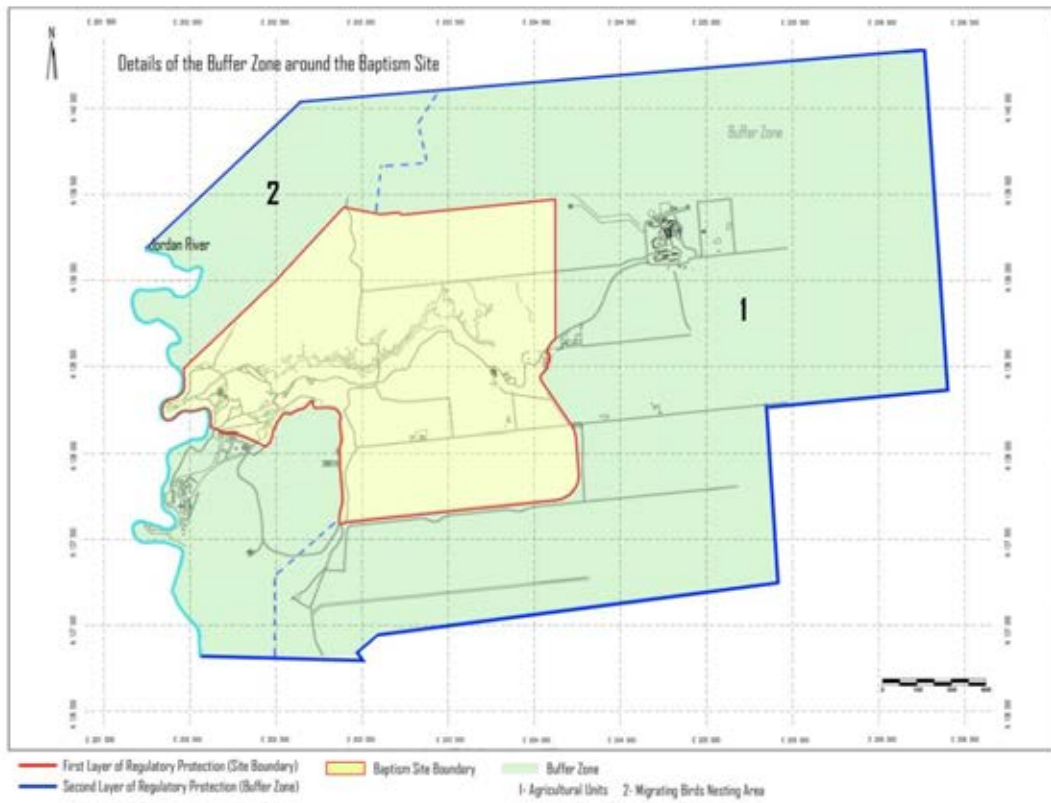
ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas), Jordan, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- Issue a construction moratorium for the property, which prevents any construction except for architectural structures created solely to protect archaeological remains;

- Integrate the management procedures on maintenance, visitor management and disaster response in the management system;
- Develop design and construction guidelines for the Churches which are to be constructed in the buffer zone.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the World Heritage Committee encourages all concerned State Parties to ensure the protection of the western banks of the Jordan River to preserve important vistas and sightlines of the property.



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Aerial view of the Baptism Site and the Jordan River



The Church of Saint John the Baptist, remains of the first church



Visitors and pilgrims



Zor area with Churches of St. John the Baptist and baptism pool

**« Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain »
(Jordanie)
No 1446**

Nom officiel du bien tel que proposé par l'État partie
Site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas)

Lieu

District sud de Shunah, gouvernorat de Al-Balqaa
Royaume hachémite de Jordanie

Brève description

Le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » est situé dans la vallée du Jourdain, au nord de la Mer morte. Le site abrite deux zones archéologiques distinctes, Tell Al-Kharrar, également connue sous le nom de Jabal Mar Elias, et la zone des églises Saint-Jean-Baptiste. On croit que c'est là que Jésus de Nazareth fut baptisé par Jean-Baptiste et le bien est une destination de pèlerinage populaire pour les chrétiens. Les vestiges physiques associés à la commémoration de cet événement comprennent un système de collecte d'eau et des bassins ainsi que des églises postérieures, des chapelles, un monastère, des grottes d'ermite et des stations de pèlerinage.

Catégorie de bien

En termes de catégories de biens culturels, telles qu'elles sont définies à l'article premier de la Convention du Patrimoine mondial de 1972, il s'agit d'un *site*.

1 Identification

Inclus dans la liste indicative

18 juin 2001

Assistance internationale au titre du Fonds du patrimoine mondial pour la préparation de la proposition d'inscription

Aucune

Date de réception par le Centre du patrimoine mondial

27 janvier 2014

Antécédents

Il s'agit d'une nouvelle proposition d'inscription.

Consultations

L'ICOMOS a consulté son Comité scientifique international sur la gestion du patrimoine archéologique et plusieurs experts indépendants.

Mission d'évaluation technique

Une mission d'évaluation technique s'est rendue sur le bien du 21 au 25 septembre 2014.

Information complémentaire reçue par l'ICOMOS

L'ICOMOS a envoyé une lettre à l'État partie le 7 octobre 2014 demandant des informations complémentaires à propos des projets de développement sur le bien, du plan de gestion ainsi que des procédures de suivi instaurées. Une deuxième lettre a été envoyée le 19 décembre 2014, demandant plus d'informations sur les délimitations, le moratoire de construction pour le site, l'entretien, la gestion des visiteurs et celle des catastrophes et, une fois encore, les procédures de suivi.

L'État partie a répondu par lettres du 2 novembre 2014 et du 4 février 2015, en soumettant des informations complémentaires sur tous les points demandés, avec notamment un plan de gestion prévu pour le site et des cartes révisées du bien et de la zone tampon.

