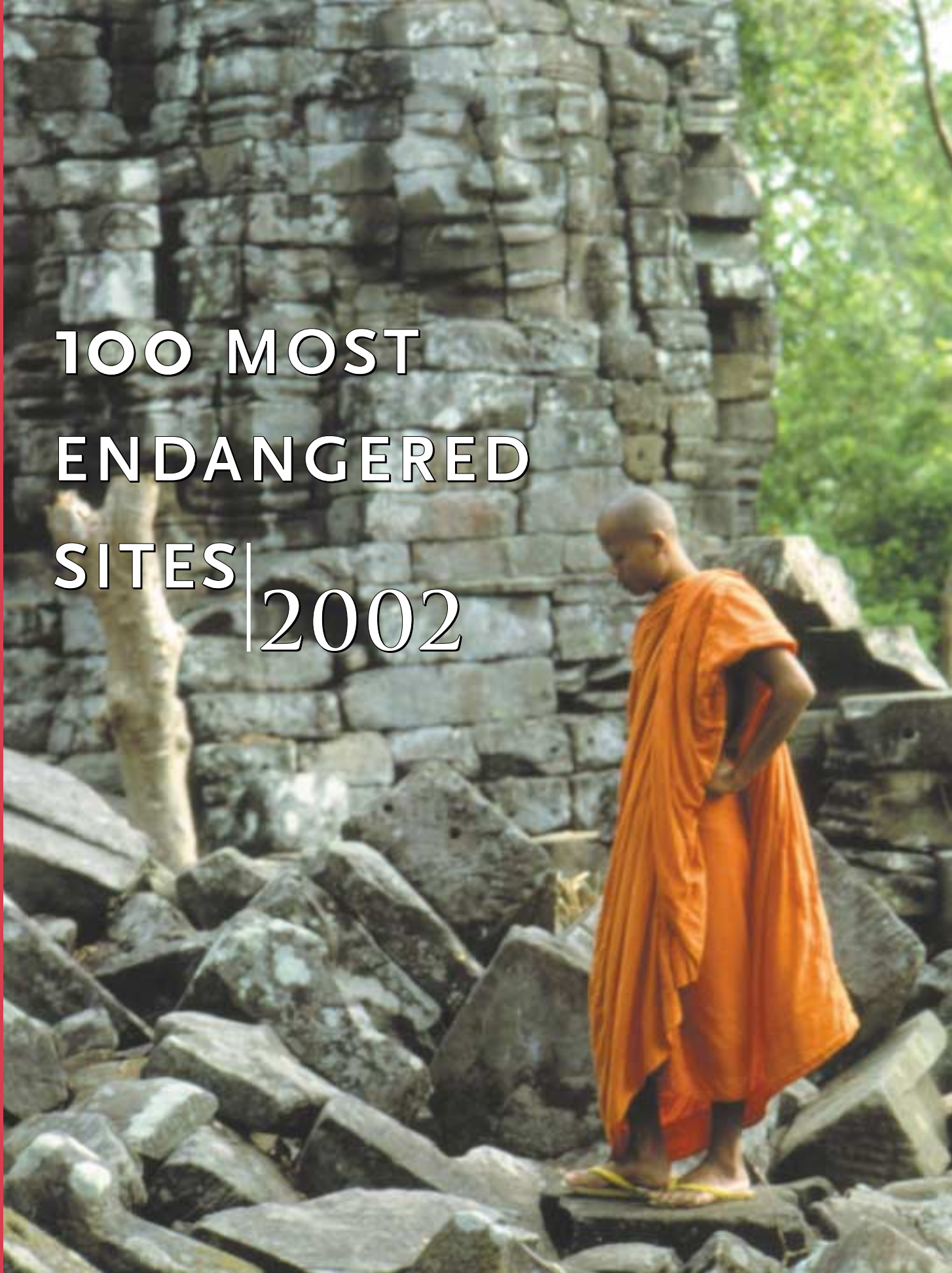


W O R L D M O N U M E N T S W A T C H

# 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES | 2002



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ART NOUVEAU BUILDINGS  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA



NESTAN TATARASHVILI



CITIES OF TBILISI, BATUMI, KUTAISI,  
POTI, & DUSHETI, REPUBLIC  
OF GEORGIA

19TH–20TH CENTURIES A.D.

Georgia is renowned for its ancient monuments but a more recent layer of history is reflected in its towns' marvellous array of Art Nouveau buildings—houses, schools, workshops, cinemas, theaters, shops, banks, and hospitals—all done in the international style of the turn of the nineteenth century. These buildings, embellished with mosaic and stained glass, embody the paradox of Art Nouveau: its ahistorical, international character on the one hand and the ease with which it became a medium for a fresh visual language in which to express regional handicraft traditions. In Georgia, Western European-style Art Nouveau façades often conceal back courtyards with traditional Georgian timber balconies carved with Art Nouveau motifs.

During the Soviet period, Art Nouveau was ignored as a style of bourgeois culture. Neglect, along with air and water pollution, has caused decorative plasterwork and mosaics to fall away. After the Revolution of 1917, these privately owned buildings were turned to incompatible collective uses, often destroying their interior decorative schemes. Unfortunately, local interest in these magnificent buildings is as nonexistent under new private investment and speculation as it was under the Soviet regime. The Georgian Art Nouveau Preservation Pressure Group is a dedicated local group fighting mass indifference, and hopes to provide the advocacy needed to stimulate investment in conservation.



