



საქართველოს კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის დაცვის ეროვნული სააგენტო
Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation

№ 08/13/165

„29“ 01 2016

To: Ms. Mechtild Rössler,
Director
World Heritage Centre

7, Place de Fontenoy
75352, Paris 07 SP

Dear Ms. Rössler,

In conformity with the decisions 39 COM 7A.41 and 39 COM 7A.40 of the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee I would like to present you the State of Conservation for the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta and Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery World Heritage Sites with the following documentation on the implemented works in 2015.

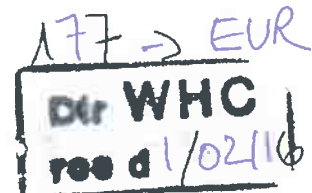
We are open to provide further information on any issues related to the mentioned World Heritage Sites.

Please, Madam, accept the assurance of my highest consideration,

Annex 1: State of Conservation Report, Historical Monuments of Mtskheta

Annex 2: State of Conservation Report, Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery

Nikoloz Antidze
Director General





**FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF
STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORTS
BY THE STATES PARTIES**

(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

Name of World Heritage property (State(s) Party(ies)) (Identification number)

Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia), (C 708)

Date of Inscription: 1994

Criteria: (iii)(iv)

City of Mtskheta, Region of Mtskheta-Mtianeti

N41 50 38.004 E44 42 59.004

1. Executive Summary of the report

[Note: each of the sections described below should be summarized. The maximum length of the executive summary is 1 page.]

In 2015 the Georgian Government adopted the Decree #411 on Enactment of Special Regime of Urban Development Regulation in the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta that imposes a strong moratorium to a new construction within the operational boundaries of the Temporary Regime, before the entrance into force of the Urban Land Use Master Plan of Mtskheta.

The elaboration of the Code on Cultural Heritage is now underway. The Heritage Code includes special Chapter on World Heritage, was prepared with the assistance of the Italian experts, provided in the framework of the EU funded TWINNING program. The Document will be finalized in 2016 and submitted to the Georgian Parliament for its consideration and approval. The Chapter on World Heritage will serve as a basis for the state approval of the Management Plan.

In the framework of the tripartite cooperation agreement between the State Party, World Heritage Centre and World Bank, the WHC will assist the SP in developing adequate instruments for site management, providing guidance for Mtskheta's Urban Land Use Master Plan, as well as capacity building opportunities for the town administration and other major stakeholders.

The elaboration of the Urban Land Use Master Plan for Mtskheta is still in progress and is envisaged to be finalized in 2016.

The Memorandum of Understanding and the Contract was signed between the NACHPG and ICCROM on the establishment of the training platform in the field of cultural heritage in Georgia.

Detailed study and assessment of the current situation of the building materials at minor church of the Jvari (Holy Cross) monastery were carried out.

Urgent conservation/stabilization works on building materials and wall paintings of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery were implemented.

Reconstruction of the partition wall and construction of the monastery shop and museum space on the west of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery started in 2015. The construction works are expected to continue in 2016.

In 2015 the National Museum of Georgia continued implementation of the archaeological excavations at Armaztsikhe-Bagineti archaeological site.

Implementation of adaptation of the former cinema building into a Mtskheta Archaeological Museum in the scope of the Third Regional Development Project launched in 2015 by the Government of Georgia with the funding of the World Bank is expected to start in 2016.

The NACHPG run the project aiming at the virtual reconstruction of residential complexes of the Late Bronze Age at Samtavro settlement and the phased scanning of the exhibits kept in the Great Mtskheta Archaeological State Museum-Reserve

In 2015 the educational program “Archaeology for kids” at Samtavro Valley held special charity courses for socially unprotected and refugee children.

1. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

[Note: The State(s) Party(ies) is/are requested to address the most recent Decision of the World Heritage Committee for this property, paragraph by paragraph.]

Decision : 39 COM 7A.41

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-15/39.COM/7A,
2. Recalling Decision **38 COM 7A.17**, adopted at its 38th session (Doha, 2014),
3. Welcomes the efforts made by the State Party to improve the protection of all components of the property and its buffer zone and, more particularly, introducing a moratorium on any development in the zone next to the Aragvi and Mtgvvari rivers banks declared as a non aedificandi zone until the Urban Land-Use Master Plan and unified buffer zone are approved and implemented to curb uncontrolled development;

The Government of Georgia adopted the Decree #411 on Enactment of Special Regime of Urban Development Regulation in the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta on 3rd of August, 2015. The Decree entered into force on 1st of September, 2015 and in the case of new constructions on 5th of August, 2015. The Decree #411 was submitted to the WHC and its advisory bodies in 2015.

4. Notes with appreciation that an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism has been established with the purpose to ensure that the conservation of World Heritage properties receive priority consideration within the governmental decision-making processes and that a Heritage Code and a World Heritage law are currently in the last stages of approval by the respective authorities and encourages the State Party to sustain these efforts and to secure that all necessary resources and regulatory regimes are in place;

In 2015, the State Party developed the draft of the Code on Cultural Heritage. Gaps identification in the current Georgian legislation, as well as analysis of the international agreements and Conventions in the field of cultural heritage have been implemented within the scope of the initiative. On the basis of the comprehensive analysis carried out by the working team, the NACHPG is currently finalizing the draft document. The Code on Cultural Heritage will incorporate the special chapter dedicated to the protection and management of the World Heritage in Georgia. the EU funded Twinning project “Support to the Institutional Development of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia” (ended in April, 2015) gave considerable inputs in the process of elaboration of the Code on Cultural Heritage, with the particular emphasis on the issues of World Heritage of Georgia. After the document is finalized, it will be submitted before the Georgian Parliament for its consideration and approval at its spring sessions in 2016.

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The Chapter on World Heritage integrated in the Heritage Code will serve as a basis for the official approval of the Management Plan for Mtskheta WHS and for its effective implementation with the involvement of all the stakeholders.

5. *Acknowledges the steps taken in addressing the corrective measures through training and capacity building activities, as well as the development, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and partnership with the World Bank, of a project towards the completion of the Urban Master Plan, as well as strengthening the management system through the self-governing status bestowed to the City of Mtskheta and the cooperation agreement with the Patriarchate of Georgia, ensuring co-management of protection and conservation of historical churches;*

The tripartite cooperation agreement between the State Party, World Heritage Centre and World Bank (October, 2015) envisages the enhancement of the institutional and technical capacity of the national and local authorities to ensure stakeholder coordination and long-term planning and the reinforcement of management mechanisms and capacities required to deal with the integration and sustainable implementation of heritage protection and development needs in the future. The main activities are focusing on a case-study concerning the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta, WHS. The project will develop capacity building activities that among others imply organization of capacity building workshops for Mtskheta municipality staff and relevant national agencies staff, fostering networking amongst European professionals, organization of study tours for Georgian professionals abroad. WHC will assist the State Party to identify ongoing capacity building projects and advise on cross-professional training areas which could be further developed.

The NACHPG in close collaboration with ICCROM - *being the priority partner in training for cultural heritage (Operational Guidelines for the Convention, paragraph 33.)* - launched in 2015 the long-term (2015-2017) project on establishment of the training platform in the field of cultural heritage in Georgia. Based on the Memorandum of Understanding (dated 21.05.2015) and the Contract N3/417 (dated 23.12.2015) signed between the NACHPG and ICCROM, the project aims at establishment of the multidisciplinary platform for the development of professional opportunities through improvement of the education and professional system and policies in the field of conservation and management of cultural heritage in Georgia, with the special focus on World Heritage. The project implies the implementation of the feasibility analysis of the professional opportunities, assessments of Georgian educational system in the field, development of the capacity concept paper and curriculum models, and at the last stage setting up of the pilot training program.

6. *Takes note of the findings and recommendations made by the joint ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission and the joint World Heritage Centre/World Bank Advisory mission, carried out to the property in November 2014;*
7. *Reiterates its request to the State Party to establish a unified buffer zone, to encompass the landscape surrounding the components, including in particular the panorama along the rivers and the mountain setting, and provide this enlarged buffer zone with appropriate protection, and to submit a minor boundary modification proposal of the unified buffer zone of the property to the World Heritage Centre, prior to any further works being completed on the Urban Land-Use Master Plan;*

The elaboration of the Urban Land Use Master Plan for Mtskheta is still in progress and is envisaged to be finalized early 2016. In the framework of the tripartite cooperation agreement signed between the State Party, World Heritage Centre and World Bank aimed at assistance for

the “Historical Monuments of Mtskheta” WHS and providing guidance in the process of elaboration of the Mtskheta Urban Land Use Master Plan, the WHC technical assistance mission was invited by the State Party on 23-28 November, 2015 to the World Heritage Property. According to the preliminary assessment, the mission identified several crucial items to be further addressed by the working team as well as the need of further technical assistance and guidance from WHC in order to strengthen the methodology to elaborate the documentation in pursuance of international standards. With a view to finalize the phases I, II and III of the Urban Land Use Master Plan, the State Party has extended the duration of the assignment (original deadline was set for December, 2015). Currently, the Master Plan team continues work on the elaboration of the documentation based on the recommendations and comments provided by the NACHPG and the WHC technical assistance mission. Furthermore, the working team will submit to the WHC in the nearest future all the data requested by the mission in order to finalize the detailed mission report and provide the team with the final assessment and recommendations.

8. *Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, technical details, including Heritage Impact Assessments, for all proposed projects that may have a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;*
9. *Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 February 2016, an updated report, including a 1-page executive summary, on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 40th session in 2016;*
10. *Decides to retain the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia) on the List of World Heritage in Danger and to examine the implementation of the corrective measures at its 40th session in 2016, in view of the possible removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.*

Other issues:

- Detailed study and assessment of the current situation of the building materials at minor church of the Jvari (Holy Cross) monastery were carried out, that included mineralogical, petrographic and biological analysis of building materials.
- Urgent conservation/stabilization works on building materials and wall paintings of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery were implemented. (*See annex 1*).
- The arrangement of the reliquary of Blessed Father Gabriel and fool-for-Christ at the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery was carried out. The design project was submitted to the WHC and its AB in 2015.
- Rehabilitation works were implemented on the fence of the Samtavro monastery.
- Arrangement of the infrastructure for disabled people at Samtavro Monastery was implemented.
- Reconstruction of the partition wall and construction of the monastery shop and museum space on the west of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery started in 2015. The construction works are expected to continue in 2016.
- Rescue archaeology works were carried out on the western area (40 m²) of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery (*see annex 2*).

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- Due to the damage, the tomb stones (XXc.) of King Vakhtang Gorgasali and Catholicos-Patriarch Melkisedek I were replaced by new tomb stones at Svetitskhoveli Cathedral.
- Preliminary archaeological survey on Samtavro Valley and its neighbouring territory was implemented. The report was submitted to the WHC and its AB in 2015.
- In 2015 the National Museum of Georgia continued implementation of the archaeological excavations at Armaztsikhe-Bagineti archaeological site. The excavations revealed fragments of dwellings, separate walls and other archaeological remains that are subject to research and further analysis.
- The Third Regional Development Project launched in 2015 by the Government of Georgia with the funding of the World Bank includes several important activities to be done in 2016 in Mtskheta, in particular:
 - a) Implementation of adaptation of the former cinema building into a Mtskheta Archaeological Museum. The project design was submitted to WHC and its AB in 2015. The State Party received positive evaluation and respective recommendations from ICOMOS.
 - b) Detailed design and construction of visitor centre at Jvari church, according to the project concept provided and agreed with the WHC and ICOMOS.
- The NACHPG launched the project that envisages the virtual reconstruction of residential complexes of the Late Bronze Age at Samtavro settlement and the phased scanning of the exhibits kept in the Great Mtskheta Archaeological State Museum-Reserve. In 2015 the following was implemented within the project: unified digital model of Great Mtskheta Historical and Archaeological landscape including the reconstruction of adjacent relief and historical landscape; reconstruction and 3D model of Armaztsikhe Hall of Columns; High resolution scanning of Mtskheta Archaeological Museum artifacts. (summery video on the implemented works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7hbqsf2YmM>)
- Educational program “Archaeology for kids” at Samtavro Valley has been carried out for last 6 years, aiming at raising children’s interest in history and cultural heritage of the country, archaeology and developing skills of creativity, discussion, investigation and analysis. In 2015 up to 1500 children took part in the program and received special certificates. Besides, in order to promote accessibility to and raise awareness on cultural heritage the charity courses were held for socially unprotected and refugee children.

If the property is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Please also provide detailed information on the following:

- a) Progress achieved in implementing the corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee
If needed, please describe the success factors or difficulties in implementing each of the corrective measures identified
- b) Is the timeframe for implementing the corrective measures suitable? If not, please propose an alternative timeframe and an explanation why this alternative timeframe is required.
- c) Progress achieved towards the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR)

Decision : 34 COM 7A.27

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-10/34.COM/7A.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **33 COM 7B.102**, adopted at its 33rd session (Seville, 2009),
3. Notes the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Commission to ensure co-ordination of all World Heritage matters;
4. Also notes the recommendations of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM reactive monitoring mission to the property in March 2010;
5. Reiterates its serious concern about the state of conservation of the different components of the property, and the slow rate of progress made by the State Party in addressing urgent issues;
6. Adopts the following Desired State of Conservation for the property, for its future removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger:
 - a) The World Heritage property with clearly marked boundaries and buffer zone precisely identified,
 - b) The Urban Master Plan of the City of Mtskheta, including land-use regulations and conservation master plan approved,
 - c) A comprehensive management system, including an Integrated Management Plan of the World Heritage property and its buffer zone, approved,
 - d) Long-term consolidation and conservation of the historical monuments in Mtskheta ensured;
7. Adopts the following corrective measures and the timeframe for their implementation:
 - a) Changes to be effected within one year - Precise identification of the World Heritage property and clearly marked boundaries and buffer zones by the following actions:
 - Prepare adequate maps showing clear limits of all components of the property,
 - Undertake topographic and archaeological surface surveys including the archaeological remains, important historical monuments and landscapes,
 - Define the boundaries of the World Heritage property according to the results of the relevant surveys,
 - Develop a 5-year training programme for the conservation and management of the site, possibly with participation at sub-regional/regional level,
 - Develop a monitoring mechanism for the physical conservation of the buildings and archaeological sites,
 - Define and prioritize the long-term conservation and consolidation measures within the World Heritage property;
 - b) Changes to be effected within one/two years - Implementation of the Urban Land-Use Master Plan of the City of Mtskheta, including operating plans and conservation master plan by the following actions:
 - Establish complete cadastral information (land ownership), in publicly available and easily accessible format, for all land within the World Heritage property and its buffer zone,
 - Establish clear operating plans and strict limits to development rights and management regulations within the property and its buffer zone, to ensure the long-term protection and conservation of the World Heritage property,
 - Ensure that development rights on existing private or leased lands within the property are clearly defined and strictly controlled,

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- Adopt and implement the Urban Land-Use Master Plan of the City of Mtskheta, including all aspects of infrastructure rehabilitation, zoning regulations with particular emphasis on the establishment of no-construction zones, the institutional reform and capacity building, community relations, and tourism development,
 - Make publicly available the information on land-use for all lands within the property and its buffer zone, in easily accessible format, to ensure transparency in land use and allocations;
- c) Changes to be effected within two/three years - Ensured site management by the following actions:
- Adopt legislation that assures the protection and maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value of the whole of the World Heritage property and its component parts,
 - Adopt the necessary priority for the conservation of the property in national policy, planning and budgets, and take pro-active measures to solicit donor support for property management and conservation,
 - Develop and implement an Integrated Management Plan for the World Heritage property and its buffer zone, including:
 - o a tourism strategy,
 - o strategic guidelines for the integrated multi-stakeholder approach to the conservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings,
 - o design guidelines for new constructions and the street furniture,
 - o clear guidelines for the type of management, religious or visitor infrastructure that can be built within the World Heritage property,
 - Develop and implement a management system,
 - Undertake appropriate training in conservation and management for the staff in charge of the preservation of the property,
 - Establish a clear institutional coordination mechanism ensuring that the conservation of the property receives priority consideration within relevant governmental decision-making processes,
 - Develop a state programme for the protection of World Heritage religious properties in Georgia, as a legal framework for co-management under which the respective responsibilities of the State Party and the Georgian Patriarchate are effectively established, monitored and evaluated in relation to the protection and conservation of the property,
- d) Changes to be effected within five years (after possible removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2 - 3 years) - Long-term protection and conservation of the historical monuments and the archaeological remains in Mtskheta by the following actions:
- Complete the documentation and recording of all historical monuments and archaeological remains in a digitized information database for management, conservation and planning purposes,
 - Establish a full inventory of paintings including digitalization and reference system for all historical monuments in Mtskheta,
 - Implement restoration of the paintings,
 - Develop a special programme on the protection of all archaeological components of the City of Mtskheta;

8. Urges the State Party to develop, in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, a draft retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011;
9. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2011**, a detailed state of conservation report, including a progress report relevant to the implementation of the corrective measures, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session in 2011;
- 10. Decides to retain the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (Georgia) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

Implemented Measures 2009-2015:

• **World Heritage Property Boundaries and the Buffer Zone**

- 2010-2014 | The Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta was prepared, revised in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and, consequently approved by the Committee (38 COM 7A.17)
- 2011-2012 | The Retrospective Maps of the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta were prepared and adopted by the Committee (36 COM 7A.31)
- 2012 | In course of elaboration of the Management Plan the proposal for the revised Buffer Zone was developed;
- 2013-2014 | The proposed Buffer Zone boundaries were further enhanced based on the Mtskheta Cultural Landscape Pilot Survey

• **Management and Legal Framework**

- 2010 | The **Inter-Ministerial Committee for World Heritage established** at Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection;
- 2010 | The **UNESCO and International Relations Unit established** at the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia;
- 2012 | **The integrated Site Management Plan elaborated** with the financial support of the World Monuments Fund and involvement of the local and national stakeholders as well as international consultant, including the Patriarchate of Georgia; The Plan aimed at setting general framework for conservation, management and enhancement of the World Heritage property.
- 2014 | The special **Chapter on World Heritage of Georgia** was prepared with the assistance of the Italian experts, provided in the framework of the EU funded TWINNING program in the partnership with the Ministry of Culture of Italy and the National Heritage Board of Denmark. The work is still ongoing in scopes of elaboration of the **Code on Cultural Heritage of Georgia**, initiated in 2015 based on TWINNING recommendations and outputs.

- 2014 The town of Mtskheta was granted the status of the self-governing town and the administration of the town established, with the Mayor, the Town Council and respective staff.
- 2013-2014 The National World Heritage Strategy was prepared and submitted with the State of Conservation Report to the World Heritage Centre in 2014. In 2015 the Strategy has become the basis for planning the NACHPG budget for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
- 2013-2016 The creation of the Unified National GIS Database and Web Portal for Cultural Heritage is under way at the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, with the support of Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in partnership with the Cultural Heritage Directorate of Norway. The system was in the testing phase in 2015. It allows the improved online communication between the central and regional offices of the NACHPG, as well as between the different state authorities, self-governments. The system also provides for improved access to information on the cultural heritage of Georgia for general public via online GIS portal.

• **Land Use Management and Regulation**

- 2011 The Preliminary Study for elaboration of Mtskheta Urban Master Plan was conducted by the Municipality of Mtskheta;
- 2013-2014 Mtskheta Cultural Landscape Survey and the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared as a pilot study by the NACHPG and submitted to the WHC in 2014 for comments;
- 2014 Mtskheta Urban Master Plan preparation launched by the special funding from the Government of Georgia, all the preceding studies and works are being integrated into the document including the Heritage and Tourism Master Plan of Mtskheta. Prepared by UNESCO/UNDP in 2003.
- 2014 To ensure the Urban Master Plan is fully in line with the UNESCO requirements, the contract is prepared between Municipal Development Fund of Georgia and the World Heritage Centre, upon the initiative of the NACHPG, in scopes of the third Regional Development Project, funded by the World Bank. The co-operation envisages the World Heritage Centre to assist the State Party in developing adequate instruments for site management, providing guidance for Mtskheta's Urban Land Use Master Plan, as well as capacity building opportunities for the town administration and other major stakeholders, etc.
- 2013-2016 The full cadaster of Mtskheta is prepared by the public register and available online for public access. The Memorandum of Cooperation is planned between the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and the Public Registry to integrate the cultural heritage data in the public registry information through the National GIS Database for Cultural Heritage.
- 2014-2015 The Urban Land Use Master Plan is being elaborated based on the GIS tools and upon its completion will be accessible for public online. The Urban Land Use Master Plan will be finalized in 2016.

2015 The Georgian Government adopted the Decree #411 on Enactment of Special Regime of Urban Development Regulation in the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta that imposes a strong moratorium to a new construction within the operational boundaries of the Temporary Regime, before the entrance into force of the Urban Land Use Master Plan of Mtskheta.

• **Awareness Rising and Communication**

2012 Georgia hosted the **UNESCO Periodic Reporting Workshop** for focal points of the Central, Eastern and South-East European Countries;

2013-2015 Trainings and seminars with participation of Italian and Danish experts, study visits and internships of Georgian specialists to Italy and Denmark were provided in scopes of the EU TWINNING project;

2014 **International conference on “World Heritage and Sustainable Development”** was organized in Mestia, Upper Svaneti, by the NACHPG, with participation of official representatives from ICCROM, WHC and ICOMOS, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan.

2015 The Memorandum of Understanding (dated 21.05.2015) and Contract N3/417 (dated 23.12.2015) was signed between the **NACHPG and ICCROM** concerning the creation of the **training platform in the field of cultural heritage in Georgia**.

2011- onwards The special educational program “Archaeology for Kids” established in Mtskheta Samtavro burial ground. The program is focused on the secondary school pupils.

2009- onwards Publication and translation of UNESCO guiding documents has taken permanent character since 2009. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention Guide was published in 2014. The UNESCO publication Guidelines for Site Managers was translated in 2015. The ICCROM Manual for School teachers “Protection of Heritage Sites and Historic Towns” was translated and published in 2014 by ICOMOS Georgia in scopes of the EU funded regional project (RCHDD).

• **Conservation and Restoration**

Svetitskhoveli Cathedral

In 2009-2015 the following conservation, rehabilitation and monitoring works were conducted on the Cathedral:

- Conservation of the wall paintings on Southern wall
- Cleaning and restoration of the roofing of the Cathedral
- Improvement of the drainage system
- Monitoring of the groundwater level in the foundations
- Update of the full graphic documentation with modern technologies with the assistance of international expert (UK) and financial support of the UNESCO Participation programme (2010-2011)
- 2012-2013 the full structural survey of the Cathedral took place led by prof. Georgio Crocci. The electronic system for monitoring of cracks was installed.

- In scopes of the two year project video endoscopy and laboratory analysis of the building material, sonic and micro seismic studies were undertaken and consequently the mathematical model was created.
- Preliminary assessment of the Svetitskoveli Stone Conservation issues was undertaken by ICCROM expert Mr. Simon Warrack.

Jvari (Holy Cross) Church

In 2009-2015 the following conservation, rehabilitation and monitoring works were conducted:

- The conservation of stone reliefs of Jvari main church was conducted in 2011-2012 under the leadership of ICCROM expert Mr. Simon Warrack. The training of Georgian young specialist also took place in course of the conservation works.
- The rehabilitation program of Jvari monastery implied replacement of damaged tiles on the roof of the main church and roofing of the small church with removable material for conservation purposes. The stone conservation of the small church is ongoing in co-operation with ICCROM expert Mr. Stephano Volta.
- The first steps for improvement of visitor infrastructure took place including the fencing of the territory, information panels, pathways, conservation of the ramparts and walls of the monastery.
- The design for the visitor centre prepared in consultation with the WHC and ICOMOS. The project will be realized through the third Regional Development Program funded by the World Bank.
- Detailed study and assessment of the current situation of the building materials at minor church of the Jvari (Holy Cross) monastery implemented.