Date d'approbation de l'évaluation par l'ICOMOS

12 mars 2015

2 Le bien

Description

Le site archéologique de « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » se trouve sur les rives orientales du Jourdain, à neuf kilomètres au nord de la Mer morte. Le bien couvre 533,7 ha et inclut deux principales zones archéologiques, Tell Al-Kharrar, également connue sous le nom de Jabal Mar Elias (la colline d'Élie), et la zone des églises Saint-Jean-Baptiste près du Jourdain.

Le bien contient des structures archéologiques d'origine romaine et byzantine, telles que des églises et des chapelles, un monastère, des grottes d'ermite et des bassins baptismaux. Les vestiges archéologiques seront décrits en quatre volets, en se concentrant sur Tell Al-Kharrar (la colline d'Élie), les églises de la région du Zor (églises Saint-Jean-Baptiste), les grottes et les tombeaux.

La zone archéologique de Tell Al-Kharrar (la colline d'Élie) est située à deux kilomètres à l'est du Jourdain. Comme son nom l'indique, selon la tradition la colline d'Élie est l'endroit d'où le prophète Élie a effectué son ascension ; un monastère byzantin fut donc construit à cet endroit, le monastère de Rhetorios, au Ve siècle. La colline était occupée aux époques romaine et byzantine. Des fouilles ont révélé trois églises, trois bassins baptismaux et un puits circulaire en sus d'un mur d'enceinte qui entourait la colline. Des recherches archéologiques ont aussi révélé la présence de conduits en céramique transportant de l'eau depuis les sources plus à l'est jusqu'au site du baptême, lesquels alimentent aujourd'hui encore le bien en eau.

Les églises de la région du Zor comprennent la salle hypostyle, une basilique dénommée église Saint-Jean-Baptiste, la basilique inférieure, aux sols de marbre à motifs géométriques, les vestiges de la basilique

supérieure, les escaliers en marbre, les quatre piliers de la chapelle du Manteau, la petite chapelle, la Laure de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne et un grand bassin. Les escaliers de marbre, remarquables avec leurs vingt-deux marches authentiques en marbre noir, furent construits aux environs de 570 apr. J.-C. et conduisent de la basilique supérieure à un bassin baptismal. Ce dernier est entouré de quatre piliers, qui auraient jadis soutenu la chapelle du Manteau.

Un groupe de grottes de moines (dites aussi cellules d'ermite) creusées dans les collines de Qattara, se trouvent à 300 mètres du Jourdain. Elles étaient jadis accessibles depuis les flancs ouest et sud-ouest par des cordes, des échelles ou des escaliers aujourd'hui disparus. Des niches semi-circulaires sont creusées dans le mur oriental de chaque grotte, qui était divisée en deux salles, supposées réservées l'une à la prière, l'autre à la vie quotidienne.

Plusieurs tombeaux ont été identifiés à côté des églises et à l'intérieur. Il semble s'agir des lieux de sépulture de moines ou de personnes étroitement associées aux églises. La plupart des tombes sont rectangulaires, de taille adéquate pour accueillir un seul corps allongé. Les inhumations ont pu être datées de la période byzantine et du début de l'ère islamique (Ve-VIIe siècle apr. J.-C.). Le bien a révélé des découvertes archéologiques, y compris des pièces et des céramiques, et sert de référence épigraphique.

Histoire et développement

Sur la base des observations archéologiques, le site fut habité pour la première fois à l'époque chalcolithique (ca 3 500 av. J.-C.) par une petite communauté agricole. Les vestiges de peuplement ultérieurs datent de l'époque hellénistique, mais c'est aux époques romaine et byzantine que le site connut son principal essor, du Ier au VIIe siècle apr. J.-C., les structures principales datant d'après le IVe siècle, au temps où le christianisme fut déclaré religion d'État. Le site devint un lieu de pèlerinage important à l'époque byzantine tout particulièrement ; toutefois, tous les édifices datant de cette période furent détruits à la suite de tremblements de terre et d'inondations et reconstruits à plusieurs reprises jusqu'à l'abandon du site à la fin du XVe siècle.

L'occupation byzantine s'est regroupée sur deux zones, le long de la rive orientale du Jourdain et autour de la colline de Tell Al-Kharrar, souvent appelée colline d'Élie. La première église Saint-Jean-Baptiste fut construite par l'empereur byzantin Anastase pendant la période 491-518 apr. J.-C. Elle fut deux fois détruite par des inondations et des tremblements de terre ; reconstruite une troisième fois, elle s'effondra avec la chapelle sur piliers durant une inondation de grande envergure au VIe ou au VIIe siècle apr. J.-C. Les principaux édifices sur la colline d'Élie remontent aux Ve et VIe siècles apr. J.-C.

Plusieurs des structures byzantines continuèrent d'être utilisées au début de la période islamique. Un monastère

orthodoxe fut fondé au XIIIe siècle sur les vestiges du monastère byzantin antérieur mais on ignore avec certitude combien de temps il fut en activité. À cette époque, le nombre de voyageurs chuta et la plupart des éléments du bien tombèrent en désuétude ; d'après un pèlerin venu le visiter en 1484, le site était alors en ruines. Il semble qu'il fut peu fréquenté entre le XVe et le XIXe siècle, date à laquelle une petite chapelle dédiée à sainte Marie l'Égyptienne, une ermite de la période byzantine, fut construite mais une fois de plus détruite dans le tremblement de terre de 1927.

Au début du XXe siècle, le site était utilisé par une communauté locale d'agriculteurs, puis, après la guerre des Six-Jours en 1967, il devint une zone militaire fermée jusqu'à la signature d'un traité de paix entre la Jordanie et Israël en 1994. Dans les années 1990, les fouilles archéologiques du site commencèrent et des travaux élémentaires de conservation et de restauration débutèrent au début du XXIe siècle. Les infrastructures et les installations destinées aux visiteurs ont été établies en dehors des zones archéologiques ; elles incluent une aire de stationnement, un guichet, des bureaux de gestion, un centre de conférences, un magasin, des boutiques de souvenirs, une station d'épuration des eaux et une usine de désalinisation.

3 Justification de l'inscription, intégrité et authenticité

Analyse comparative

L'analyse comparative est divisée en deux sections. La première considère des sites pertinents en termes d'événements historiques propres au christianisme, ainsi que d'autres devenus des destinations de pèlerinage pour les diverses communautés chrétiennes. Cette comparaison se concentre essentiellement sur la région et envisage des sites comme le mont Nebo – lieu d'où, selon la tradition, Moïse contempla la Terre promise –, Deir ain Abbata, supposée être la grotte où Lot et ses deux filles séjournèrent après la destruction de Sodome et Gomorrhe, l'église de la Nativité et la route de pèlerinage à Bethléem, Palestine [2012, (iv) et (vi)], le monastère Sainte-Catherine au pied du mont Sinaï, Égypte [2002, (i), (iii), (iv), et (vi)] et plusieurs autres sites, particulièrement dans la vallée du Jourdain.

Dans cette section, l'État partie conclut que plusieurs autres sites sont comparables ou même supérieurs, du point de vue des vestiges matériels, mais que « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » a une signification unique et exceptionnelle du fait de son association avec le baptême de Jésus. L'ICOMOS estime que le jugement quant à l'absence de caractère exceptionnel des vestiges physiques est juste, et que le site – par rapport aux lieux comparés – tire son importance de son association à cet événement historique et à la pratique du pèlerinage sur deux millénaires. L'ICOMOS note en outre qu'il existe sur la rive occidentale du Jourdain d'autres structures historiques associées au baptême de

Jésus. Mais il semble que les destinations de pèlerinage soient concentrées sur « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » et ses églises, lieu considéré comme le site probable du baptême du fait de son aspect sauvage ainsi décrit dans les textes, ce qui ne semble pas le cas des rives opposées.

La seconde section de l'analyse comparative considère à l'échelle mondiale les sites d'importance religieuse et de pèlerinage en mettant l'accent sur les biens déjà inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Les biens, comparés sur la base de leur importance religieuse, incluent l'île de Pátmos, Grèce [1999, (iii), (iv) et (vi)] et Lumbini, Népal [1997, (iii) et (vi)], lieu de naissance du Bouddha. L'ICOMOS estime que d'autres sites de pèlerinage religieux, comme le mont Wutai, Chine [2009, (ii), (iii), (iv) et (vi)], les églises creusées dans le roc de Lalibela, Éthiopie [1978, (i), (ii) et (iii)], l'ensemble du temple de la Mahabodhi à Bodhgaya, Inde [2002, (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) et (vi)], l'ensemble historique et archéologique de Bolgar, Fédération de Russie [2014, (ii) et (vi)] ou les lieux saints bahá'ís à Haïfa et en Galilée occidentale, Israël [2008, (iii) et (vi)], auraient pu être ajoutés pour une comparaison plus approfondie. Toutefois, l'ICOMOS considère qu'aucun de ceux-ci n'aurait conduit à une autre conclusion : le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » est unique de par son association avec le sacrement du baptême propre à la foi chrétienne.

L'ICOMOS estime que l'analyse comparative justifie d'envisager l'inscription de ce bien sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

Justification de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle

Le bien proposé pour inscription est considéré par l'État partie comme ayant une valeur universelle exceptionnelle en tant que bien culturel pour les raisons suivantes :

- Le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » est matériellement associé au ministère de Jean-Baptiste et au baptême de Jésus à l'aube du 1^{er} siècle.
- Le site est aussi associé à la vie et à l'ascension d'Élie (également appelé Elias et Elisha), qui tient un rôle dans toutes les religions monothéistes, ainsi qu'aux dernières années de la vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne.
- La signification toute particulière attribuée au baptême de Jésus a incité des générations de moines, d'ermites, de pèlerins et de prêtres à résider sur le site ou à venir le visiter, laissant derrière eux des témoignages de leur dévotion et de leurs activités religieuses, du IV^e au XV^e siècle apr. J.-C.
- La reconstruction incessante des églises détruites par les inondations et les tremblements de terre illustre l'importance considérable accordée au site, qui ne se prêtait pourtant pas à des constructions permanentes.

L'ICOMOS considère que les preuves fournies dans le dossier de proposition d'inscription ne démontrent pas de façon indubitable l'association des structures archéologiques de Jabal Mar Elias et des églises proches du Jourdain avec le baptême de Jésus de Nazareth, et note que plusieurs sites le long du Jourdain ont historiquement revendiqué le même statut. Toutefois, l'ICOMOS note que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » possède une signification religieuse immense pour la majorité des branches du christianisme, qui reconnaissent ce site comme celui où Jésus fut baptisé par Jean-Baptiste. Les structures archéologiques témoignent des débuts de l'importance qu'on lui a attribué, à l'origine de la construction d'églises et de chapelles, de l'habitation de grottes d'ermes et d'activités de pèlerinage. L'ICOMOS estime que la justification ci-dessus est appropriée rapportée à la signification attribuée au site par les croyants chrétiens.

Intégrité et authenticité

Intégrité

La zone proposée pour inscription correspond à la zone administrée par la Commission du site du baptême. Elle est entretenue en tant qu'espace naturel sauvage et abrite tous les vestiges archéologiques associés à la signification proposée du bien. Les dimensions du bien permettent aux visiteurs de voir et d'apprécier toute la vallée et, dans la plupart des directions, intègrent l'environnement plus vaste de la vallée du Jourdain depuis les points de vue établis à cette fin. Tous les éléments nécessaires à la lecture et à la compréhension des valeurs véhiculées par le bien sont toujours présents, et ce dans les limites de la zone proposée pour inscription.

Toutefois, vers le nord-est et le sud-ouest, le bien initialement proposé pour inscription comportait des zones dépourvues de vestiges archéologiques qui ont été réservées à l'établissement d'infrastructures religieuses, administratives et d'accueil. À la demande de l'ICOMOS, ces zones de construction ont été exclues du bien, et sont maintenant situées dans la zone tampon. L'ICOMOS a demandé le retrait de ces zones afin de permettre l'application d'un moratoire de construction pour le reste du site, ce qui n'a pas encore été fait.

L'ICOMOS note que, même si ces zones ont été exclues du bien, tout projet futur qui y serait envisagé doit faire l'objet d'un examen attentif avant d'être approuvé. Le village de pèlerinage prévu devrait faire l'objet d'études d'impact sur le patrimoine (EIP) exhaustives avant que sa construction ne soit autorisée. L'engagement de l'État partie à présenter tout plan au Centre du patrimoine mondial et aux organisations consultatives avant autorisation est utile dans ce contexte. L'ICOMOS recommande en outre l'élaboration de directives de construction pour les églises afin de mettre en place un cadre commun d'échelle, de conception et de programmes de construction.

Par le passé, le bien a souvent été sujet aux inondations, qui ont provoqué la destruction des structures architecturales à maintes reprises. La plus récente s'est produite quand les digues en amont du Jourdain ont été ouvertes pour soulager les hauts niveaux d'eau des lacs. Des accords ont été mis en place pour contrôler et coordonner ces évacuations afin d'éviter d'autres inondations à l'avenir. Le courant du Jourdain est désormais maîtrisé, de sorte que les inondations du fait d'événements climatiques naturels sont désormais impossibles.

Authenticité

Le site de « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas) est considéré par la majorité des Églises chrétiennes comme l'endroit où Jean-Baptiste baptisa Jésus. Le pèlerinage ininterrompu sur le site et la vénération de ce dernier constituent une expression convaincante de l'esprit et de l'impression qu'on lui reconnaît, ainsi que de l'atmosphère qu'il inspire aux croyants. Le lieu de baptême de Jésus étant décrit comme un endroit sauvage, la préservation du Zor, région sauvage le long du Jourdain, est indispensable pour préserver cette attribution. En dépit du grand nombre de visiteurs sur le site, ce sentiment d'un lieu à l'état sauvage demeure, accentué par les matériaux naturels et la technique de construction locale simple utilisée pour les abris et les aires de repos destinées aux visiteurs.

Du fait qu'il s'agit d'un important site religieux, plusieurs Églises chrétiennes désirent être présentes sur ces lieux vénérés et, en conséquence, des sites en périphérie immédiate du bien ont été et continuent d'être affectés à la construction d'églises. Bien que ces structures récentes puissent être vues comme compromettant l'authenticité du cadre du site, actuellement elles n'empiètent pas ni n'ont d'impact négatif sur la zone centrale abritant les vestiges archéologiques.

Les vestiges archéologiques ont été préservés dans leurs matériaux d'origine, mais ont été en de nombreux endroits restaurés à l'aide de matériaux similaires issus de la zone même, afin de faciliter l'interprétation et l'utilisation des structures. Dans certains cas, des fragments archéologiques ont été réassemblés par anastylose. L'ICOMOS considère que la restauration entreprise affaiblit en certains endroits l'authenticité des matériaux et de la fabrication. Toutefois, l'ICOMOS estime que cette perte d'authenticité des matériaux n'affecte pas la signification ou la crédibilité attribuée au site par les croyants chrétiens.

En conclusion, l'ICOMOS considère que la condition d'intégrité est remplie. L'ICOMOS estime également qu'en dépit d'une authenticité des matériaux parfois compromise, l'authenticité au regard de la signification associée au bien en tant que site du baptême de Jésus et de la tradition culturelle de pèlerinage est, elle, avérée.

Critères selon lesquels l'inscription est proposée

Le bien est proposé sur la base des critères culturels (iii), (iv) et (vi).

Critère (iii) : apporter un témoignage unique ou du moins exceptionnel sur une tradition culturelle ou une civilisation vivante ou disparue ;

L'État partie justifie ce critère aux motifs que les vestiges archéologiques illustrent l'usage ininterrompu et millénaire du site comme lieu de pèlerinage et apportent un témoignage unique de la tradition culturelle et religieuse du baptême et de son importance dans le système de croyances chrétien. En outre, l'État partie revendique le fait que des découvertes récentes démontrent que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas) est bien le lieu où Jésus fut baptisé par Jean-Baptiste, et prouve son association avec la vie de Jean-Baptiste, avec l'ascension du prophète Élie et avec la vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne.

L'ICOMOS considère que le bien représente parfaitement la tradition du baptême, sacrement important dans la foi chrétienne, et avec lui la pratique ininterrompue de pèlerinage sur le site. Cette tradition est illustrée par les preuves archéologiques qui font remonter au IV^e siècle la pratique du baptême, laquelle se poursuit toujours à l'heure actuelle. L'ICOMOS estime que les revendications concernant l'authenticité du site en tant que lieu du baptême de Jésus ou celui de l'ascension d'Élie ne peuvent être confirmées d'un point de vue archéologique mais sont admises par la majorité des branches du christianisme, ce qui semble de toute façon plus pertinent du point de vue de la pratique historique comme de la pratique actuelle de cette tradition culturelle.

L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère a été justifié.

Critère (iv) : offrir un exemple éminent d'un type de construction ou d'ensemble architectural ou technologique ou de paysage illustrant une ou des période(s) significative(s) de l'histoire humaine ;

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie aux motifs que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » offre des exemples exceptionnels d'édifices et d'ensembles architecturaux illustrant un événement fondamental dans l'histoire de l'une des grandes religions mondiales. L'État partie explique que les édifices illustrent des techniques de construction particulières, par exemple la construction sur piliers pour protéger les églises des inondations ou l'utilisation d'escaliers en marbre. Ces structures correspondent aux descriptions des premiers pèlerins et voyageurs venus visiter le lieu du baptême de Jésus de Nazareth.