TBILISI, REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA  
6TH CENTURY A.D.—PRESENT

An ancient and beautiful city embraced by the hills of the Caucasus, Tbilisi is composed of two main parts, a medieval core known as “Old Tbilisi,” and areas built in the nineteenth century that make up “Modern Tbilisi.” Old Tbilisi contains the Betlemi group, a collection of buildings selected for a pilot project, which exhibits features found throughout the rest of the historic city—a rocky setting with picturesque views, narrow winding streets and street-stairs, horizontal and vertical tower-like dwellings, flat roofs and architectural ornament of stained glass, and wooden openwork balconies. Sacred buildings include two Orthodox churches, a bell tower, and an *atheshga* (fire temple) that has been converted into a mosque. Street stairs lead to such monuments as the sixth-to-seventeenth-century Upper Betlemi church, the Botanical Gardens, and the Sololaki Ridge with its sweeping view of the Great Caucasus.

The capital of a united and independent Republic of Georgia since 1991, Tbilisi, like so many former Soviet cities, is working to reestablish its own identity. The Betlemi area exemplifies the plight of historic structures throughout Georgia—deliberate destruction in the name of modernization. Previous listing resulted in an aggressive action plan now being implemented. A pilot project in the Betlemi group entails data collection, a sociological survey, analysis of the urban fabric and individual buildings of cultural value, preliminary engineering, geological surveys and photographic documentation. As a result of the listing, the local group “Save Old Tbilisi” has successfully stirred interest among international heritage groups, but additional financial support and local awareness-raising efforts are needed.

Listed in 1998 & 2000



JON SPANULLI/CORBIS

SITE NO. 69  
TBILISI HISTORIC DISTRICT

CARL-THEODOR BRIDGE



SCHASSACH



HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

A.D. 1786

A key architectural feature of Heidelberg, the picturesque Carl-Theodor Bridge attracts four million tourists each year. Commissioned by Prince Carl-Theodor in 1786, the bridge was built entirely of red sandstone—the only bridge on the river of this color. It was the ninth bridge to be built on this stretch of the Neckar River; the previous eight, built of wood, had perished in floods, fire, or winter storms. Its two-year construction period yielded a mock-medieval bridge gate, two towers, and two statues, one of Prince Carl-Theodor, the other of Minerva, the classical Roman goddess of science.

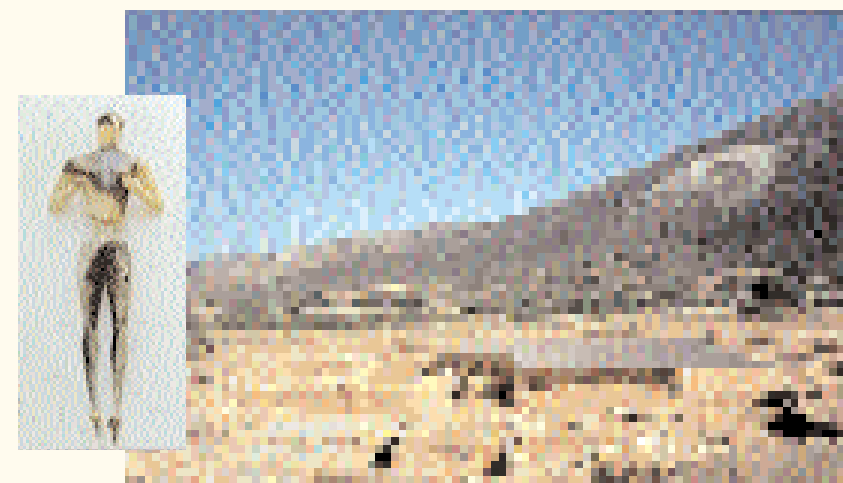
In March 1945, two pillars and three arches were blown up by German forces; they were restored two years later. Today, an autobahn runs below the bridge. A major threat to this much-loved monument is that water constantly penetrates its inadequately sealed stone construction. New concrete-supported sealing and stone reconditioning are of the utmost urgency.



PALAIKASTRO, CRETE, GREECE  
3000 B.C.—A.D. 200

Located on the eastern shore of Crete, Palaikastro is the only Minoan city to have survived intact—its harbor, outlying settlements, sanctuaries, and quarries preserved under sediments accumulating over more than 2,000 years. It was here, the ancient authors tell us, that Diktaian Zeus (the youthful Cretan equivalent of the classical Greek god Dionysos) was born and here where the young god founded his holy city. It was also here that Jason and the Argonauts confronted Talos, the man of bronze, a generation before the Trojan War. The earliest written records documenting the worship of Diktaian Zeus at Palaikastro come from the Mycenaean Greek archives at Knossos and date to the close of the Cretan Bronze Age (ca. 1300 B.C.), however, sacred art and architecture dating from all periods has been found, suggesting that the site was hallowed throughout its occupation history. Among the most beautiful artifacts attesting the worship of Diktaian Zeus is a unique gold and ivory statuette of the god made ca. 1500 B.C.

While the ravages of later periods and recent tourism development have obscured similar sites elsewhere in Crete, so far they have spared Palaikastro, which covers some 30 hectares. Today, however, a private developer has been granted permission to build a large tourist complex at Cape Plako, an area which includes the Minoan quarries and outlying sites. An access road to reach the resort area is planned through the ancient city. In addition to development pressures, Palaikastro's harbor and coastal buildings are also threatened by a rise in sea level due to local tectonic activity.



J. ALEXANDER/MAGILL/EVERETT

SITE NO. 71  
PALAIKASTRO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE