

REPORT

Third mission to Nokalakevi

Nokalakevi archaeological-architectural complex

Senaki district

Georgia

April 2012

English edition

The Directorate for Cultural Heritage is responsible for the management of all archaeological and architectural monuments and sites and cultural environments in accordance with relevant legislation.

We are responsible for ensuring that a representative selection of monuments and sites from all periods is preserved for present and future generations. The selection of monuments and sites must provide an overview of historical developments, the way of life and the range of works of art and craftsmanship of each period.



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PROJECT:

Management of Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural
Complex, Senaki District, Georgia

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SUMMARY:

The third Norwegian visit to Nokalakevi concentrated on
finalizing the Nokalakevi Management Plan, consisting of a
Master Management Plan and five Management Action
Plans.

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Cover photo: *The entrance gate to Nokalakevi archaeological-architectural Complex.*

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New information board in front of Nokalakevi Museum (see also page 18).

Foreword

The first Norwegian mission to Nokalakevi took place in October / November 2009. Based on recommendations to Riksantikvaren – the Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Norway and expressed wishes from the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, it was followed up with a Georgian-Norwegian workshop on presentation of Nokalakevi in November 2010. During this mission, development of a comprehensive Management Plan for Nokalakevi became a central issue, and it was decided to follow up this work with further cooperation.

The list of the 2012 workshop participants, eight from Georgia and four from Norway, is presented in chapter 2 of this report.

The Norwegian group would like to give warm thanks to each and all of the participants of the workshop for an effective, work intensive, friendly, and cordial stay during which we were able to do almost all we had planned for. What remained after the end of the workshop was continued by e-mail contact during the following weeks.

As before, we would like to thank Ekaterine Lomidze for taking such good care of us in 'Ekaterine Chalet' in Nokalakevi village. Also many thanks to Gulnara Kakulia who made sure we had plenty of coffee and tea at all times to strengthen us during our work at the Nokalakevi field station.

It is with not little regret it must be realized that with the finished Nokalakevi Management Plan and this report, this part of the Georgian-Norwegian cultural heritage cooperation has come to a conclusion. It has been such a pleasure and privilege to have had the opportunity to cooperate with our good colleagues and friends at the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia and the Nokalakevi Museum-Reserve during the project years 2009-2012. We give our best wishes for a prosperous – albeit sustainable – future for the Georgian Cultural Heritage in general, and Nokalakevi in particular, and our hopes that the Nokalakevi Management Plan will become a good tool for the future.

This report comes in two language versions. Many thanks to the National Agency for taking care of its translation into Georgian.

Sarpsborg / Oslo, June 2012

Anne-Sophie Hygen

1. Mission program

- Sunday 22 April: Arrival in Tbilisi at 03.30.
No program.
- Monday 23 April: Morning: Meeting and discussions at the National Agency in Tbilisi.
Departure for Nokalakevi by mini-bus at 14.00.
- Tuesday 24 April: Discussions concerning the conservation works on the King's Bath.
Division of the workshop participants into work groups.
Management Plan work at the Nokalakevi field station.
- Wednesday 25 April: Continued work on the Management Plan at the Nokalakevi field station.
Arrival of Vano Vashakmadze in the evening.
- Thursday 26 April: Continued work on the Management Plan at the Nokalakevi field station.
Arrival of Jørgen H. Jørgensen in the afternoon.
- Friday 27 April: Morning: Departure of Vano Vashakmadze
Continued work on the Management Plan at the Nokalakevi field station.
Afternoon: Departure from Nokalakevi by mini-bus.
- Saturday 28 April: Departure from Tbilisi at 04.45.

