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DIRECTORATE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE, Oslo, Norway

NOKALAKEVI ARCHAEOLOGICAL-ARCHITECTURAL COMPLEX
NOKALAKEVI MUNICIPALITY
SENAKI DISTRICT
THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

REPORT:
First mission to Nokalakevi
October - November 2009
English edition

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Sarpsborg / Oslo 2009

NAME OF PUBLICATION: Report: 1. mission to Nokalakevi, October-November 2009
*THIS REPORT IS PRINTED
IN AN ENGLISH AND A GEORGIAN
EDITION* Georgian edition printed separately.

PROJECT: Management of Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Complex, Senaki District, the Republic of Georgia

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SUMMARY: The Nokalakevi Complex covers c. 20 ha. and consists of a number of stone monuments from 4-7th CC AD, most of which are in ruins. Besides, there are important archaeological remains on site, dating from 8-7th CC. BC. The central aim of the mission was to start preparations for the development of a Management Plan for Nokalakevi which eventually can be used as a model for management plans for other sites and complexes in Georgia.

KEYWORDS: Cultural heritage management; management planning; presentation; conservation; masonry; Nokalakevi, Georgia

DATE: December 2009

NUMBER OF COPIES / PAGES: 40/24

REG.NR: RA 09-176

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Anne-Sophie Hygen © Østfold fylkeskommune

Cover photo:
The toothed top of the 4th C. eastern defence wall was constructed in the 1970's. No one knows what the top looked like originally.

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Foreword and background

Riksantikvaren – the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage initiated cooperation with the Cultural Heritage authorities in Georgia in 2006 and concentrated on the rehabilitation of the built heritage in Betlemi district, Tbilisi. In September 2006, the Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport was invited to Norway by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to share experiences concerning cultural heritage management. A group of Norwegian cultural heritage experts visited Georgia in May-June 2007 in order to define the purposes and aims of a 3 year plan of cultural heritage cooperation between Georgia and Norway. In September 2008 two representatives from the Department of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia visited Riksantikvaren in Oslo, Tromsø University Museum and the World Heritage Rock Art Centre – Alta Museum in order to study cultural heritage management, museum management and presentation of a World Heritage site.

In November 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment. In July 2009 an Agreement to extend the cooperation in different directions was signed between the newly established National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia and Riksantikvaren. According to the Agreement, Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Complex in Senaki District was included in the cooperation, according to an expressed need for advice on the development of a Management Plan for the Nokalakevi Complex. Management plans according to modern methodology have not yet been developed for any cultural heritage site in Georgia, and the aim is that a developed plan for Nokalakevi can serve as a model for management plans for other sites and complexes in Georgia.

On request from Riksantikvaren three Norwegian experts went on a first mission to Georgia and Nokalakevi in October-November 2009:

Head of Cultural Heritage, Østfold County Council, Sarpsborg, Dr Anne-Sophie Hygen (leader of the Norwegian delegation);
Professor Dr Knut Helskog, University of Tromsø / Tromsø museum;
Curator Karin Tansem, Alta museum.

Adviser Jørgen H. Jørgensen, Riksantikvaren, joined us during the initial days in Tbilisi.

The aim of the mission was to

- Discuss models for a management plan for Nokalakevi, including master plan and action plans.
- Discuss and outline further Georgian-Norwegian project cooperation connected to Nokalakevi, and give recommendations to Riksantikvaren.

We would like to give our sincere thanks to our dedicated and hospitable colleagues and hosts from the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, who made our visit both profitable, interesting and extremely pleasant, and who kindly made information and material available to us: General Director, Nikoloz Vacheishvili; Vice Directors, David Andguladze and Zurab Miminoshvili; UNESCO National Coordinator, Rusudan Mirzikashvili; Head of Archive and Information Systems, Leila Tumanishvili; Quality

Control and Coordination Manager, Irma Dolidze; Fundraising and Project Manager, Manana Vardzelashvili, who also served as our never-resting translator; Director of Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Museum-Reserve, David Lomitashvili; Head of the Union “Preserve the Heritage”, Ivan Kenia; and our trusted driver Soso Marikhashvili. We would also like to thank Ms Ekaterina Lomidze and her family who took such good care of us while staying at Ekaterine Chalet in Nokalakevi.

Many thanks to Manana Vardzelashvili who organized proofreading of the manuscript of this report and remedied several mistakes and misconceptions. Possible remaining mistakes are, however, entirely to blame on the author.

Sarpsborg / Oslo, 8 December 2009

Anne-Sophie Hygen

1. Mission program

- Friday 23 October: Arrival in Tbilisi at 00.55
Meeting at the National Agency and received orientation about the structure and functioning of the Georgian Cultural Heritage.
- Saturday 24 October: Visit to heritage sites in Tbilisi, including the Georgian-Norwegian building preservation projects in Betlemi.
- Sunday 25 October: By car to Nokalakevi.
First overview of the area. Discussions.
- Monday 26 October: Orientation on the archaeological situation and activities at Nokalakevi.
Study of the different monuments.
Visit to Nokalakevi museum and the traditional wooden building on site.
- Tuesday 27 October: Study of the upper monuments: Walls, fortress, towers, citadel, churches.
Orientation on site documentation.
Discussions of structure of Master Management Plan and Management Plans of Action.
Planning of possible future activities.
- Wednesday 28 October: Visit to the standing Church of Forty Martyrs inside the walls.
Orientation on the socio-economic situation in the area.
Discussions of the museum's situation and capacity.
More discussions of future projects (workshops).
- Thursday 29 October: Discussion of the social and economic situation and infrastructure.
Discussion of site monitoring and care.
Discussion of tourist possibilities.
Creation of a timetable for further work and cooperation.
Dinner with the Mayor of Senaki District, Mr Koba Kilasonia.
- Friday 30 October: Return to Tbilisi by car.
On the way, visit to the 9th C. Obisa church and tower.
- Saturday 31 October: By bus to Mirzaani and the re-opening of the Pirosmiani art museum.
- Sunday 1 November: Visit to the National Museum.
Hygen and Helskog by train to Baku in the late afternoon.
- Monday 2 November: Tansem by plane to Norway in the early morning.