L'ICOMOS considère que l'ensemble de structures historiques ajoutées au bien au fil des siècles peut difficilement être décrit comme un type particulier d'ensemble architectural. L'ICOMOS considère également que les preuves archéologiques visant à

démontrer que le site est celui du baptême de Jésus restent contestables et que la pratique continue des communautés religieuses est mieux reconnue par les critères (iii) et (vi).

L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère n'a pas été justifié.

Critère (vi) : être directement ou matériellement associé à des événements ou à des traditions vivantes, des croyances ou des œuvres artistiques et littéraires ayant une signification universelle exceptionnelle ;

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie aux motifs que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas) est directement associé à la tradition chrétienne du baptême ainsi qu'à différents individus et événements importants dans les trois religions monothéistes, parmi lesquels le baptême de Jésus par Jean-Baptiste, l'ascension d'Élie (également appelé Elias et Elisha) et les dernières années de la vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne.

L'ICOMOS considère que le bien est également d'une grande importance pour plusieurs branches du christianisme en tant que site du baptême de Jésus de Nazareth, et qu'il est depuis des millénaires une destination populaire de pèlerinage. L'ICOMOS estime que l'association du bien avec cet événement historique, dont on croit qu'il s'est produit à cet endroit, ainsi que les croyances contemporaines toujours associées permettent la justification de ce critère.

L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère a été justifié.

En conclusion, l'ICOMOS considère que le bien proposé pour inscription répond aux critères (iii) et (vi) et remplit les conditions d'authenticité et d'intégrité.

Description des attributs de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle

Les attributs de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle résident dans les caractéristiques paysagères du Jourdain et la végétation naturelle, le tout perçu comme une nature sauvage, ce qui étaye l'association du site avec le baptême de Jésus de Nazareth par Jean-Baptiste. Les vestiges archéologiques sont des attributs des anciennes pratiques de pèlerinage, d'érémisme et de vénération religieuse – autant de réponses à ce qui a été associé à ce site. En outre, les visites incessantes des communautés chrétiennes sur le site soulignent la pérennité de la tradition culturelle du baptême et du pèlerinage sur son lieu d'origine.

4 Facteurs affectant le bien

Les pressions dues au développement sont faibles, compte tenu de l'application de lois nationales et régionales relatives à l'occupation des sols et à l'urbanisme, ainsi que des règlements de la Commission du site du baptême. Toute menace du site due à un

développement planifié ou illégal est très éloignée. La construction de bâtiments religieux à proximité du bien est limitée à des secteurs précis de la zone tampon, étroitement surveillée par la Commission du site du baptême, qui a le contrôle total de tous les aspects de la conception, de la forme et des permis de construction. Toutefois, des études d'impact sur le patrimoine devraient être menées pour tout développement futur dans un cadre plus vaste, ainsi que pour toute infrastructure d'accueil ajoutée sur le site.

Les principaux facteurs environnementaux affectant le site sont d'importantes fluctuations de température et la cristallisation saline sur les matériaux archéologiques exposés. Des stratégies de conservation ont été imaginées pour atténuer l'impact de ces conditions environnementales et réduire les conséquences des processus de détérioration. Les inondations constituaient une menace récurrente par le passé, mais l'analyse des dégâts qu'elles ont provoqués a permis de construire de petites digues autour des vestiges archéologiques afin de retenir les eaux de crue et de réduire ainsi l'impact des inondations. Au chapitre des catastrophes naturelles, les tremblements de terre, qui ont endommagé le site par le passé, demeurent possibles dans cette zone. Par ailleurs, des feux de forêt pourraient toucher la végétation dans la vallée du Jourdain, laquelle exprime l'idée de nature sauvage.

Bien que la visite des pèlerins contribue à la signification du site, une augmentation massive des visiteurs et des activités touristiques pourrait porter préjudice à celui-ci. La Commission du site du baptême, en se fondant sur les archives antérieures du nombre de visiteurs, a entrepris des études pour déterminer la capacité d'accueil approximative du site. L'étude a mis en évidence le fait que même une augmentation considérable du nombre de visiteurs resterait dans les limites d'une évolution acceptable. Le site étant clôturé et l'entrée sécurisée par des guichets, la Commission du site du baptême est à même d'éviter le dépassement du seuil de référence calculé pour le nombre de visiteurs.

L'ICOMOS considère que les principales menaces pesant sur le bien sont les grandes inondations, les tremblements de terre, les feux de forêt et l'augmentation incontrôlée du nombre de visiteurs.

5 Protection, conservation et gestion

Délimitations du bien proposé pour inscription et de la zone tampon

Les délimitations du bien sont clairement définies et correspondent en partie au périmètre du site proposé. Les délimitations correspondent également en partie aux routes, goudronnées ou non, qui l'entourent ainsi qu'à une clôture à mailles de chaîne surmontée de barbelés qui encercle le site. Des sections du site initialement proposé au nord-est et au sud-ouest ont été affectées à la construction d'églises par les communautés religieuses et

à celle d'autres infrastructures pour les visiteurs ; elles ont donc été définies comme zone tampon, afin de permettre l'application d'un moratoire de construction aux autres parties du site. Le moratoire devrait empêcher la construction de structures architecturales, à l'exception des structures créées dans un simple but de protection des éléments archéologiques. Cet engagement juridique reste encore à prendre. Des fouilles archéologiques suffisantes ont été entreprises sur le site et le périmètre des vestiges archéologiques concernés est bien établi.

L'ICOMOS est satisfait des délimitations en termes d'inclusivité. À la suggestion de l'ICOMOS, les zones réservées à l'établissement des bâtiments religieux modernes, au village de pèlerins envisagé et au centre administratif actuel ont été désignées comme zone tampon et ne sont plus incluses dans les limites du bien. Les fouilles archéologiques ont montré que ces zones ne comportent aucun vestige archéologique important, de sorte que des constructions peuvent y être autorisées selon des directives qui restent à établir.

La zone tampon entoure le bien sur les côtés nord, est et sud, sur environ 600 mètres dans chaque direction. Elle se répartit soit en terres agricoles, soit en zone naturelle protégée où aucun développement n'est autorisé. Il n'y a pas de zone tampon prévue à l'ouest, où le Jourdain marque la frontière nationale. Compte tenu de la topographie du site et de l'importance du Jourdain dans son contexte historique, il semble que plusieurs vues et points de vue importants soient dirigés vers l'ouest, pointant la rive opposée du Jourdain. L'ICOMOS reconnaît que ceux-ci ne sont pas inclus dans la zone tampon, car ils sont situés hors du territoire jordanien. Cependant, l'ICOMOS considère qu'il faudrait encourager une coopération internationale visant la protection des vues essentielles de part et d'autre du fleuve, afin d'assurer la préservation du caractère du paysage du bien dans toutes les directions.

En conclusion, l'ICOMOS considère que les délimitations du bien englobent tous les attributs de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle. L'ICOMOS considère en outre que la zone tampon est satisfaisante mais que la protection des rives occidentales du Jourdain serait souhaitable à l'avenir, dans un souci de protection des points de vue importants de part et d'autre du fleuve.

Droit de propriété

Les droits de propriété relatifs au bien se divisent en deux parties. Les principales zones sont définies en tant que Waqf (donation à perpétuité) chrétien appartenant à l'église grecque orthodoxe. Le reste de la zone avoisinante est la propriété de l'autorité de gestion, la Commission du site du baptême.

Protection

Le bien et la zone tampon bénéficient d'une protection juridique à tous les niveaux. Au niveau de l'État, le bien est classé « site antique » au titre de la Loi sur les antiquités n° 21/1988, art. 3, § 8, qui interdit toute

destruction d'un monument ancien ainsi que tout dommage ou toute altération portés à celui-ci, et régleme les travaux de développement alentour, afin d'éviter un impact majeur sur le monument et la perception de son environnement. L'ICOMOS a recommandé à l'État partie d'appliquer un moratoire de construction pour le bien proposé pour inscription, destiné à empêcher la construction de toute nouvelle structure à l'exception de celles exclusivement dédiées à la protection des vestiges archéologiques. Dans sa réponse, l'État partie acceptait la modification des délimitations, suggérée dans le but de permettre ce moratoire, mais n'a pas indiqué si celui-ci serait décidé ou quand il le serait.

À l'échelon régional, le bien et la zone tampon sont protégés par les lois de l'Autorité de la vallée du Jourdain et, au niveau du site, par les règlements de la Commission du site du baptême. L'objectif de ces lois consiste à protéger le bien de potentielles menaces futures, essentiellement axées sur le développement et les projets touristiques susceptibles de compromettre la nature et le caractère du site et de son environnement immédiat. Indépendamment des droits de propriété précédemment indiqués, la Commission du site du baptême a l'entier contrôle juridique du site.

Bien que ceci ne soit pas mentionné dans le dossier de proposition d'inscription, la vénération du lieu, la présence de plusieurs communautés ecclésiastiques et le pèlerinage continu participent à une protection traditionnelle du site. En effet, il n'est pas dans l'intérêt des communautés chrétiennes que le caractère du bien change, et les visites sont de ce fait organisées au regard de la signification du site. Les mesures de protection à l'échelon national et en particulier au niveau de la Commission du site du baptême sont efficaces et, si elles sont mises en œuvre de façon cohérente, éviteront des impacts négatifs sur le bien.

En conclusion, l'ICOMOS considère que la protection juridique en place est satisfaisante.

Conservation

Le bien a été convenablement décrit, documenté et inventorié en 2012, les rapports étant disponibles aux archives de la Commission du site du baptême et au département des Antiquités à Amman. L'état de conservation actuel est bon. Les responsables et le personnel de la Commission du site du baptême connaissent les approches actuelles de conservation des sites archéologiques, comprennent les processus de détérioration qui touchent le site et mettent en œuvre des stratégies de conservation pour en atténuer les effets.

L'approche générale de la conservation active repose sur une intervention minimale se concentrant sur la consolidation et la stabilisation plutôt que sur la reconstruction. Toute stabilisation conçue pour protéger les vestiges archéologiques des intempéries se distingue des structures d'origine et est complètement réversible. Ceci inclut notamment la mise en place d'abris construits

en trois endroits du site. Ces abris sont autoportants et clairement conçus pour être vus comme des ajouts nouveaux au site plutôt que l'imitation d'un style architectural historique.

Les projets de conservation sont programmés sur une base annuelle et une équipe d'entretien est présente sur le site. L'accès des visiteurs au bien se fait en compagnie de guides, auxquels il est demandé de signaler tous les problèmes qu'ils constatent au responsable de conservation. Le département des Antiquités fournit une expertise en matière de conservation chaque fois que des connaissances spécialisées sont nécessaires. Dans ce cas, l'équipe de conservation et d'entretien du site reçoit une formation pratique de la part de ces experts dans le cadre de leur travail. Actuellement, le site ne semble pas nécessiter d'intervention de conservation majeure et l'ICOMOS considère que les mesures de conservation en place sont efficaces.

L'ICOMOS considère que les approches de conservation et l'expertise appliquée sont satisfaisantes et efficaces.

Gestion

Structures et processus de gestion, notamment processus de gestion traditionnelle

L'autorité responsable du site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » est la Commission du site du baptême, dirigée par un conseil d'administration indépendant nommé par Sa Majesté le roi Abdullah II bin al-Hussein et présidé par Son Altesse Royale le prince Ghazi bin Muhammad. La gestion courante est pilotée par le directeur général de la Commission du site du baptême et son adjoint, chargé de la conservation. Tous deux sont basés sur le site à temps plein et dirigent une équipe de 55 employés.