2. Workshop participation

From Georgia:

1. Vano Vashakmadze, Deputy Director of the National Agency
2. Leila Tumanishvili, Head of Information Systems Unit
3. Manana Vardzelashvili, Chief Coordinator of UNESCO and International Relations Unit
4. Nino Nozadze, Senior Coordinator, Permits and Ongoing Projects Coordination Unit
5. David Lomitashvili, Director of Nokalakevi Architectural-Archaeological Museum-Reserve
6. George (David) Cheishvili, Head of Educational and Informational Procurement Unit
7. Tsotne Chankotadze, Coordinator of Marketing and Infrastructure Unit
8. George Patashuri, Coordinator, Monuments' Attribution Unit

From Norway:

1. Knut Helskog, Professor, University of Tromsø, Tromsø Museum
2. Karin Tansem, Curator, Alta Museum
3. Anne-Sophie Hygen, Head of Cultural Heritage, Østfold County Council (Norwegian project leader)
4. Jørgen H. Jørgensen, Senior Adviser, Riksantikvaren (Norwegian project coordinator)



Workshop participants working on the Management Plan at Nokalakevi field station.

3. Meeting and discussions in Tbilisi

Before the departure for Nokalakevi on 23 April a meeting took place at the office of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia in Tbilisi. The aims of the meeting, lead by Deputy Director Vano Vashakmadze, were to agree on the scope for the workshop, discuss elements to be emphasized in the Management Plan, and exchange information relevant to the forthcoming workshop in Nokalakevi:

- The finished Nokalakevi Management Plan will represent a milestone for further activities;
- Important to deal with stone- and wood conservation in the Plan;
- As activities must be tendered according to Georgian regulations, it will be important to make detailed specifications in the design documents;
- The timeframes for activities in the Management Action Plans must be realistic in relation to available funding;
- The path is paved for good cooperation on Nokalakevi between the National Agency and the National Museum of Georgia;
- The Nokalakevi Management Plan should lay the foundations for good cooperation between all relevant partners and stakeholders;
- The Government is strongly concerned with the education (local population, pupils, students) and tourism aspects and possibilities of Nokalakevi;
- Proper on-site visitors' services are high priorities;
- The Municipality is positive and willing to support the management and positive development of Nokalakevi;
- Step by step development of the Complex according to sustainability;
- Realization that ruins conservation takes time; monuments chosen for conservation must be prioritized (according to condition, sustainability to visitation, financing, available competent masons);
- Local masonry competence must be developed, strengthened and maintained;
- The National Museum should be involved in the rehabilitation of the wooden Oka-type house east of the defensive walls (cf. the Georgian-Norwegian cooperation in Betlemi, Tbilisi).

4. The King's¹ Bath

In the Norwegian 2009 Nokalakevi mission report², the ruins conservation challenges were described (pp. 12-13), and it was recommended to arrange a workshop for Georgian and Norwegian masons. The ruin of the King's Bath was found to be a suitable monument for a joint workshop. The 2009 workshop participants agreed that this ruin should be a priority for conservation, and the recommendation was confirmed in 2010.

Following a first meeting in Nokalakevi in April 2011³, the workshop for Georgian and Norwegian masons took place in Nokalakevi in September 2011. Materials and methods applied for the conservation of the north-east corner part of the ruin of the King's Bath is described in the workshop report⁴.

As we observed in April 2012 the result was not at all satisfactory. While the mortar in the vertical pointings looked fairly acceptable, the mortar on the wall top was seriously cracked, crumbled and dissolved. Below the loose bits, the mortar was still soft and obviously had not hardened as it should. There may be several reasons for this unfortunate result which obviously must be further studied and discussed (see also the September 2011 conservation report, pp. 7-8).



Overview of the north-east conserved corner of the The King's Bath.

¹ In previous reports, also named «The Royal Bath».

² A-S. Hygen 2009. *Report: First mission to Nokalakevi, October-November 2009*. Riksantikvaren. Oslo.

³ I-M. A. Olsrud 2011. *Conservation of the Royal Bath, Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Complex, Senaki district, Georgia. Report from first meeting in Nokalakevi 14-17 April 2011*. Riksantikvaren. Oslo.