2. The organisation of the Georgian Cultural Heritage

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, established in 2008 and more or less equivalent to the Norwegian Riksantikvaren, is an organisation under the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport and covers all complex monuments of local, national and world value. While under the Soviet Union the Georgian Cultural Heritage was managed according to Soviet laws, a new situation emerged after 1991 and much of the existing capacity deteriorated. Now there are 11 museum-reserves in the different provinces in the country, each with local capacity and expertise, although most of the competence is centralised in Tbilisi. There is an expressed need to strengthen the local and regional capacity and to build improved museum infrastructure. The National Agency has developed a strategic plan to increase the number of museum-reserves with the aim to establish such units in each province and district in Georgia.

Each of the museum-reserve administrations is responsible for presenting the National Agency with a registration of monuments and sites within each area, and to offer recommendations. They are in charge of monitoring, but need to develop expertise and capacity for regular, systematic and planned management and maintenance. The cooperation with Norway is regarded as a crucial part for improving and strengthening the management system..

The financing of the museum-reserves is based partly on a basic state funding, partly on self-generated income. The basic state funding covers salaries and running expenses, while income from tickets and sales, tourist services, etc. are partly channelled back to the museum-reserves. The museum-reserve status opens up for wider cooperation with external partners and different sources of income. There is now an opening towards more private enterprises, although under state legislation. The systems are still under development, and the Agency is in the process of clarifying roles and boundaries between private and state, ownership, etc.

The Orthodox Church has a central role in the development, conservation and management of the Georgian Cultural Heritage, since the Church has the ownership of all Orthodox churches and religious monuments. In some cases the Church may ask ownership of buildings in the neighbourhood of churches. An agreement on this matter between State and Church was reached in 2003.

All preservation and management acts and all initiatives must be approved by the Agency, and this state body also oversees all work on religious monuments after having given approval (state permission). The State can interfere if measures are not performed in an acceptable way, and the museum-reserve, as local authorities, are responsible for monitoring and supervising the works within their boundaries. For profane monuments the Agency approves of restoration plans etc., but the actual work may be performed by private firms, NGOs, etc.; although supervised by the Agency. Documentation before, during and after measures is a requirement, and publication is viewed as part of each project. It is of the Agency's opinion that they are in good control of the processes and the firms.

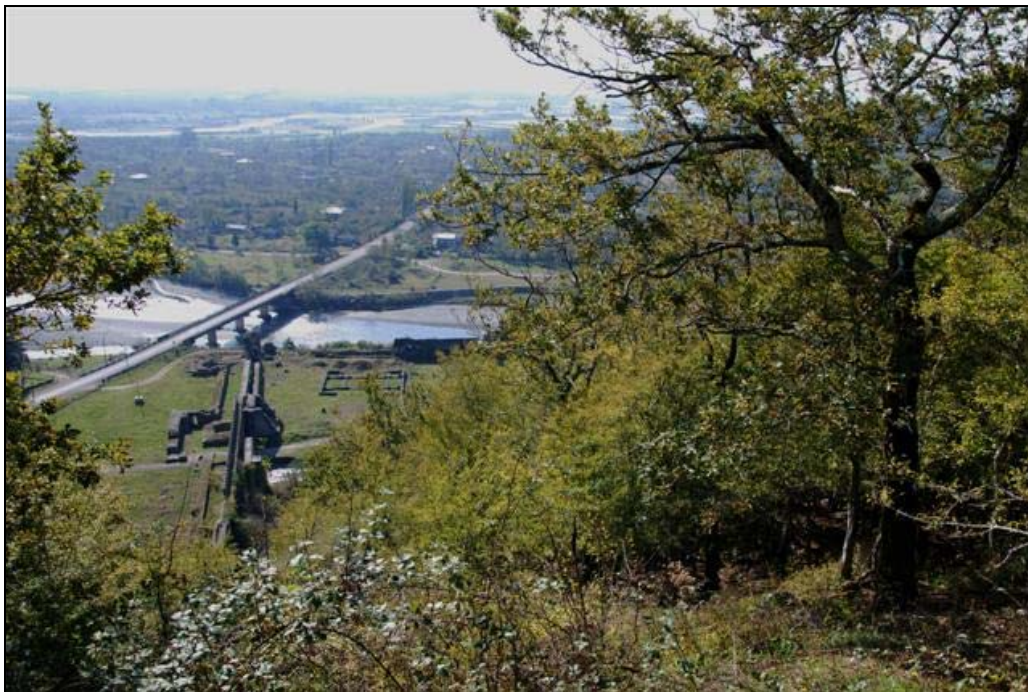
In 2007 the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport started the work on the development of two integrated site management plans, of which Nokalakevi is one. The plans were not finished or realized and are still under discussion. The Agency is concerned to create management plans according to international standards of management.

There is a great emphasis on local infrastructure and local involvement. Several villages – like Nokalakevi – are situated more or less on the cultural heritage sites, making local cooperation, involvement, and partnership necessary and profitable. In general, local authorities recognize the importance and resources of the Cultural Heritage, and they are pleased that the Central Government are active and provide funding. Most regions are very poor and lack economic capacity, and they know that Cultural Heritage represents recourses for local benefit, employment, etc.