Samtavro Monastery

In 2009-2015 the following conservation, rehabilitation and monitoring works were conducted:

- The rehabilitation of the bell tower of Samtavro monastery as well as improvement of infrastructure within the monastery walls was conducted
- In consultation with WHC and ICOMOS the design for the small museum and shop was prepared and is under implementation.
- Urgent conservation/stabilization works on building materials and wall paintings of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery implemented.
- The reliquary of Blessed Father Gabriel and fool-for-Christ at the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery arranged.

Archaeological Sites of Mtskheta

- Conservation of Armaztsikhe-Bagineti archaeological site took place with the co-funding of the US Ambassadors Fund. The visitor infrastructure, including paths, signage and information panels were installed in consultation with Norwegian partners.

- The National Museum of Georgia implemented the archaeological excavations at Armaztsikhe-Bagineti archaeological site.
 - The first stage of scanning and virtual reconstruction of the artifacts from Samtavro burial ground, stored in the Mtskheta museum took place in 2014.
 - Rescue archaeology works took place on the western area of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery
 - The archaeological survey of the territories of Samtavro burial ground and the settlement was launched in 2014.
 - The visitor infrastructure for archaeological sites of Mtskheta, including Armaztsikhe, Samtavro, Armazi, Dzalisa will take place in scopes of the third Regional Development program, funded by the World Bank in 2016-2019.
3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

[Note: this includes conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Centre]

No urgent conservation issues at stake.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

The Georgian Government Decree #411 on Enactment of Special Regime of Urban Development Regulation in the Cultural Heritage Protection Zones of Mtskheta being in force since 1st of September, 2015 and in case of new construction since 5th of August, 2015 imposes a strong moratorium to a new construction within the operational boundaries of the Temporary Regime, before the entrance into force of the Urban Land Use Master Plan of Mtskheta.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

[Note: this report will be uploaded for public access on the World Heritage Centre's State of conservation Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>). Should your State Party request that the full report should not be uploaded, only the 1-page executive summary provided in point (1.) above will be uploaded for public access].

The State Party gives its consent to upload the present SOC Report for public access.

6. Signature of the Authority

Nikoloz Antidze
Director General

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia



Rescue archaeology works were carried out on the western area (40 m²) of the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro monastery



Head of the archaeological works: Dr. Ketevan Dighmelishvili

Mtsketa, 2015

Report

Investigated plot is situated west the church of the Holy Transfiguration at Samtavro monastery, over the front perimeter of the Nunnery cells (Table I-II). Studied area covers 40 sq. m. of unused land plot (GPS coordinates: N 41⁰50'47.87 E 44⁰43'04.03; N 41⁰50'47.08 E 44⁰43'04.46).

According to the work plan the territory was surveyed, divided into plots¹ and the upper layer of soil was removed. It became evident that it was possible to conditionally divide the section under investigation into three sections: Southern, Northern and Central sections. Out of the above three sections, southern part of Northern and Central sections represented the loose sediment layer; during the last decade certain interventions took place over those layers (reinforced concrete wall, small water reservoir, green plants and etc). It turned out that western part of Southern and Central sections were relatively untouched; the remains of fortification structures and layers of immovable culture of various periods have been excavated there. The water channel remains damaged due to the natural events was cleaned; the channel was discovered at about 0.40 -0.45 meter depth from the modern layer of soil and was arranged from Northern to Southern direction (Table I, III-2). The pipes had cylindrical form; the pipes were joined not via the placement of pipe cylinder into another pipe, but based on slushing mortar over the edges of pipes. The length of pipes is 0.75 m, and diameter – 0.2 m. In total, remains of 4 pipes have been discovered (total length of preserved water channel – 2.8 m); out of remaining 4 pipes one is preserved only partially, half of it. Pipes of the above size and form are encountered only in very late periods; the above is also confirmed by the principle of their joining. We are of the view that the date for water channel should not go earlier than XIX century and it must coincide with the period of launching of the Samtavro Nunnery.

In the same Southern section remains of two walls of various periods were cleaned (Table I-II). For the construction of No 1 wall, the preparatory layer stones were laid in (Table III - 2, IV), over the stones there were three rectangular sand-stone tiles placed as pillows (their widths – 1.5 m, length -0.65 – 1 m, thickness – 0.2m); various size stone quadras were used as facing layers from all four sides of the above tiles; the gap between the stones were filled up with cobble-stones. Out of facade quadras the large Northern and Southern quadras (measurements for northern quadra: height – 0.75m, length and width -0.7 m; sizes for Southern quadra: height – 0.72 m, length – 0.7 m, width – 0.35m) and relatively small three quadras of Western edge are preserved. Quite a strong mortar was used for joining the remains of the wall. The measurements for the wall remains are as follows: length – 2.55 m, width – 1.5 m, and height – 1 m.

It is difficult to state with some certainly part of what was the No 1 wall, as at this stage it is impossible to identify the traces of any structures connected with it. The above is the result of number of alterations made and damages inflicted to this territory during the later periods.

¹ As in 2011 year the archeological works have been implemented East to the section under investigation on its continuation and the survey and division into squares was already made, therefore we continued the numbering and referred to the investigation plot of the current year as plot II.

The remains of wall perpendicular to the No 1 wall located between the No 1 wall and counterforce section of the cell wall (Table I, V-2) was cleaned. There is one layer of two rows of cobblestones laid opposite to each other preserved on the sight (width – 0.72 m, length – 1.65 m), which is plastered with mortar. The wall obviously represents the later period remains of No 1 wall, as it is built on the level of the wall upper part, however not establishing its organic part. The counter-positioning of No 2 wall and counterforce of cells clearly indicate that counterforce was built after the wall. It cannot be excluded, that during the construction of counterforce the remains of No 2 wall were further damaged/ destroyed.

Following the removal of soil between the No 1, No 2 walls and present cell walls, we have detected the floor level (at 0.9 m depth from the No 1 wall surface, $h=3 \text{ m}^2$) at the level of No 1 wall sand-stone pillows, which were finished with cobble-stone, sand-stone and brick tiles (Table I, IV – 1). The strong trace of coal is well preserved over the whole section, indicating that the life of the period, to which the floor belongs, ended with burning to ashes and destruction (such a burnt layer is encountered over the whole section under investigation). In this section, at the top of No 1 wall and at the depth of 40-50 cm the following items were discovered: 1. Fragment of flat clay tile (inventory item N2) with the inscription in Georgian alphabet “Asomtavruli” (the top of grapheme „j“(“e”) is preserved). Number of analogous clay tiles has been discovered in the area adjacent to Svetitskhoveli church and on the territory of Bebristsikhe and Armazi Saint Mary church [Nikolaishvili... 2009; Bokhichadze 1969: 20-26; Lomtadze 1977: 126-127]. The inscriptions made in Georgian alphabet “Asomtavruli” are of donation type (contents). Specialist of paleography T. Jojua studied the inscriptions and based on paleographic signs dated them to XIII century. 2. Fragments of flat clay tiles with ruffles (inventory items No 3, 13, 29), made from burnt, large grain red clay, using the gauge, of relatively small size. The tiles with ruffles are elevated at the top. They are varnished in violet or green color. The tiles of similar form, attributes and varnishing /coloring are characteristic to the developed mid centuries, however are also encountered in late mid centuries [Mindorashvili 2010: 48-50]. 3. Jug edge burnt to light straw-color. Vessels of the above form and attributes (clearly elutriated, with thin walls, wide top and rib like neck) was characteristic to the life style of III-IV century Mtskheta; such vessels in a high number have been discovered in almost all settlement remains or burial places in great Mtskheta. 4. Fragments of basins (inventory items No 5, 12, 21, 22), burnt to straw-color or reddish color, with the somewhat elutriated bottom, lightly closed top, with one or two concentric ruffles, with flat heel. Such basins were widely used in developed mid centuries and encountered during the later periods. 5. Fragments of varnished basin (Inventory item No 16); internal surface covered with white engobe; there is an ornament scratched over the engobe. It is painted with green paint and later varnished with colorless varnish. Number of similar basins has been discovered in town remains of developed mid centuries and are mainly dated by XII – XIII centuries [Japaridze 1956: table LI-LII, Mindorashvili 2010: 30-45]. Discovery of the above ceramic items in the western section of No 1 wall indicated that date of lower level of the floor could not be earlier than developed mid

² According to the master plan of the Nunnery, the balcony of the cells is located at about 4.79 meter height from the zero level. Accordingly, we have used this solid point for the definition of heights.

centuries (as for the fact of discovering the ceramics of early mid centuries, such ceramics had to be placed there by chance).