⁴ I-M. A. Olsrud & T. Berner 2011. *Conservation of the Royal Bath, Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Complex, Senaki district, Georgia. Report from the First Conservation Workshop in Nokalakevi 13-17 September 2011*. Riksantikvaren. Oslo.



Details of parts of the wall top and pointings of the north-east conserved corner of the the King's Bath.

5. Nokalakevi Management Plan

5.1. The situation before the 2012 workshop

The information needed for the Management Master Plan was already in 2010 considered to be abundant since the Nokalakevi Complex is well studied and documented (ID-cards; Passport; reports). The main task would be to organise the relevant information into a master management plan and relevant management action plans according to a functioning structure and what would be necessary in order to fulfil the intentions of a management plan.

Action plan drafts were made already before the 2010 workshop, and three action plans were foreseen and further discussed during this workshop⁵:

1. Documentation and Conservation
2. Management, Monitoring and Maintenance
3. Presentation: Education, Information and Tourism

⁵ A-S. Hygen & K. Helskog 2010. *Report: Second mission to Nokalakevi, November 2010*. Riksantikvaren. Oslo.

These were later split up, added to and re-organized into five action plans (see chapter 5.3.2-5.3.6 below).

The initial intention of the National Agency was to have the whole Nokalakevi Management Plan finished in the spring of 2011. This turned out not to be possible and a new schedule was set for 2012. Grants from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Riksantikvaren made the April workshop and the finalizing in mid-2012 of the Management Plan possible.

The intention has all the time been to use the Nokalakevi Management Plan as a model for the other museum-reserves in Georgia.

5.2. Master Management Plan

5.2.1. The aims of the Master Management Plan

The main aim of the Master Management Plan is to identify and describe the premises and preconditions for the comprehensive management, conservation, preservation and presentation of Nokalakevi Complex with its multiple values. An important objective of the Master Plan is to clearly describe and define these values and qualities and what has been done to identify, document and research them, and to function as the superior framework for the practical implementation of activities. Based on descriptions, status, premises, policies, co-operation structures and available resources, the Master Plan gives the general bases for actual short-, middle- and long-term management practices; i.e. as described in the Management Action Plans.

Also, in the Master Plan the basic guidelines and strategies for the preservation and management of the Complex are outlined, based on descriptions and a statement of its values and qualities and the issues to be dealt with. In addition, the Master Plan defines the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the different cooperative partners in relation to the tasks and issues to be dealt with.



Together with the author of this report, Manana Vardzelashvili (left) and Leila Tumanishvili (right) worked on the Management Master Plan.

5.2.2. The contents of the Master Plan

Foreword

1. Introduction
2. The aims of the Management Plan
3. Site characteristics
 - 3.1. Location information
 - 3.2. General natural and cultural features
 - 3.3. Landscape and climate
4. Vegetation Site description
 - 4.1. The Nokalakevi complex
 - 4.2. Ruins, restored buildings and structures
 - 4.3. Archaeological features
 - 4.3.1. Archaeological research
 - 4.3.2. Archaeological layers and chronology
5. Documentation
6. Site evaluation
 - 6.1. Site values and qualities
 - 6.2. State of conservation
 - 6.3. Authenticity and site integrity
7. Factors affecting Nokalakevi Complex
8. Management of Nokalakevi Complex
 - 8.1. Management goals, directions and development visions

- 8.2. Management action plans
- 9. Roles and obligations
- 9.1. The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia
- 9.2. Structure of the Head Office of the Agency
- 9.3. Parmen Zakaraia Nokalakevi archaeological-architectural museum-reserve
- 9.4. Ownership, main partners and stakeholders

References

Appendices

5.3. Management Action Plans

5.3.1. The aims of Management Action Plans

While the Management Master Plan represents the superior framework for the management, conservation and presentation of the Nokalakevi Complex, the Management Action Plans are plans for how issues and challenges are to be dealt with in the short-, middle- and long-term perspectives in a practical and goal-oriented way. Consequently, the five Management Action Plans together with the Master Management Plan constitute inseparable parts of the overall Nokalakevi Management Plan.

All issues, strategies, recommendations and planned actions in the Management Action Plans are based on the principles of sustainability, minimum intervention, preservation of site integrity and authenticity, and respect for all inherent site qualities and values. The descriptions and definitions of these values and qualities in the Management Master Plan function as the superior framework for practical implementation of tasks and measures through the Action Plans.

Although with some variations according to the needs of each individual Action Plan, the structure and contents are basically the same:

1. Background and present situation
2. Issues and objectives
3. Recommended strategy and actions
4. Expected outcome
5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation

The Management Action Plans will give the bases for creating yearly work plans.

In the following presentation of the Management Action Plans, some words of description are edited from each Action Plan.

5.3.2 Management Action Plan 1: Documentation

Contents:

1. Background and present situation
2. Issues and objectives
3. Recommended strategy and actions
4. Expected outcome
5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation

Even though the Nokalakevi Complex – the monuments as well as the results of the archaeological excavations – is well documented, the format of the documentation does not meet today's standards regarding storage safety and accessibility for research and management. It exists only in the form of hard-copies and moreover, it does not meet the standards established by the Law on Cultural Heritage of Georgia (2007). Further, each monument and its position within the Complex is mapped, but there is a need to get exact positions of all monuments and structures by GPS recording.

The main issues are to draw up inventory and design documentation meeting modern standards for the purpose of implementation of research and planning, as well as for conservation, maintenance, site management, monitoring, protection and presentation.

5.3.3. Management Action Plan 2: Conservation

Contents:

1. General background and present situation
2. Issues and objectives
3. General recommended strategy and actions
4. Conservation of each monument
5. Expected outcome – all monuments
6. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation

The condition of the monuments located within the Nokalakevi Complex is more or less similar. The monuments which underwent conservation works in 1970-1980s and also later, are located in the Agora area, on the terrace by the left bank of Tekhuri River. The conservation works were carried out with cement mixed with lime. In general, the mortar is seriously cracked and crumbled, and there are cases where building stones have fallen out or are threatening to do so. Where no conservation works have taken place, such as in the Citadel area, the stone walls of the monuments and fortification walls are for the most part in a quite serious situation of decay. It is also considered dangerous for visitors.

The Agora is the most visited area of the ancient settlement, along with the museum. Thus, conservation of the monuments in the Agora is considered to be a priority in order to sustain visitation. The monuments on the Citadel with its steep slopes and hardly walkable paths should so far be made available in special cases only.

5.3.4. Management Action Plan 3: Archaeology

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Background and present situation
3. Issues and objectives
4. Recommended strategy and actions
5. Expected outcome
6. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation



David Lomitashvili (left) and Knut Helskog working on Management Action Plan 3 – Archaeology.

The first archaeological research excavations in Nokalakevi took place in December 1930, then in 1973. Every year since 2001 there has been small scale excavations. The data from these excavations is stored in the National Museum of Georgia and in Nokalakevi Museum. A large number of artefacts have been found, altogether around 40.000. Most of these, together with the documentation (reports, drawings, photographs), are stored in the National Museum. The excavations have concentrated on the lower area inside the fortification walls. Only a few test excavations have been

conducted in the enormous settlement area in the upper part of the Acropolis and on the outside of the fortification walls along the river.

It is necessary to improve methods of archaeological research in compliance with international conventions, which must be a permanent undertaking as methodologies are continuously changing (new technologies, techniques, and understanding). Other central issues are:

- To continue current archaeological research and promote new research projects;
- To maintain a staff of archaeologists for research, managing archives, databases and storage;
- Develop/provide facilities for staff, researchers and visiting scholars;
- To disseminate the research results.