3. Short description of Nokalakevi

3.1. History and chronology

Nokalakevi Complex, or rather Tsikhegoji (“the fortress of Goji”), encompasses several kinds of heritage situations and objects, the earliest dating to 8-7th CC. BC. It is not confirmed whether “Archaeopolis”, mentioned in Byzantine sources, is in fact Nokalakevi. The name Nokalakevi appears for the first time in written sources in the 8th C. The first archaeological excavations took place in 1930-31, when the first phase of the built monuments was confirmed to the 4th C. AD.

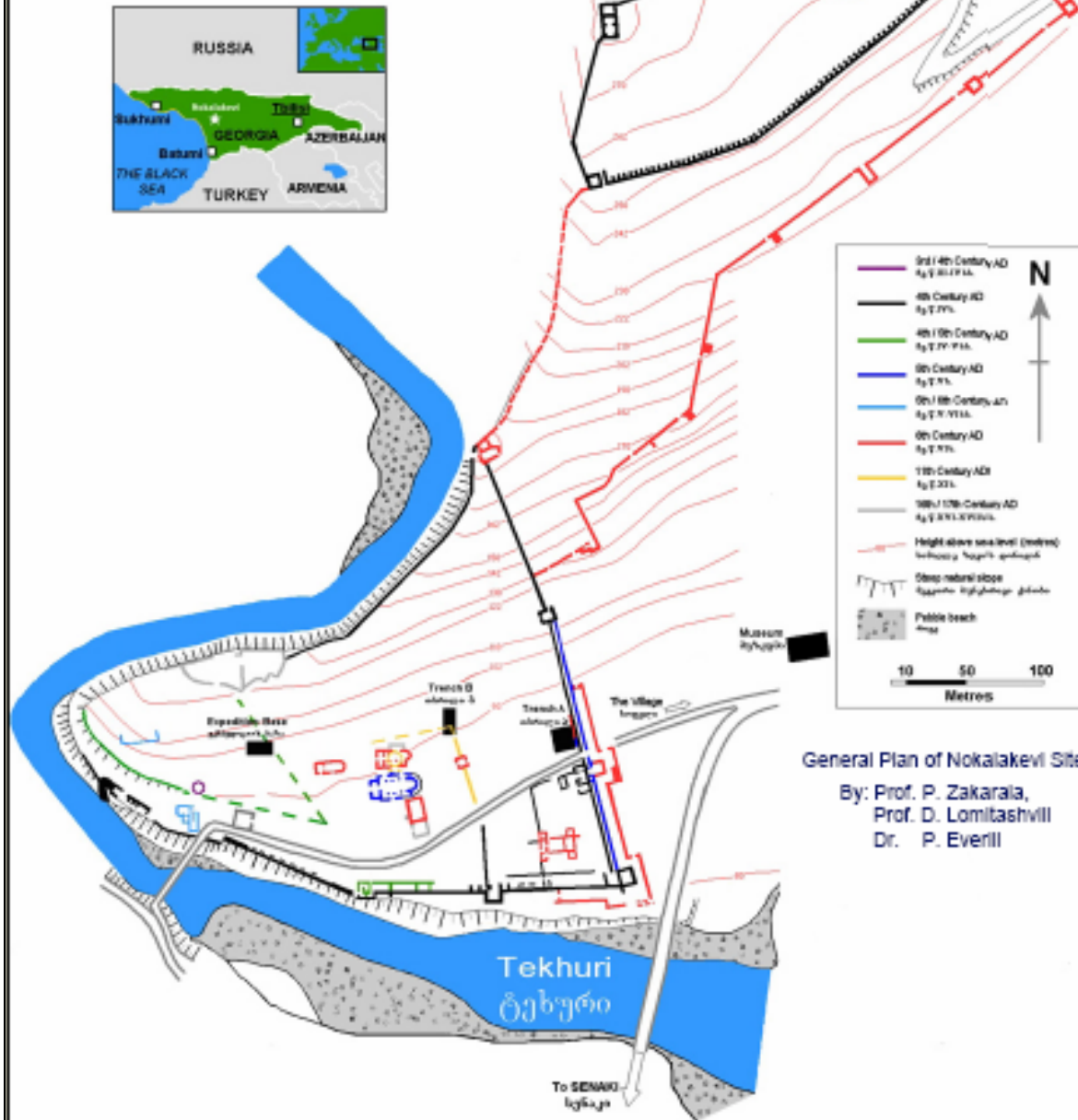


Overview of the lower eastern part of Nokalakevi from the hilltop. The citadel is situated c. 272 m above sea level and c. 180 m up from the monuments below.

Nokalakevi is situated on a peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the river Tekhuri. Of the three 4-6th C. eastern defence stone walls, the second stage 4th C. wall closes the peninsula on the fourth side. The chronologically 3rd stage of the defence walls (6th C.) was built, which run from the east to the north and enclose the whole territory including the Citadel. This took place during the conflicts with Byzantz and the Sassanide wars. Massive building activities have taken place in Nokalakevi over the centuries. For instance, the stone wall from the lower area to the hilltop covers alone 21.000 m² / 16.000 m³. The whole of the Complex covers c. 20 ha.

NOKALAKEVI-ARCHAEOPOLIS, GEORGIA

ნოქალაქევი-არქაეოპოლისი სამართველო



General Plan of Nokalakevi Site
By: Prof. P. Zakaraia,
Prof. D. Lomitashvili
Dr. P. Everill

General plan of the Nokalakevi Complex. Drawn by Parmen Zakaraia, David Lomitashvili and Paul Everill. Many thanks to D. Lomitashvili for making the map available for this report.

Changes in the trade routes between Asia and Europe through Caucasus made Nokalakevi a strategic point. In 542-62 AD there were hard wars between Byzants and Iran taking place in Nokalakevi. 3200 Byzantine warriors with elephants were reported to have fought outside the defensive walls; this is confirmed through carbon dates (5-6th C.). According to Georgian

written sources Arabs totally destroyed the town in the 8th C.; this event is however not confirmed archaeologically.