In the middle of the plot under investigation, the wall situated north to No 1 and No 2 walls and inclined from North to South was cleaned (Table I-II, V-2, VI -1). The wall is built with large size, somewhat finished sand-stone boulders, sizes of which significantly differ. Dirt and mortar was used for joining the stones. The North-eastern corner of the wall is sharply rounded and continues to West (it is interesting that Mtskheta gate also has tower with one rounded corner). Western side of the wall is fully filled up with cobble-stones and chipped stones over the mortar. The width of the wall reaches 1 meter, length – 1.2 meters and only 3.1 meter length of the wall is preserved. It was impossible to clearly state, how long was the wall outstretched to the South. If the wall continued to the South, then it must have connected to the No 1 wall remains from its western side. No 1 and No 3 walls were built at the same level (h=2.9 m) and are preserved at almost the same height.

In the process of removing soil at the Eastern part of No 3 wall at the wall level, the fragments of ceramics of developed mid centuries were detected. Among the above fragments the following items are worth noting: 1. Earthenware frying pan with polished edges (inventory item No 23); 2. Wheel like heel of basin varnished in multi colors (Table No 25). There is an ornament scratched on its bottom, white engobe, which is painted with green and yellow paint, and then covered with colorless varnish. Scientists date such basins to XI – XIII centuries [Japaridze 1956: 29]; 3. Fragments of basin varnished in green color (Inventory items No 8, 9), again belonging to the developed mid centuries [Japaridze 1956: Table XXI – XXII; Mitsishvili 1979: 29-40]. It was especially interesting to discover ceramic defects in this layer, out of which one item was - vessel bail, and the other one was the slag defected at the moment of creating the form (Inventory items No 10, 11). Discovery of above fragments indicates that during the mid centuries ceramics were produced on site, at the temple.

Territory between the No 1 and No 3 walls (length - 2.45 meters), as well as the full Northern perimeter of No 3 wall (where the alternation of cultural layers is well observed) approximately from the wall height downside consisted of clay tiles, stones and earth embankment. Its strength fluctuates within the range of 50 cm. There is 0.35 – 0.4 burnt layer underneath, which is directly followed by 0.1 -0.12 meter layer of rammed clay (h=2.9 m), which also bears the traces of fire (table VII -2). On this layer, three clay tiles were detected between No 1 and No 3 walls; two of them falling correctly and one – upside down (Table VI-2). One of those tiles is the fragment of clay tile widely spread during the late antique and early mid period; there are observable traces of fire on the tile; other two represent the small size flat clay tiles of mid centuries. As it is evident, the structures were destroyed as a result of strong cataclysm (invasion or earthquake?) and the above conditioned existence of such number of clay tiles on site. It was especially important to identify following two arte-facts in this layer: 1. Fragment of antefix (Inventory item No 33) with the relief image of cross. The cross, on the lower part of axis has descending branch and generates the analogue of tree. 2 antefixes of the similar theme

have been discovered on Svetitskhoveli territory; however, the above two with their forms belong to late antique period. Antefixes with Christian symbols are encountered in Georgia from IV century until mid centuries [Digmelashvili 2013: 225-241]. It is important that near the first discovery the fragment of another antefix was also discovered, clearly indicating on the use of them in roofing of church structures. 2. In the same area, in burnt clay layer the bronze cross pendant with its eye was also discovered (Inventory item No 35). The cross wings (the lower wing is missing) are widening outwardly and ending with the relief images of human being. The images have oval faces, high foreheads and hairs brushed back. Images slightly differ. There is a possibility that the artisan wished to convey the images of four heralds (?).

The remains of another wall (wall No.4) were discovered at the South-eastern edge of No 3 wall attached to the wall. The wall is built with sand-stone quadras over the dirt and arranged from Western to Eastern direction (Table I – II, VII -2). The wall has a strongly fragmented nature (Length from the west to east – 1.07 m, width -0.62 m, height – 0.87 m).

In the northern section of investigated area, the works have been implemented on front perimeter (Table I-II, VIII) of east wall of so called “fireplace” tower. The objective of implemented activities was to clarify what the existing wall was standing on. The 0.7 m loose and destroyed layer was removed. It was discovered that the wall was constructed over the wall (wall No.6), built with an earlier sandstone large quadras and the earlier wall went deeper. In south part of the wall, at 0.4 m depth from its surface, the remains of rectangular wall (wall No.7) were discovered, again, built with sand-stone quadras (length of the wall - 0.57 m, width – 0.58 m). It is preserved at the height of 0.3 m, h=3.9 m). It is very difficult to say, which period the above two walls, cleaned by us, belong to. Similarly, we cannot determine the end point of the south wall. Only future archaeological research can provides answers to these questions.

Therefore, the preliminary findings regarding the section under investigation are as follows: the investigated area is represented by Middle Ages, particularly, XII-XIII centuries’ cultural layer. The life of this period ended with the destruction and fire (possibly, the reason for this was the earthquake of 1283 year, during which, as it is well known, the church has incurred significant damages. In the same area, as a result of research, carried out in 2011, the bakery building of the same period was cleaned, which also must have been destroyed by the earthquake of 1283 year).

Description of tables:

Table I – The master plan for investigated section

Table II – The plan and section of area to be studied

Table III – 1. The area to be excavated, prior to starting the archaeological works.

2. XIX s. Water supply system.

Table IV – 1. Wall No 1 from the eastern side.

2. Wall No 1 from the south-eastern side.

Table V – 1. The floor cleaned between the wall No 1 and cell walls.

2. Wall No 3 from the eastern side.

Table VI – 1. Wall No 3 from the southern side.

2. The clay tiles cleaned at floor level.

Table VII – 1. No 3 and No 4 walls from the north-eastern side.