5.3.5. Management Action Plan 4: Management, Monitoring and Maintenance

Contents:

1. Background and present situation
2. Issues and objectives
3. Recommended strategy and actions
 - 3.1 Infrastructure
 - 3.2 Vegetation control
 - 3.3 Garbage control
4. Expected outcome
5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation



Vegetation is growing in and out of stone walls and represents a serious conservation threat. The south part of the Complex, the walls of the Garrison.

The territory of Nokalakevi Complex has several owners and stake-holders, making management activities challenging:

- The State, represented by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia and the National Museum of Georgia (83,6% of the territory)
- The Patriarchate of Georgia (15% of the territory)
- Citizen residing on the territory of the Museum-Reserve (1,4% of the territory).

At the same time, there are several entities operating on the territory of the Complex: the Nokalakevi Museum-Reserve (museum activities), the archaeological expedition of the National Museum, the Eparchy (church rituals in two churches), and a private citizen (agricultural and other household activities).

Issues concentrate around the monuments, the vegetation, the garbage problem, the private dwelling, and the archaeological field station.

5.3.6. Management Action Plan 5: Presentation, Information and Tourism

Contents:

1. General introduction
2. Education and training
 - 2.1. Background and present situation
 - 2.2. Issues and objectives
 - 2.3. Recommended strategy and actions
 - 2.4. Expected outcome
 - 2.5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation
3. Information, popularization and marketing
 - 3.1. Background and present situation
 - 3.2. Issues and objectives
 - 3.3. Recommended strategy and actions
 - 3.4. Expected outcome
 - 3.5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation
4. Visitors and infrastructure
 - 4.1. Background
 - 4.2. Issues and objectives
 - 4.3. Recommended strategy and actions
 - 4.4. Expected outcome
 - 4.5. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation
5. Museum
 - 5.1. Introduction
 - 5.2. Background and present situation
 - 5.3. Issues and objectives

- 5.4. Recommended strategy and actions
- 5.5. Expected outcome
- 5.6. Timeframe and responsibilities for implementation

One of the over-all goals of the Management Plan is to develop the Nokalakevi Complex into an attractive tourist site and a leading educational centre in the region. The goals will be achieved by thoroughly planned education, information and marketing policy based on the best international practice. Because of its unique cultural and visual qualities, Nokalakevi can be recognized as a particularly attractive visitors' target.

All activities concerning presentation, education, information and tourism in Nokalakevi are chosen and will be conducted according to the principles of *sustainability, respect for site integrity* and *minimum interventions*.



In the future, visitors will not be allowed to climb the defensive walls and the steps to the wall will be discreetly closed. Goats, however, will be harder to stop ...

Photo: Karin Tansem.

The common objectives regarding activities concerning presentation, education, information and tourism, are to promote:

- Understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the Nokalakevi Complex and its values and qualities;
- Understanding of and respect for the issues of protection and sustainable use of Nokalakevi and other heritage sites;

- Understanding of the vulnerability of archaeological and cultural heritage sites and monuments, and the requirements and rules for proper behaviour;
- Renew the museum exhibition in accordance with modern standards and make them attractive both for educational purposes and tourists. The exhibition has to be renewed on a regular basis;
- Motivation to visit and revisit Nokalakevi and other heritage sites for learning, enjoyment and leisure, and to spread the words to others.

Today, the Nokalakevi Complex is not prepared for a rapid increase in the number of visitors. Therefore, the chosen measures are designed to control and carefully develop the site infrastructure in pace with the number of visitors and according to site sustainability.

5.4. Post-workshop work on the Management Plan

The Management Master Plan and the Action Plans no. 1, 3, 4 and 5 were more or less finished during the workshop, and what remained (adding some information, proof-reading, etc.) was solved through e-mail contact.

Preparations for Management Action Plan 2 – Conservation started through a detailed study of each monument during the workshop, but the plan itself was not prepared. The first draft of the English translation of this Action Plan was finished by the end of May and after some rounds back and forth between Georgia and Norway, it was altogether finished in June.