Christianity was adopted in Georgia in the middle of the first half of the 4th C. AD. There were 6 churches in Nokalakevi: one from the 4th C., one from the 5/6th C. and four from the 6th C. The tunnel leading down to the river for access to water and safe exit was established in the 4th C., with another building stage in the 5th C. and with an arch at the entrance added in the 6th C.

Tsikhegoji was an administrative, strategic and trading centre for several centuries. An Arab campaign in Georgia 735-737 devastated the fortified town. The centre of the county moved to Kutaisi and Nokalakevi was reduced to an ordinary village.

3.2. Documentation

Documentation of Cultural Heritage sites and monuments is done according to contemporary Georgian standards. Old documentation of rehabilitation projects is archived in the National Museum and not always readily accessible, and some material is situated in the National Agency. New standards were set in 2004. All available material up to the present is being digitalized; this work will be finished in 2010.

In 2007 a project was initiated with the aim to identify cultural heritage immovable objects, comprising establishment of GPS-coordinates, mapping, and ID-card descriptions and to include all documentation in a standard digital system. All information on 7 monument complexes, including Nokalakevi, is done. Such information is necessary in order to create Kadaster maps with protective zones. 15 ID-cards are filled out for Nokalakevi: 1 general and over-all, and 14 for the individual monuments. The preservation zone is considered to be sensible, adequate and of satisfactory size. Even beyond the zone there are restrictions concerning what may be developed and built, and plans must be approved by the Agency.

The ID-card system was introduced in 2004, based on recommendations from the Council of Europe. Each ID-card has the following information:

- Name, address, administration etc.
- Geography, situation, history / chronology, historical name and sources
- Definition of monument
- Status
- Dating, function, ownership
- Description
- Condition and recommended measures
- Damages – causes and threats
- Existing documentation; bibliography
- Connection to other monuments on site
- Additional information
- Date and signature

The information ID-card clarifies what documentation there is, and what is lacking.

A “Passport” is a bigger document, and includes drawings, maps, measurements, etc. A passport is not yet created for Nokalakevi, but in 2007 the work began to create passports for sites in Senaki District.

3.3. Conservation history

The royal family of Dadiani initiated rehabilitations of Nokalakevi in 17-18th C. While originally mostly stone blocks from the hillsides were used for building, now they for the most part used river stones. Lime mortar in this phase of rehabilitation was produced locally, while from the 1980's cement with lime mortar was applied everywhere. During this decade several of the buildings and walls were reconstructed. Until the 1970's several families lived within the defence walls, and there were factories and even a school. For instance, at the site of the 6th C royal palace there was a vineyard until 1987. The palace was reconstructed as “a ruin” based on remaining traces in 2001. Other conservation, restoration and reconstruction works were done after 2000.



The entrance to the ruins of the 6th C. Royal Palace. Part of the cement works is visually and technically of bad quality

An architectural firm was hired to do the reconstructions in the 1980's, and architectural drawings from that time make it possible to document the works. Extensive use of cement is evident more or less everywhere, and the quality varies between quite good and solid to cracked, deteriorated and fallen out. Some of the cement works are aesthetically and visually intrusive and unsatisfactory. Luckily, minimum winter temperature does not fall below freezing point and problems caused by frost are avoided.

3.4. Socio-economic situation

During the Soviet time this was a quite rich area with good infrastructure, working factories, and active farming with corn as the basic crop. Tropical fruits (such as citrus fruits, walnuts, laurel) had a steady market in Moscow, and people kept cattle and goats. The state budget was large. Many in Nokalakevi found work in archaeological expeditions, for instance school students during the summers. The challenges became large in the 1990's, especially so in this

region which was hard hit during the civil war. There are no new factories and the small farms are hardly sustainable. The Culture Centre was destroyed in the 1990's and not rebuilt. Only during the past 5-6 years the situation is stabilized. Today there is one combined primary and secondary school in Nokalakevi and a new school is being planned. There are social programs, but at this time they are concentrated on internal refugees following the 2008 conflict with Russia. There is some work available for the local people in connection with Nokalakevi and archaeological excavations there.

However, the Georgian people are used to major hardships, and we were told that they adapt to the situation and are more or less back to normal. Advisory as well as financial support is, however, very welcome.

During the months April-October this year there were 3500 paying visitors to Nokalakevi, and a new ticket system is introduced. A problem is that people enter without tickets, since the reception system is not yet well in place. Most visitors are school students in spring to early autumn. There are also casual visitors and tourists. Except for reduced entrance fees for socially protected people, large groups and students, the ticket price is the same for everybody. The managers will focus on information and advertising in order to attract more visitors, and improved road information signs are planned but not yet implemented. It is to be remembered that the Agency has not been functioning very long (only since 2008).

Cooperation with the Senaki District authorities is initiated in order to take students and organized groups to Nokalakevi. In this district there is a military training camp having educational programs. Work is on-going to bring groups of soldiers for excursions, also, hopefully, to do some work on site, such as vegetation control and general maintenance. Another idea is to establish a pioneer camp in Nokalakevi. Production of sales-products (traditional crafts like ceramics, knitting, etc.) may give a welcome income to local families.

4. Conservation challenges

4.1. Stone walls

Although several ruins are reconstructed or rehabilitated and solidified by new stone and cement, many are still in a non-intruded ruin state. Some of the ruins, especially the large and tall ones on the top of the hill, are partly very unstable and stones threaten to fall out. The situation could be dangerous for visitors and security and monitoring measures should be established as soon as possible.

Lime was produced and used as a building material in Georgia from the 3.C. AD. In Nokalakevi, local river sand is presumed to have been used as aggregate. Where cement has not been applied, the stability of the walls varies greatly; from quite stable to dangerously unstable.

Lime mortar samples are reported to be under analyses in England. Nevertheless, we collected two samples which will be submitted to Riksantikvaren for possible additional analyses.

For conservation purposes, however, it has not been common practice to apply lime but cement. While some cement pointing is of some quality and stable, most places it is cracked, crumbling and open to rains, and stones have fallen out. This situation is particularly grave on the wall tops, where water gets free access.



Crumbling cement on the reconstructed toothed 4th C. defence wall.



The wall top of part of the Royal Bath: Cracked and crumbling cement. A stone block has fallen out.

4.2. Vegetation

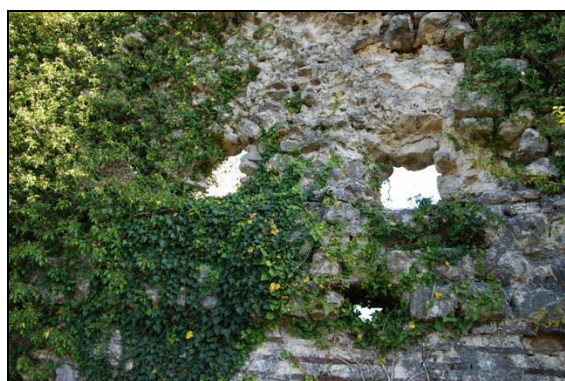
A large part of the stone walls are covered by ivy, growing on the walls and into the mortar joints. The ivy growth has obviously been going on for a number of years, since stems are often quite big and well rooted into the walls. The ivy clings to the walls, and the roots intrude into the stonework and cause major damages. Our recommendation is to seek expert advice on how to deal with the problem.

In the citadel area in the upper parts of the complex, the tree and bush vegetation is particularly dense. The growth makes it difficult to access and study the ruins, and especially roots and stems may cause major harm to the stone walls. We were told that permission to cut trees must be received from the Ministry of Nature protection. It is recommended to seek such permission at a suitable time, when plans are made for regular maintenance.



*Vegetation in and around the small 6th C. church ruin.
Helskog on the ruin, and the field station in the background.*

25 years ago chemicals were used to clean vegetation adjacent to the fortress in the upper area of the Complex. The treatment had effect for 15 years before the vegetation again started to grow. In general, chemicals are not recommended in vegetation control.



*Ivy grows in abundance on and in the stone walls and represents a major preservation problem.
Walls of the 6th C. ruined church on the top of the hill.*

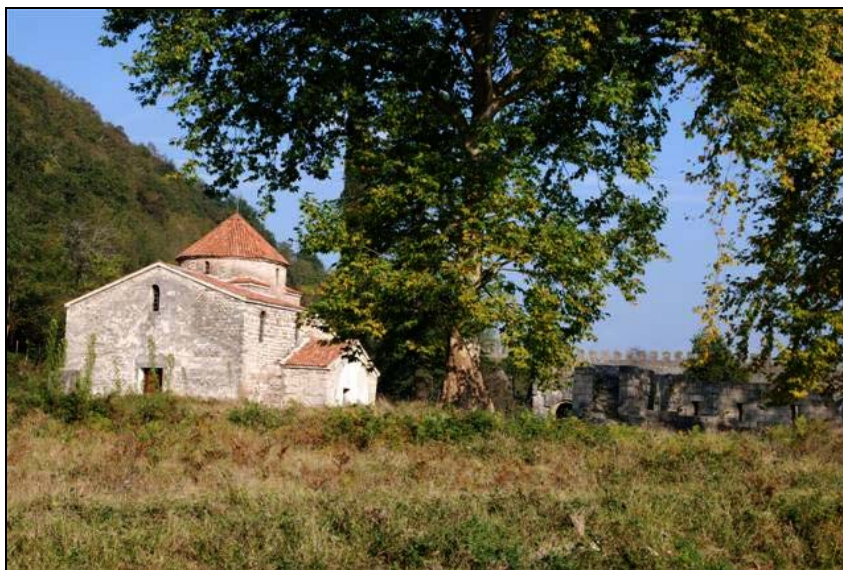
Cattle are now kept out of the Nokalakevi Complex in order to protect the ruins from potential damages. A good thing about the grazing cattle was, however, that they kept the grass down. Now this problem has to be met by other measures: Either cut the grass manually, or introduce smaller and less harmful animals. We were told that sheep, the best choice in this connection, are not comfortable with the climate in this area, but goats may be considered (although they, too, may do harm). Probably manual work will be the safest.

4.3. Church murals

The Church of Forty Martyrs dates back to the 6th C. but was rebuilt in the 17th and 18th CC. The church was built in the name of 40 Sebastian legionnaires who were killed for their faith. The 17th C. Dadiani Period rehabilitation was caused by the need of a palace church. The church was researched during the 20th C., when the theory was formed that this was originally

a basilica. When recently the church got new roofing, this theory was reconsidered based on the discovery of 20-25 5-6th CC. AD amphoras under and following the shape of the cupola. This trait, made to emphasise acoustics, was used until the 6th C. Consequently, the theory of two building periods was discarded.

Originally, the church was fronted by a western narthex, which has disappeared and which is marked on the ground by a low stone wall. On the east wall of the original narthex, which is now in the open, are remains of murals dating to 16-18th C. They were covered by lime in the Tsar period in the 19th C., and foreign experts have helped to remove some of it. Some fixation was done in the 1970's when some broken parts of the wall were filled with cement. Being in the open, the paintings are extremely sensitive to climatic conditions and are gravely threatened by cracks and segments falling off.



The 6th C. Church of Forty Martyrs is situated within the defence walls and close to the field station. The murals, previously within the narthex to the right (south) of the church entrance, are now in the open and exposed to wind and rains, and are gravely threatened to be destroyed.

In order to preserve the remains of the mural paintings they should be conserved and protected from natural climatic forces (see recommendations, chapter 7). There have been plans to reconstruct the narthex, but this is not recommended.

4.4. The traditional wooden building

The building, dating to c. 1900, is built in traditional Mengrelian style and is situated between the museum and the eastern defence walls. The building is not in a bad condition but needs some rehabilitation. The roof cover should be changed back to the original style ceramic tiles.

There is an idea to use the building as a visitors' house, for information, for school classes, café, sales of souvenirs, etc. The house has a perfect position for such purposes, and the idea is to be highly recommended (see recommendations, chapter 7).



The traditional wooden building in Nokalakevi, just outside the eastern defence walls.

5. Presentation

5.1. The Nokalakevi museum

The museum is situated in the village but close to the heritage site. The building was built as a part of a Soviet labour collective farm but was turned into a museum in the 1980's. It is now worn out without and within and needs some renovation. However, the building is quite nice and has a good potential.

The museum employs 11 persons:

- Director
- 4 guides, one of whom serves as a artefact storage keeper
- 1 financial manager
- 3 museum guards
- 2 security (in the museum and on site)

The Director is an archaeologist, and the other staff comprises one historian, one accountant and two philologist mastering Russian and English languages.

Each year foreign students take part in archaeological excavations in Nokalakevi. There is a Georgian-English cooperation field school for students from Tbilisi and the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Winchester and Southampton. The participants also help the museum staff by providing information and stories as starting point for museum education.

A big challenge is to fulfil the National Museum's security requirements in order to exhibit important artefacts from Nokalakevi in the museum. Such requirements are not fulfilled today, and the exhibition is a very simple one. The most significant finds from Nokalakevi are exhibited at the National Museum in Tbilisi.

There is a small field laboratory in the on-site field station working for 2 months a year, but the Director wishes to establish a year around working conservation laboratory for artefacts in Nokalakevi that will serve the entire western region of Georgia.



The Nokalakevi museum.

The museum is state funded and on the Agency's budget. A better and more secure museum will, however, require a more basic funding from the Agency in order for the Complex to become more attractive to visitors and thereby generate more income. As the situation is now, it is difficult for the museum to further develop.

5.2. Site presentation and tourism

At the present, visitors may walk around in the area as they please, without on-site information, information boards or walkways. As long as the number of visitors is low, and the most part of visitors consists of guided groups like school classes, this is not a big problem, although consistent programs for schools are not yet developed. With increasing number of visitors, however, "wild visitors" will gradually cause problems with strain both on the ruins and on nature. Besides, visitors' safety with regard to unstable ruins and loose stones has to be dealt with.

Systematic presentation is important for visitors' experience of the Complex. Therefore, the establishment of minimum intervention walkways for regulation of visitors' movement in the area is recommended. Also, there will be a necessity to create on-site information for self-guiding. A combination of information boards and viewing stations with a corresponding guide booklet is a solution to be considered. In chapter 7 it is recommended to arrange a Georgian-Norwegian workshop with the aim to discuss different possibilities and to come up with suggestions for practical solutions.

For tourist purposes Nokalakevi has a perfect position not far from Kutaisi and between the popular Black Sea coast towns and resorts to the west and Svaneki in the Caucasian mountains to the north. Besides housing one of the most important cultural heritage monument complexes in Georgia, there are hot springs and bathing and fishing possibilities in Nokalakevi. As part of this "triangle", Nokalakevi is considered to have a major tourist potential.

It was decided to make a memorandum as part of this report, with visions and ideas concerning the development of tourism in and connected to Nokalakevi for the Agency to use strategically (see Appendix).



Overview over the 4-5th C. Royal Palace and part of the Garrison (to the far right) from the top of the eastern defence wall.

6. Management planning

Nokalakevi is a complex consisting of a number of different entities, and needs a complex management. There is a need to integrate the different parts and reports into the structure of one management regime.

Before the mission, the 3 Management Plans of Action for Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape in Azerbaijan (2006) and the index of Master Management Plan and 3 Management Plans of Action for The Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly, Kazakhstan (2004), were e-mailed to the National Agency. Both sets of plans were created over the same model. Also, some articles etc. about this method / model of management planning were e-mailed. The thought was that this model for management planning might work well also for Nokalakevi. The colleagues at the Agency studied the material and agreed that this might in fact be so.

It was agreed that at least 3 Management Plans of Action, possibly 4, should be developed for Nokalakevi, and the following is a preliminary joint sketch of possible contents (some points are added during the writing of this report):

1. Documentation and Conservation

- Remaining documentation work
- Documentation of the over-all state of conservation
- State of conservation of individual monuments (starting point)
- Assessment of monument security (loose stones, dangers, etc.), with measures
- Workshop for masons (see recommendations in chapter 7)
- Rehabilitation / conservation program based on documentation of state of conservation
- The question of ownership, rights and obligations.



*Georgian-Norwegian out-door office work. The Nokalakevi field station.
From the left: Helskog, Vardzelashvili, Dolidze, Tansem, Lomitashvili, Tumanishvili.*

2. Management, Monitoring and Maintenance

- Vegetation management, based on:
- Vegetation evaluation report (get a specialist to give recommendations)
 - o Vegetation as a preservation and an aesthetic problem
 - o Ivy problems
 - o Trees, bushes and grass
- Garbage management
- Strengthen the museum staff with a site manager
- Strengthen the staff with a permanent mason, qualified in ruins conservation.
- Create a monitoring regime (of visitors' behaviour, of ruined walls, vegetation, etc.).

3. Presentation: Education, Information and Tourism

- Workshop on site infrastructure and presentation (see recommendations in chapter 7)
- Decide on-site visitors' routes / walkways
- Rehabilitation of the traditional wooden house (see recommendations in chapter 7) and development as a visitors' information centre
- Training / teaching course for school teachers
- Development of educational programs
- Development of local products for sale
- Non-intrusive information signposts
- Consider visitors' safety
- Toilets for visitors
- Publish a popular-scientific book on Nokalakevi
- Produce short documentary films on different subjects (such as: excavations, conservation, tourism, etc.)
- Strengthening and training of museum staff
- Strengthen the staff with a museum teacher
- Invite local people to the site every year.

During our discussions in Nokalakevi the possibility of creating a 4th Plan of Action was brought up, namely a plan for archaeological activities. This is a logical consequence of the fact that Nokalakevi is a very important archaeological site. However, the idea was not discussed in detail during our stay, but is worthy of further development.

7. Recommendations

Norwegian authorities – Riksantikvaren and relevant ministries – are recommended to support the following (prioritized):

1. Workshops

Two workshops with Georgian and Norwegian participation are recommended: on ruins conservation and on site presentation. The workshops should take place simultaneously for exchange and transfer of experience, since the two although on separate topics, are connected in practice. During the mission it was agreed that a good time to arrange the week-long workshops would be during the first half of October 2010. The workshops are expected to generate new knowledge and experiences, to the profit of both Georgia and Norway. By disseminating reports, this may even spread further to other cooperating nations.

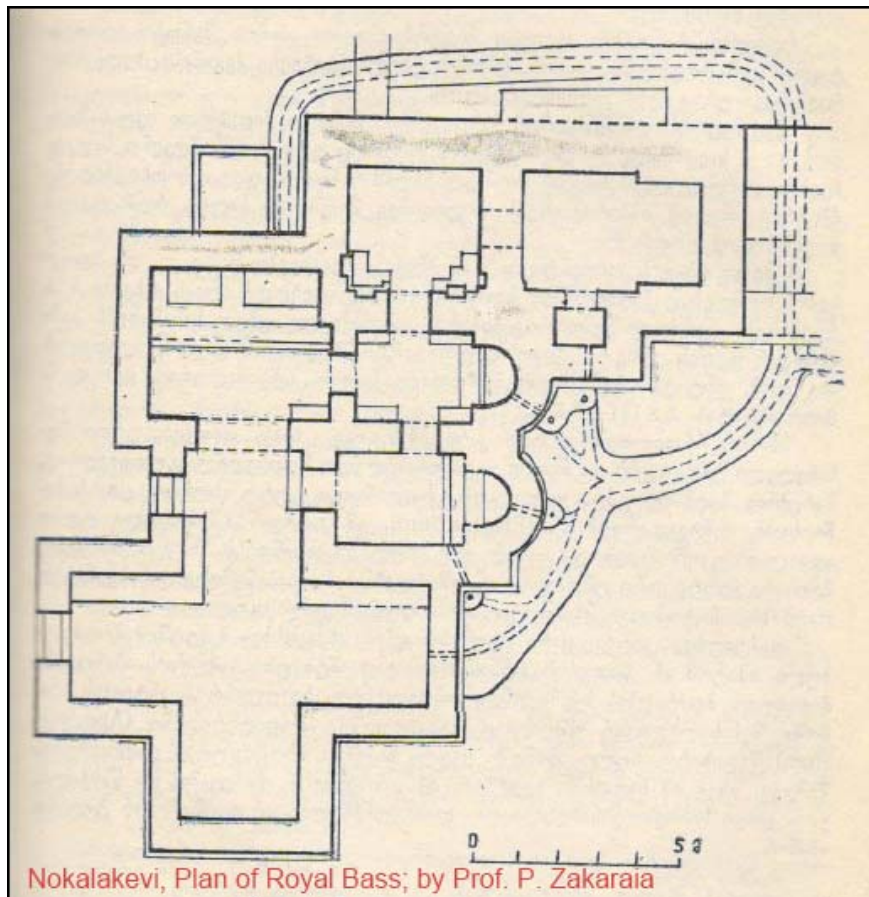
Georgian-Norwegian workshop for masons on ruins conservation

Several ruins in Nokalakevi are mended or fully reconstructed with cement. This work was conducted during different periods over the years, and the cement on wall tops and in joints is in part seriously cracked and crumbled and open to water influx. Some of the cement works are of low professional quality and visually disturbing. A number of ruins are not interfered with and are partly stable, while some are partly highly unstable. We were told that today general knowledge on the production and use of lime mortar is not kept up, cement is used everywhere.

During the mission, a possible object suitable for joint conservation practice during a workshop was discussed, and the 5-6th C. Royal Bath was chosen. This ruin is suitable for several reasons: It is a very important ruin historically, it is of manageable size, the walls are low, it comprises hot, temperate and cold water baths, and it has original floor tiles. Cement has been used for conservation, and some stone blocks are loose or have fallen out. The building material is lime stone and ceramic tile.

A considerable amount of planning will be necessary before the workshop can take place, possibly with an up-front visit from experienced Norwegian ruins conservation masons.

Riksantikvaren has good experience in bringing Norwegian and foreign craftsmen together for learning and exchange of experiences on concrete projects, also in Georgia (wooden buildings in Betlemi, Tbilisi). Also, Riksantikvaren has arranged ruins conservation workshops for Norwegian masons, before and continuing into the 10 year Ruins Conservation Project (2006-2015). It is regarded as favourable to share and further develop acquired experiences with colleagues in Georgia, and we will be happy to recommend suitable Norwegian participating masons with relevant experience to participate in a workshop in Nokalakevi.



Nokalakevi, Plan of Royal Bass; by Prof. P. Zakaraia

*Plan of the 5th-6th C. Royal Bath, drawn by Prof. Parmen Zakaraia.
Many thanks to D. Lomitashvili for making the drawing available for this report..*



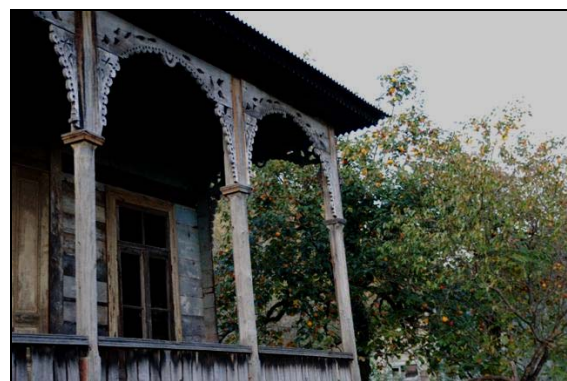
The Royal Bath ruins from the east.

Georgian-Norwegian workshop on site presentation

The three Norwegian mission participants are experienced in on-site large Cultural Heritage Complex presentation projects, and together cover projects like Alta in Norway, Tamgaly in Kazakhstan, Sarmishsay in Uzbekistan, Gobustan in Azerbaijan, Haldeikish in Pakistan, and Zalavruga in Russia. In Østfold, Norway, major site presentation projects have also been developed and important experience obtained. It seems to be extremely profitable to share and further develop experience, to the profit both of Nokalakevi and other large Cultural Heritage complexes in Georgia, and in Norway.

As described in chapter 5.2, except when guided tours are arranged in Nokalakevi visitors “go wild” within the complex, without guidance or targeted information. In order to come up-front of expected increase in visitation and tourism, it is necessary to plan and carry out measures to control visitors’ movements in the area. The workshop participants will be expected to come up with a concrete plan for non-intrusive walkways, signposts, and other solutions for on-site information. We will be happy to recommend suitable participants.

2. Rehabilitation of the on-site traditional wooden house



Some rehabilitation works are necessary before the building can be used as a multi-purpose on-site information centre.

As described in chapter 4.4., a traditional wooden building is situated on-site. It is a beautiful building in a basically good state of conservation, although some rehabilitation is necessary. The building is well suited to be transformed into a multi-purpose site information centre. At present, there are no funds available to rehabilitate and equip the building, but with Norwegian participation it should be possible.

This potential project has been discussed with the Norwegian Ambassador in Baku, Azerbaijan, who is accredited to Georgia. He showed considerable interest in this particular project.

3. Church murals

The conservation problem connected with the narthex murals of the Church of Forty Martyrs is described in chapter 4.3. None of the Norwegian mission participants is experienced in mural paintings’ conservation besides being able to recognize the grave preservation problems.

One idea may be to construct a glass cover over the wall after having stabilized the substratum. The glass cover, with suitable air availability from the sides and bottom, could be fastened into the joints. The objective of such a solution would be a combination of preservation and exhibition purposes.

Riksantikvaren is asked to consider possible following-up and expert advisory support.



The mural paintings to the right of the entrance to the Church of Forty Martyrs.

8. Outline of a time-table for further work

Provided funds and necessary Norwegian and Georgian support, the following time-table was agreed:

2009	
Nov-Dec.	Norwegian mission report in English. Draft finished before Georgian visit to Norway. Translation from English to Georgian
Before 20 Dec.	Riksantikvaren prints and sends out the report
2010	
5-15 Jan.	Meeting with Riksantikvaren and Norwegian Ministries
< 1 Feb.	Application to N-MFA to support the two workshops and the rehabilitation of the traditional wooden house
April/May	If possible, Hygen and Helskog visit on the way to Uzbekistan
30 June	Finish first draft of Management Plan (Master Plan and 3 Action Plans)
Beg. of Oct.	Workshops (masonry and site presentation) Discussions of the Management Plan

Before 20 Dec.	Workshop reports finished in English and Georgian The Management Plan finished
2011	
Beg. of May	Evaluation visit from Norway
30 June	The project finishes
15 Sept.	Final reports in English and Georgian from the Norwegian and Georgian sides

APPENDIX

Memorandum: Nokalakevi as a part of regional development

Nokalakevi is a unique Cultural Heritage Complex in Georgia – both historically and contextually. It covers a large and beautiful area, and consists of a variety of tangible as well as intangible elements. The number of individual monuments is large, they are well visual and picturesque, they are sources of knowledge and unusual experiences, and they stimulate imagination and afterthought.

In relation to tourism, Nokalakevi is geographically very well located: not far from Kutaisi and on the road to the Black Sea resorts and to Svaneti, a popular and exotic visitation target for national and international tourism. So far, Nokalakevi is not well known regardless of its enormous historical importance, but the potential is considered to be great. It is well known that today, cultural tourism is the largest growing industry in the world. Present day tourists are to a considerable degree seeking cultural and natural knowledge and experiences, not only pure recreation. A combination of recreation and cultural experiences, such as is available in Western Georgia, is regarded to have a considerable tourist potential.

Of course, tourism should never be non-sustainable and not in any way haphazard the integrity and preservation of Cultural Heritage sites. Neither must it compromise the tradition or the values of the host communities. However, with due respect both to the heritage sites themselves and to the communities in question, controlled, regulated and sustainable tourism may no doubt positively influence the local communities, therefore also the regions and the nation as such. In many nations in the world, like in Norway, Cultural Heritage is regarded a major asset in regional development.

The village of Nokalakevi hosts not only an important and spectacular Cultural Heritage Complex. There are also large artificial fish-farms, and fishing could be developed into a tourist activity. Swimming is possible in the river. Within walking distance walk from the village there is a hot spring, with remains of previous bath houses. We heard that there were plans to develop the area into a spa. If carried out, this should, of course, be done in a sustainable and low-key way in this beautiful and sensitive nature.

Altogether, Nokalakevi could be developed into an attractive and interesting area for tourism, with focus on culture, nature and positive recreation.