Le conseil d'administration se réunit à intervalles réguliers et il est tenu au courant de toutes les questions relatives au site. Il a tout pouvoir de décision, n'ayant aucun compte à rendre à une autre instance gouvernementale. Toutes les recettes générées par le site sont réinjectées dans l'administration et la gestion de celui-ci. Grâce à ces ressources financières suffisantes, l'équipe de gestion est convenablement dotée en personnel et est bien qualifiée.

La préparation aux risques n'est pas un élément clé de la gestion mais l'État partie a fourni des éléments complémentaires sur les procédures de gestion des risques et d'entretien, que l'ICOMOS recommande d'intégrer au système de gestion global.

Cadre de référence : plans et mesures de gestion, y compris la gestion des visiteurs et la présentation

À la demande de l'ICOMOS, l'État partie a soumis le plan de gestion du bien. Bien que ce soit un document volumineux, il s'agit pour une grande part d'une répétition du dossier de proposition d'inscription. Le plan de gestion demeure analytique et descriptif et insiste peu sur les

programmes d'entretien ainsi que sur les stratégies, activités et actions futures. De plus, il n'aborde ni les risques futurs ni les menaces qu'il a identifiés. À ce titre, le plan de gestion est un outil analytique exhaustif de l'état actuel de la conservation et des services, mais il ne saurait être qualifié de document de gestion stratégique.

Considérant les dispositions de gestion satisfaisantes déjà en place, l'ICOMOS, dans sa lettre demandant des informations complémentaires, a suggéré que l'État partie pourrait souhaiter donner la priorité à la documentation de l'actuel système de gestion et au développement de plans d'entretien, de gestion des visiteurs et de gestion des catastrophes, plutôt que de réviser la totalité du plan de gestion. L'État partie a transmis des informations complémentaires concernant des approches actuellement envisagées pour la gestion des visiteurs et la gestion des catastrophes. L'ICOMOS recommande de les intégrer formellement au système de gestion.

L'accès des visiteurs se fait par un seul portail d'entrée, ce qui permet non seulement le contrôle de leur nombre mais aussi la distribution d'informations. Des plans et des brochures d'information sont disponibles à l'entrée et le site propose un système de guide audio. Depuis le portail d'entrée, les visiteurs embarquent dans une navette qui les emmène au point de départ du chemin pédestre. Presque tous se joignent à des visites guidées, au cours desquelles les guides fournissent toutes les informations nécessaires. D'occasionnels panneaux d'information en anglais et en arabe sont aussi disponibles. Des chemins spécifiques sont établis sur le site pour les promenades des visiteurs et les processions de pèlerins.

Implication des communautés locales

La Commission du site du baptême tient beaucoup à sensibiliser la communauté locale et le grand public ainsi qu'à diffuser auprès d'eux les connaissances existantes sur le site et sa signification. Elle a présenté des conférences devant divers auditoires et organisé des sessions de formation sur le site. En outre, plusieurs ateliers se sont tenus, à l'occasion desquels des membres de la communauté locale et du grand public ont débattu sur la question de la tolérance religieuse et la coexistence entre les différentes religions en Jordanie. Plusieurs membres du personnel de l'équipe administrative sont issus de la communauté locale, ce qui permet au site d'être perçu comme une source de revenus et de soutien.

L'ICOMOS considère que le système de gestion est solide et apte à relever la plupart des défis actuels. Toutefois, l'ICOMOS considère que le plan de gestion présenté ne constitue pas un document de planification stratégique et recommande que les processus actuellement en cours de préparation concernant les programmes d'entretien ainsi que les stratégies de gestion des visiteurs et des catastrophes soient utilisés pour améliorer le système de gestion.

L'ICOMOS considère que le système de gestion du bien est dans une large mesure satisfaisant mais recommande que les processus actuellement préparés pour l'entretien, la gestion des visiteurs et celle des catastrophes viennent compléter le système de gestion existant.

6 Suivi

Le dossier de proposition d'inscription a présenté plusieurs aspects qui devraient être considérés dans le suivi, mais sans intégrer de mesures ou d'indicateurs précis. À la demande de l'ICOMOS, l'État partie a soumis en deux étapes de plus amples informations sur les procédures de suivi, notamment un ensemble d'indicateurs, des méthodes de mesure et la périodicité des évaluations. Les informations complémentaires soulignent également qu'un programme complet de suivi est en cours d'élaboration, faisant partie d'un plan annuel d'entretien.

L'ICOMOS considère que les indicateurs de suivi présentés couvrent des zones pertinentes et que le programme de suivi devrait être intégré au plan annuel d'entretien.

7 Conclusions

L'ICOMOS considère que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas) constitue un témoignage exceptionnel de la pratique religieuse chrétienne à travers son association avec le baptême de Jésus par Jean-Baptiste et plus généralement avec le sacrement chrétien du baptême. Bien que l'ICOMOS ne puisse suivre les arguments archéologiques fournis pour prouver l'authenticité du lieu exact où s'est déroulé le baptême de Jésus, il note que le site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » est d'une importance religieuse considérable pour une grande majorité de chrétiens, qui ont admis ce site comme étant le lieu précis où est né ce sacrement.

Les vestiges archéologiques témoignent des débuts de cette importance, qui a conduit à la construction d'églises et d'autres structures religieuses employées par les ermites et les pèlerins. La topographie du Jourdain et la végétation, perçues comme un paysage sauvage, étaient l'association avec le baptême de Jésus de Nazareth par Jean-Baptiste. Les activités de pèlerinage des visiteurs chrétiens soulignent la pérennité de la tradition culturelle du baptême et son lieu supposé d'origine. L'ICOMOS considère que les critères (iii) et (vi) sont justifiés et que le bien remplit les conditions d'intégrité et d'authenticité.