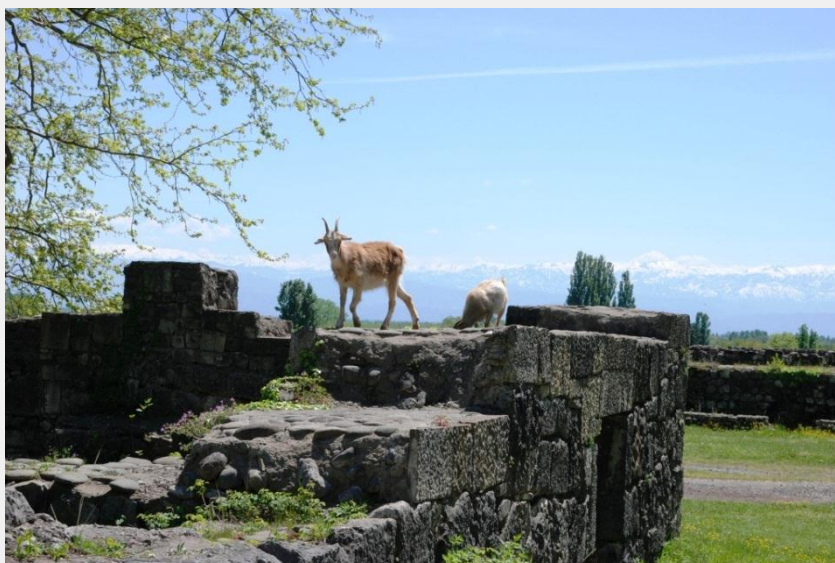
The new, large information board by the entrance to Nokalakevi Museum.

6. Concluding remarks and further challenges

In reality, a Management Plan is just a pile of paper sheets with writing. The challenge is to make things happen according to plan. In order to be able to carry out all the actions necessary to preserve, manage, research, present and further develop Nokalakevi in a sustainable way, not only will human and economic resources be necessary; it takes a strong and shared will and wish, from the cooperation partners and stakeholders and high up in the Georgian political and administrative establishment.

We have understood that there is an ambition to get the Nokalakevi Archaeological-Architectural Complex inscribed in the World Heritage List. It is the opinion of the author of this report that Nokalakevi is indeed a worthy candidate. Nokalakevi is in many ways unique in the world; not only because of its strategic geographical position between east and west, its history and its diverse standing monuments, but also the archaeological features of which the sources are yet far from exhausted. Seen all the movable and immovable elements together the Nokalakevi Complex stands out as an important testimony to a diverse historical and architectural development in a beautiful and characteristic landscape.

The Management Plan for Nokalakevi is developed according to international standards, and it is foreseen to also meet the requirements for World Heritage listing. But to be inscribed should never be a final goal. At best, it is only a station on the way. Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of any nation is and must be an on-going process, and it takes time, patience, knowledge, a lot of work and sufficient resources.



From Nokalakevi, there is a beautiful view towards the snow-capped Bakhmaro Mountains, up to 2800 m above sea level.

During our workshop we were visited by several television stations, and Nokalakevi got wide national publicity. Such building of awareness is important. The Cultural Heritage belongs to and concerns all; interest, support, knowledge and engagement among the general public are vital factors in the preservation of it.



Anne-Sophie Hygen and David Lomitashvili being interviewed by Georgian television. Manana Vardzelashvili to the right. Photo: Knut Helskog.

Awareness and support may also be turned into economic revenue, for the local community, the region, and the Georgian nation. Geographically, Nokalakevi is well situated with regard to tourism, seen together with the capital Tbilisi, the World Heritage Complexes Mtskheta and Svaneti, the Black Sea Coast, and other landscapes, sites and monuments attractive to tourists seeking cultural and natural experiences. With effort, care and consideration, and a decisive view towards sustainability, Nokalakevi is foreseen to become a strong asset for the Georgian nation.