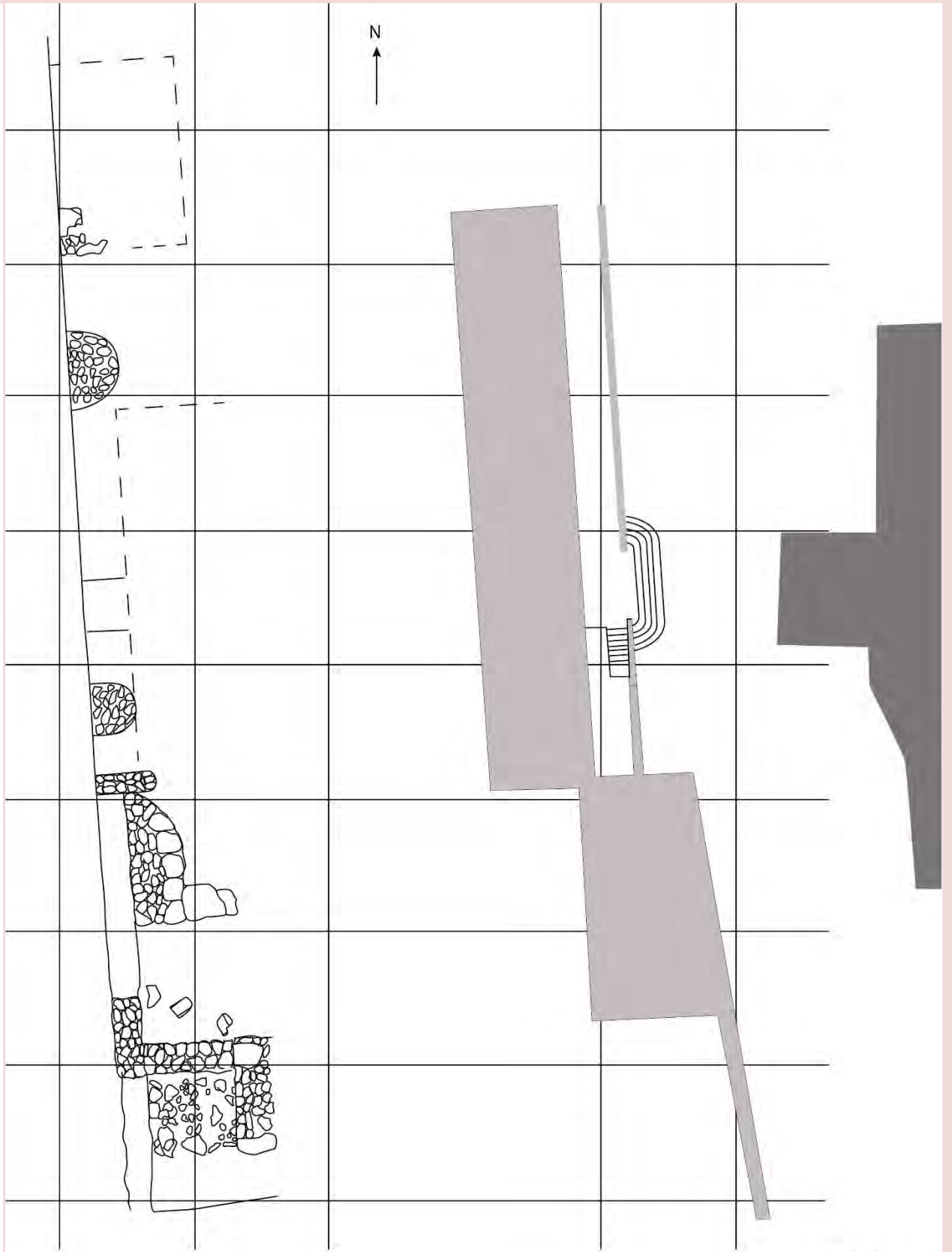
2. The section of cultural layers

Table VIII – 1. Old masonry of eastern wall of so called “fireplace” building

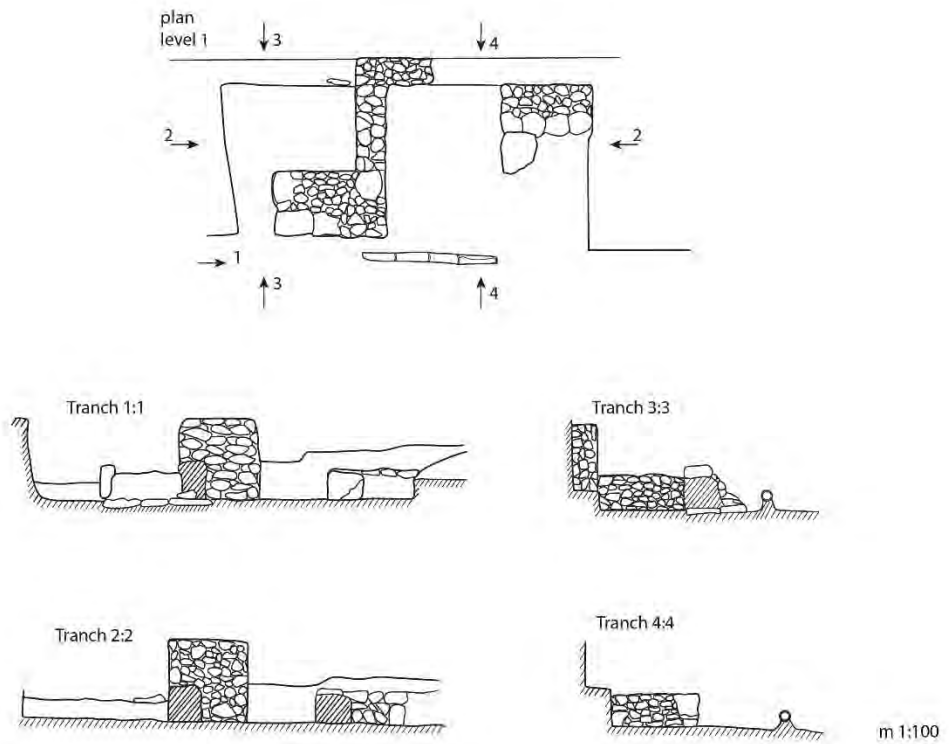
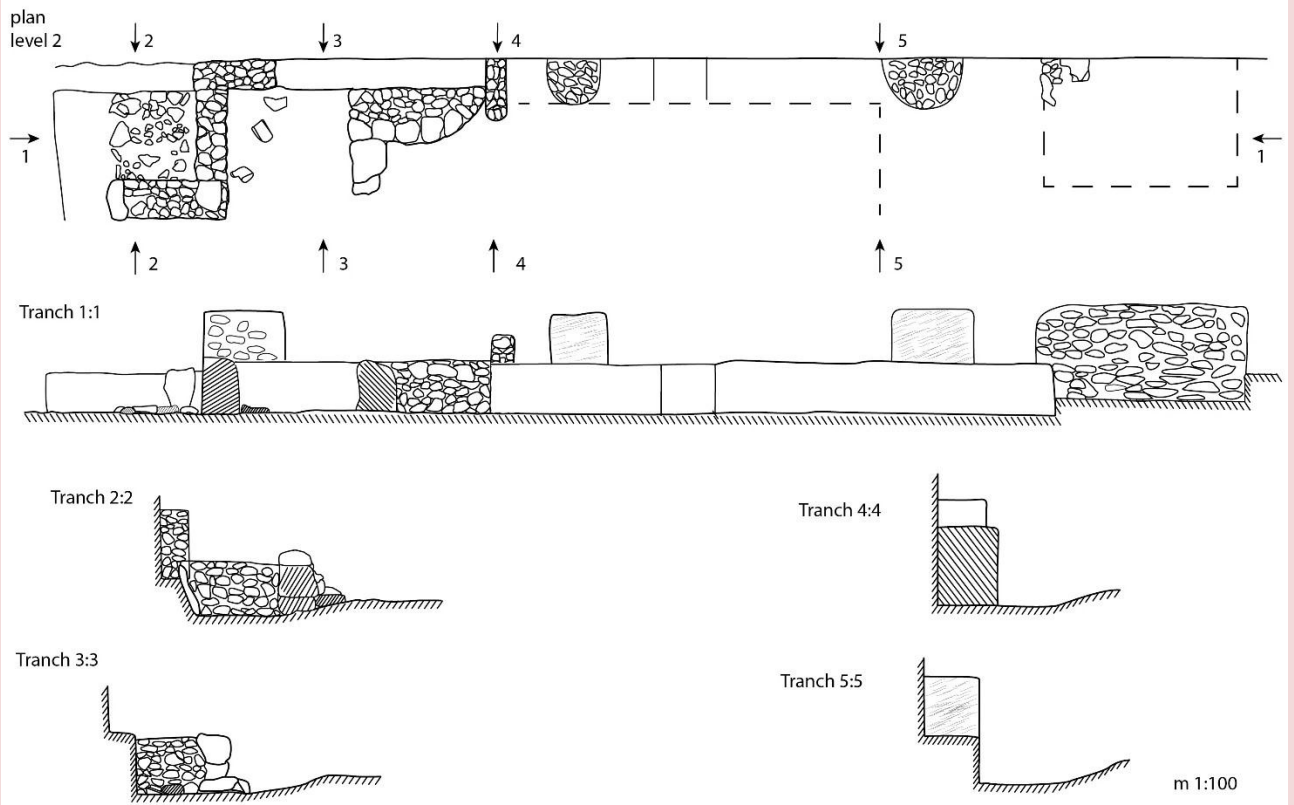
(wall No 6).

2. Wall No 7.

Table IX-XI – The materials discovered in the investigated section (the numeration follows the numbers for inventory items).



Gen plan





1



2



1



2



1



2



1



2



1



2



1



2



1



2



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6



7



8



9



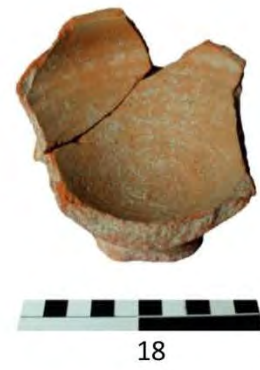
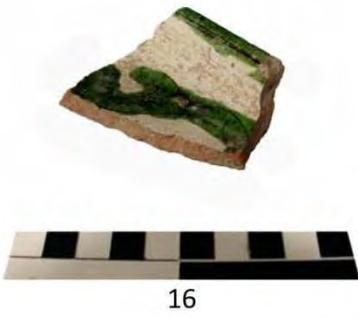
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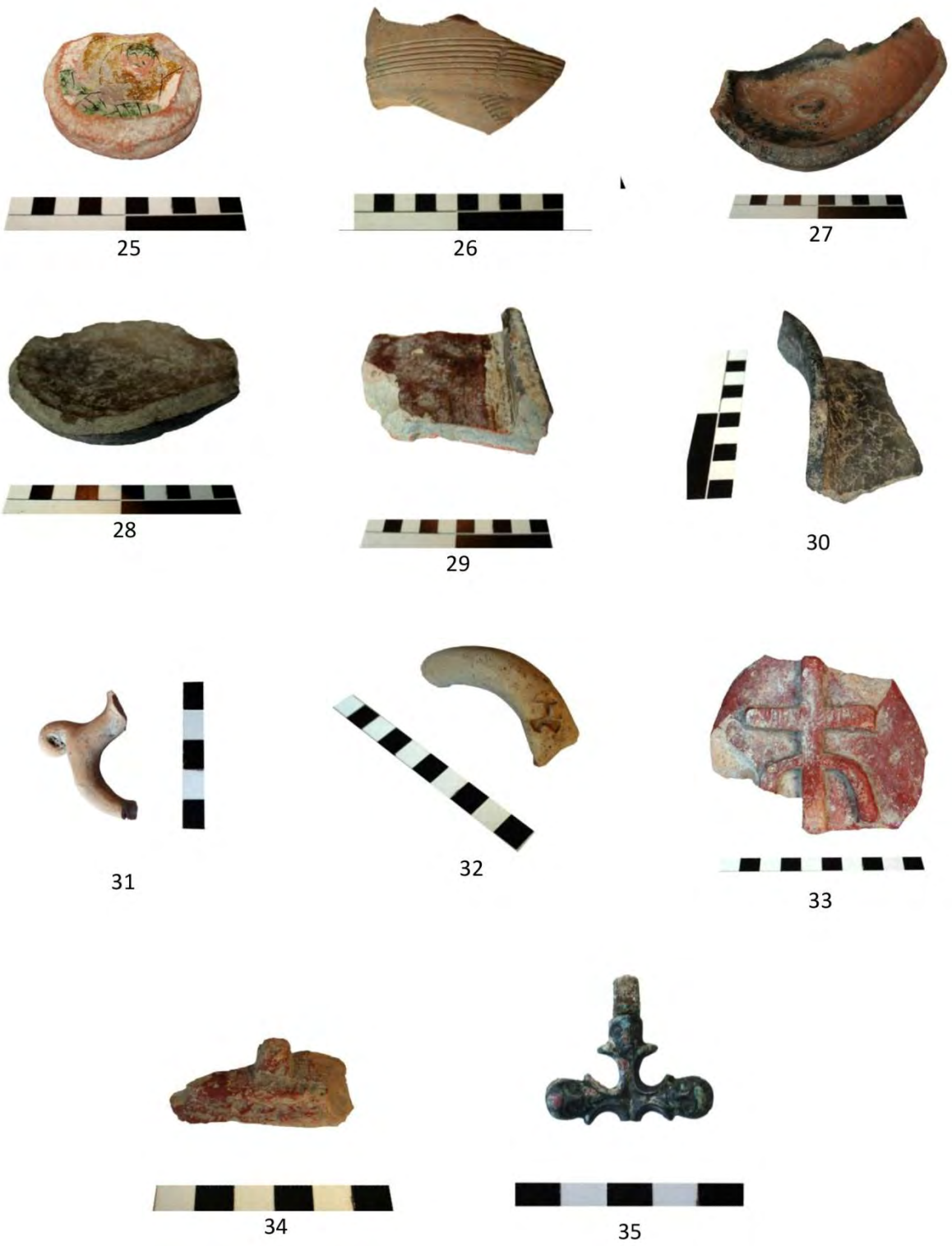


11



12







Urgent conservation works on wall paintings
and building materials of sanctuary of the
church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior
at Santavro monastery

Organization: "Betania" - E. Privalov Center for the
Research of Paintings by Technical Methods

2015

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Salome Akhalashvili



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
 General situation existing in the church

 Situation existing in the sanctuary of the church

- Foundation, stone
- Damage to the painting layer

 Implemented works

- Cleaning of stone surface
- Filling of damaged areas of stone with lime solution
- Urgent dot type strengthening of painting layer

 Conclusion-recommendations

Introduction

The Samtavro Monastery is situated in the northern part of Mtskheta. In 330-ies the King Mirian built the church, which is referred in chronicles as the upper or suburb church. the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro was constructed in 1030-400-yy and represents one of the best samples of Georgian architecture of XI century. It is a building of “inscribed cross” type. The dome leans on the flanges of the apse walls and two columns standing separately. Transition across the central square to the round cylinder of the dome is made through the sails. The apse pastophoriums (supporting religious store on both sides of central apse) are arranged on both sides of the sanctuary apse, on the top of which the storages of II floor are located. The church has two entrances – from southern and western sides. The iconostasis erected in front of the apse is dated by XV century. The church is covered with hewn slabs from the outside and is richly embellished. From the south side the church has contemporary elongated gate-eukterion (small size chapel). Two star-shaped vaults cover its elevated part in the middle, out of which the eastern part is fully carved. The square shape small size gate is built in front of the western door, dated by XVIII century. Two elongated eukterions are attached to the church from the northern side – Saint John the Baptist chapel from the eastern side and Saint John Chrysostom chapel, from the western side. The first one has the entrance from the south, from the church; and the second has the entrance from the west.



the church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Savior at Samtavro

The paintings in the church are preserved only in the dome and sanctuary. The historical data on the painting is not available, except for the fact that the icon painters, invited from Moscow, worked here under the will of the Queen Mariam. These data undoubtedly refer to the dome paintings, where the Pantocrator is depicted in the sphere, among the celestial forces; the angels' congregation and the Virgin among the prophets are represented in the cylinder; and the fragments of figures of Evangelists are preserved on the sails. Several Russian inscriptions are found near the figures of prophets, in the cylinder of the dome, and the painting is associated with the XVII century Russian painting with its stylistic attributes. The painting of sanctuary, which reflects the general features of painting of post-Byzantine period, undoubtedly, was made by other artel of painters – many of its analogues can be found in the painting of Georgian book of mid and second half of XVII century. The fragment of Virgin, sitting on the church, is observed in the konche (quarter-sphere-shaped roofing of sanctuary apse) of sanctuary, and the apostles are depicted down to its apse (the figures are standing under the arches embellished with floral ornaments). It is worth to mention that the layer of earliest painting is preserved under the figures of apostles, in the lower row of apse – the big size monumental figures of frontally standing Fathers of church; the above painting with its proportions and drapery finishing, relates to the tendencies of Georgian wall painting of XI-XII centuries.



Photo: D. Ermakov

General situation existing in the church

- Foundation, stone

The church of the Holy Transfiguration is built with yellowy-brownish well-trimmed quadras. The restoration of the church architecture was carried out a few years ago; accordingly, the structure of the building is solid. The water transfer system seems to be regulated from the roofing, based on preliminary examination.



Photo: Interior of the church



Photo to the left: façade of the church

Different types of damages were observed over the key building material used – the stone; small size losses and surface lamination were observed on surfaces of facial stones.