Le site est bien protégé par son classement national en tant que site ancien et par des restrictions au développement appropriées, à l'échelon régional et local. Des mesures de conservation suivent les normes

internationales actuelles en matière de conservation archéologique et l'entretien est entrepris conformément aux outils de planification annuels. L'état de conservation est satisfaisant et aucune intervention de conservation majeure ne semble nécessaire à l'heure actuelle. La Commission du site du baptême est responsable de la gestion du site ; elle est guidée par un conseil d'administration et dirigée au quotidien par son directeur et son adjoint, tous deux basés sur le site. Ce dernier pouvant utiliser directement ses recettes de billetterie, des ressources financières suffisantes sont disponibles.

Le plan de gestion présenté reste descriptif et analytique mais ne fournit pas d'orientation stratégique pour la gestion future. À la suite de la recommandation de l'ICOMOS, l'État partie a préparé une première présentation des procédures d'entretien, de gestion des visiteurs et de gestion des catastrophes. L'ICOMOS recommande en outre que les procédures de suivi soient intégrées aux programmes annuels d'entretien.

Si les délimitations du site sont appropriées en termes d'inclusion de tous les vestiges archéologiques, l'État partie a suivi la recommandation de l'ICOMOS, excluant les zones où est prévue la construction d'églises, de bureaux administratifs, de logements de pèlerins et autres infrastructures pour les visiteurs. L'ICOMOS a recommandé en outre d'appliquer un moratoire de construction aux parties restantes du site, dans le but d'empêcher toute construction excepté celles exclusivement dédiées à la protection des structures archéologiques. Toutefois, l'État partie n'a pas encore indiqué si ce moratoire allait être officiellement établi et quand il le serait. La zone tampon garantit une protection suffisante en direction du nord, de l'est et du sud, mais aucune zone tampon n'est prévue à l'ouest de l'autre côté du Jourdain, qui marque la frontière nationale. Compte tenu de l'importance du Jourdain dans son contexte historique et de sa signification, plusieurs vues importantes sont orientées vers l'autre rive. L'ICOMOS reconnaît que celles-ci sont situées en dehors du territoire jordanien, mais considère qu'il faudrait encourager une coopération internationale visant la protection des vues essentielles de part et d'autre du fleuve, afin de préserver le caractère du paysage du bien dans toutes les directions.

8 Recommandations

Recommandations concernant l'inscription

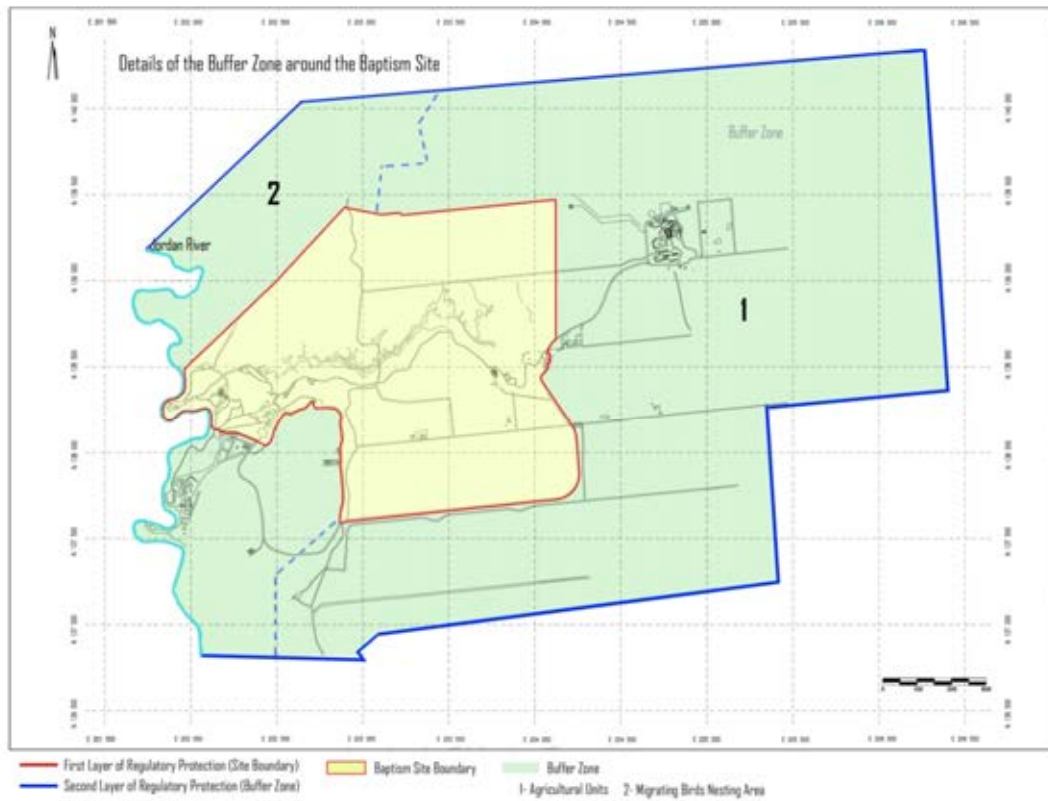
L'ICOMOS recommande que la proposition d'inscription du site du baptême « Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain » (Al-Maghtas), Jordanie, soit **renvoyée** à l'État partie afin de lui permettre de :

- appliquer un moratoire de construction pour le bien, interdisant toute construction à l'exception des structures architecturales créées dans le seul but de protéger les vestiges archéologiques ;

- intégrer au système de gestion les procédures de gestion en matière d'entretien, de gestion des visiteurs et de gestion des catastrophes ;
- développer des directives de conception et de construction pour les églises qui doivent être édifiées dans la zone tampon.

Recommandations complémentaires

L'ICOMOS recommande en outre que le Comité du patrimoine mondial encourage tous les États parties concernés à assurer la protection des rives occidentales du Jourdain afin de préserver les vues et les lignes d'horizon importantes du bien.



Plan révisé indiquant les délimitations de la zone proposée pour inscription



Vue aérienne du site du baptême et du Jourdain



Vestiges de la première église Saint-Jean-Baptiste



Visiteurs et pèlerins



Région du Zor, église Saint-Jean-Baptiste et bassin baptismal