The most obvious and widespread damage was thick layer of soot, which covered whole space of church and its gate-ekukterion (small size chapel); it was deeply rooted within the pores of the stone and was damaging the stone surface. The stone cleaning works (with the exception of sanctuary) have been carried out in the church interior during May-June of 2015, in addition, the damages on the surface have been eliminated.



Photo: Process of cleaning, the Western wing.



General situation existing in the church



In the interior, where the facial stone has losses in the form of chips, was filled with lime solution. Proportion: 1 lime, 1 quartz sand, 2 coarse fraction black sand, fiberglass tabs.

Up: Photos before and after filling with solution
To the left: Process of filling

Situation existing in the sanctuary of the church

- Foundation, stone

Similarly, as it was observed around the church, the various damages of the stone were observed in the sanctuary: a thick layer of soot, various size chipped sections of facial stone, mortar loss.



Photo: Sanctuary of the church (detail)

Situation existing in the sanctuary of the church

- Damage to the painting layer

The large flow of prayers in the church for the recent times could be considered as the reason for the soot – one of the damages to the painting layer in the sanctuary, the influence of which is clearly evident in interior environment: sweltering, oxygen-free air, the heat of candle flame and the fog-like exhaust – the members of the monastery also confirm the permanent existence of this problem.

It is impossible to comprehensively assess the condition of painting plaster and painting layer without the examination of the painting from scaffolding. However, the main problem, which poses a threat to the safety of the paintings, is obvious – thick layer of diesel soot, the formation of which is the result of exposure of diesel furnace, which was arranged 1 year ago in the church.



To the left: Sanctuary of the church



To the right: Interior of the church

In many areas, the thick layer of soot on sanctuary painting is hung as unusual scraps on the surface. Presumably, under the influence of surface dirt, the diesel emission has created such an unusual and oily cover, which undoubtedly poses a threat to the painting surface.



To the left: Sanctuary of the church (detail 1)



To the right: Sanctuary of the church (detail 2)

Based on the visual examination, the cracks are observed on the layer of painting – it is also clear, that the exhaust has penetrated into the plaster cracks.

The damage of the color layer, peel off and loosening, which covers the whole area of sanctuary painting, could be considered as one of the strongest damages.

The separation of plaster from the wall surface can be well observed in some sections, in addition, the fillings applied during the previous restoration are visible; moreover, the lamination areas and etc. can be encountered.

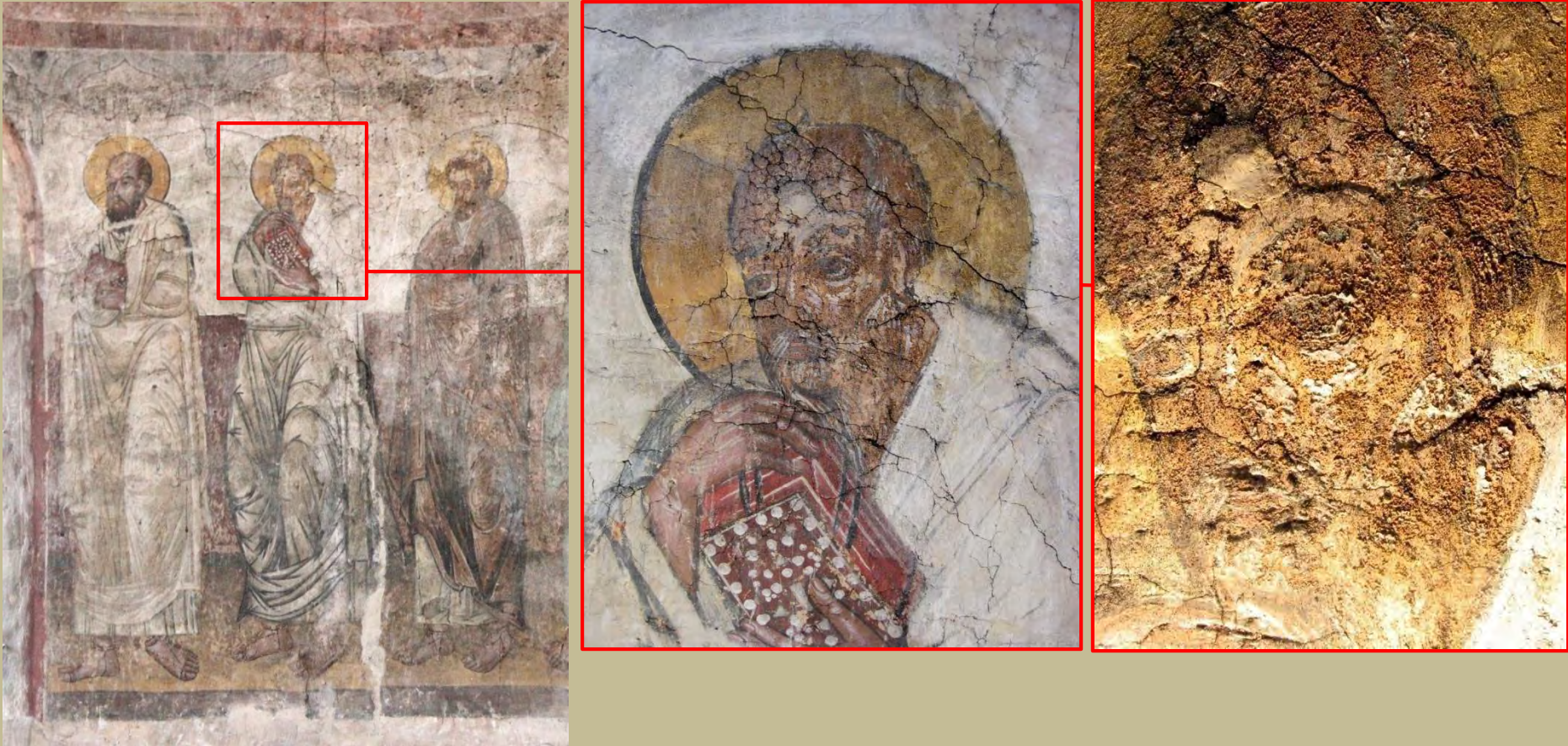


Photo: Sanctuary (detail)

Implemented works

- Cleaning of stone surface

In the church interior, the stone surface was cleaned via dry method, using the brush; and in some places, where the soot layer was firmly rooted on the stone surface, has been brushed off with sponge.



Photo: The process of cleaning of stone surface with sponge



Photo: the process of cleaning of stone surface



Photo: The process of cleaning of stone surface in the sanctuary

- Filling of damaged sections of stone with lime solution.

In the sanctuary, where the facial stone had losses in the form of chips, the gaps were filled with lime solution. Proportion: 1 lime, 1 quartz sand, 2 coarse fraction black sand, fiberglass tabs.



Photo: Before filling with solution



Photo: After filling with solution



Photo: Working process

- Urgent point-by-point strengthening of painting layer

In order to keep the painting layer, initially peeled and damaged sections have been slightly moistened with alcohol-water 30% solution; the solution was applied using syringe, in order to make it easier to subject it to the strengthening processes. Following this process the surface was strengthened with 2% primal (SF 016). In the sections, where the painting layer was stable, the soot layer, existing on the painting, has been removed using a soft brush.



Photo: Before strengthening, detail 1



Photo: After strengthening, detail 2

Photo: church sanctuary; the Saint's image, before strengthening of color



Photo: detail 1

The photo above: The church sanctuary, the Saint's image before strengthening of color

Photo to the left: Before strengthening: detail 1

Photo to the left: After strengthening, detail 2



Photo: detail 2

Implemented works



Photo: The process of strengthening of color layer



Photo: After restoration



Photo: After restoration



Conclusion-Recommendations

Due to the heavy condition of painting layer, it requires full strengthening. Above mentioned implemented works considered only urgent point-by-point type strengthening of painting layer, as defined under the project. In future, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the painting layer requires full conservation works, in order to thoroughly strengthen and maintain the above-mentioned wall painting, in the up-to-date form.

It is necessary to select strengthening materials accurately and individually, taking into account the damage of color layer.

To completely remove the soot layer from the painting.

The full photo and graphical documentation to be prepared in the process of implementation of conservation works.