

To: UNESCO World Heritage Center,  
International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural  
Property (ICCROM),  
International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS),  
International Council of Museums (ICOM),  
International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS),  
International Association of the National Committees of the Blue Shield (IANCABS),  
European Commission Directorate for Education and Culture,  
Council of Europe Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape,  
Representative of the UN organization in Georgia,  
Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi,  
European Union Monitoring Mission to Georgia (EUMM),  
Participants of Geneva talks,  
Diplomatic Corps accredited in Georgia and other international organizations

## APPEAL

Concerning the State of Georgia's cultural heritage located on Georgia's occupied  
territory of Abkhazia

Since the past few decades a large number of outstanding monuments of Georgia's cultural heritage located on Georgia's occupied territory of Abkhazia have been seriously threatened due to inappropriate interventions or natural causes of decay.

Monuments of Christian ecclesiastic architecture, medieval ensembles, rare specimen of wall painting and ancient Georgian inscriptions - all of which bear unique artistic and historical values, have been destroyed and continue to face the threat of further damage. Monuments, sites, museum artefacts and other cultural properties of historic, artistic and cultural significance are under threat. This situation can be attested with the mission report of ICOM Russia that carried out its mission to Abkhazia in 2011 (October 31-November 5<sup>th</sup>).

According to our information, the following actions have been undertaken on monuments located on Georgia's occupied territory of Abkhazia with the rough violation of conservation principles:

1. In 2009 an inadequate and non-traditional addition - a so called "helmet like dome" was erected on the Ilori Church of St. George. Its facades and a Georgian relief inscription located on eastern wall of the church were whitewashed. Uncertain construction works are still underway on the territory of the church. (pic.#1, #2, #3)
2. Unique specimen of wall painting – a fresco depicting first king of unified Georgia – Bagrat the 3<sup>rd</sup> displayed in Bedia monastic complex of the Dormition of the Virgin (10<sup>th</sup> c.) has been destroyed. According to our latest information, a restoration project has been drafted and "restoration-stabilization" works are said to renew in the nearest future. (pic. №4, №5, №6);
3. In Dranda – a monastic complex of the Virgin (6-8<sup>th</sup> c.) in 2013 roughly violating the conservation methodology a reinforced concrete monolithic baptismal font covered with modern material has been built on top of archaeological remains of the authentic baptismal font. The church has been whitewashed, new doors and windows in non-traditional material have been installed, an earth layer surrounding the church has been removed without the supervision of archaeologists. Unidentified works are now in progress in the refectory. There is information of planned or already executed plastering and painting works in the interior of the dome of the church (pic. №7, №8, №9, №10);
4. "Restoration works" have been undertaken in the temple of St. Simon the Canaanite in New Athens, while the surrounding of the church has been excavated without professional archaeologists. Results of the "archaeological excavations" are not known to us. (pic. №11);
5. Likhne Church of the Dormition of the Virgin is home to fresco paintings from 11<sup>th</sup> and 13-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as more than 17 fresco inscriptions. Following a decree of the de-facto president of Abkhazia "restoration works" have been undertaken at the church. Unfortunately, results of the works are unknown to us. (pic. №12);
6. A single arched bridge from 12<sup>th</sup> c. is located near the town of Sokhumi, on river Besleti. A stone stela with a Georgian inscription located at the site has disappeared since the beginning of the 1990ies. According to our information, Georgian inscription on the bridge itself (a one line inscription in old Georgian alphabet - Asomtavruli on the west edge of the bridge "Christ the Lord, ...may

you glorify on earth and in heaven the almighty kind of the kings Bagrat”) presently does not exist anymore as it has been removed (pic. №13);

Unfortunately, many more cultural heritage monuments and churches are in similar situation and Georgian specialists do not have access to accurate information on the state of conservation of these sites.

Therefore, we believe, it is of utmost importance to achieve study, planning and execution of protective measures for heritage monuments located on Georgia’s occupied territories. Due to the present limitations on the occupied territory of Abkhazia, Georgian specialists do not have the opportunity to undertake the above mentioned measures. Moreover, the importance of deploying an international mission in order to monitor, study and plan and carry out measures for the protection of heritage sites on the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region is still high on the agenda in the framework of international talks.

According to the above, we ask you to:

- ❖ Cooperate with international organisations such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, BLUE SHIELD and others with the purpose of engaging international organisations working in cultural heritage field in the process of conservation and rehabilitation of Georgia’s cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region;
- ❖ Place on the agenda of Geneva talks a point regarding deployment of either a UNESCO or other international organization working mission with the participation of international experts for the purpose of the study of the state of conservation of heritage monuments on occupied territories. The initial task of the mission would be regular monitoring and reporting to the relevant international organization;
- ❖ Not to spare efforts to implement the UNESCO Hague Convention and its second protocol in order to ensure protection of Georgia’s cultural heritage on its occupied territories.

We thank you very much in advance for your support.

The appeal has been drafted in consultation with specialists. Signatures of experts, representatives of scientific and civil society as well as international organizations are placed as an annex.

Tbilisi, 24.03.2014

With greatest respect,

Shermadin Sharia

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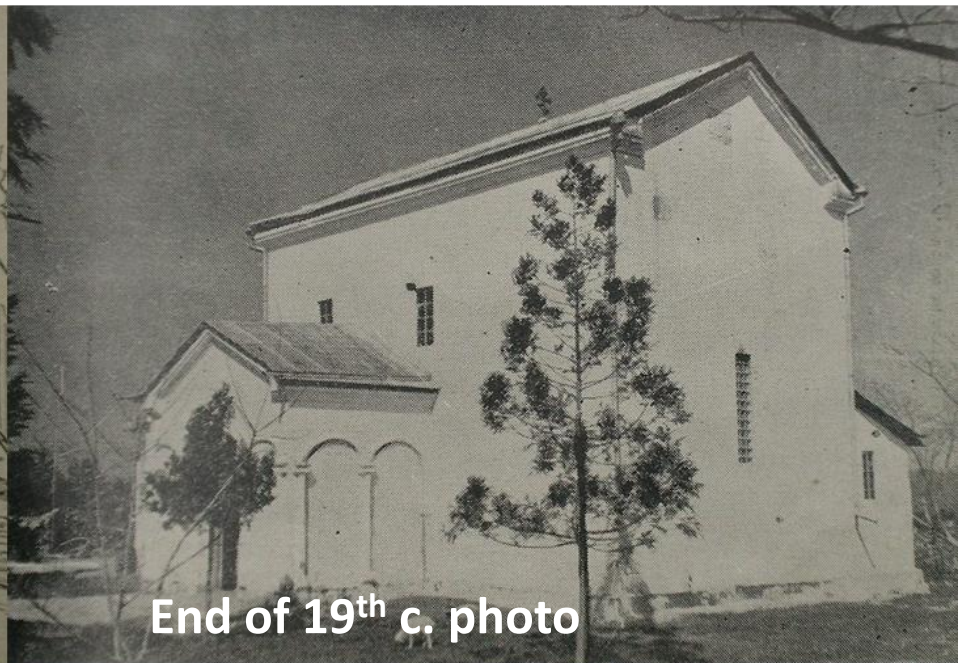
[bxorava@yahoo.com](mailto:bxorava@yahoo.com)

1

# Ilori Church, 11<sup>th</sup> century



19<sup>th</sup> century sketch



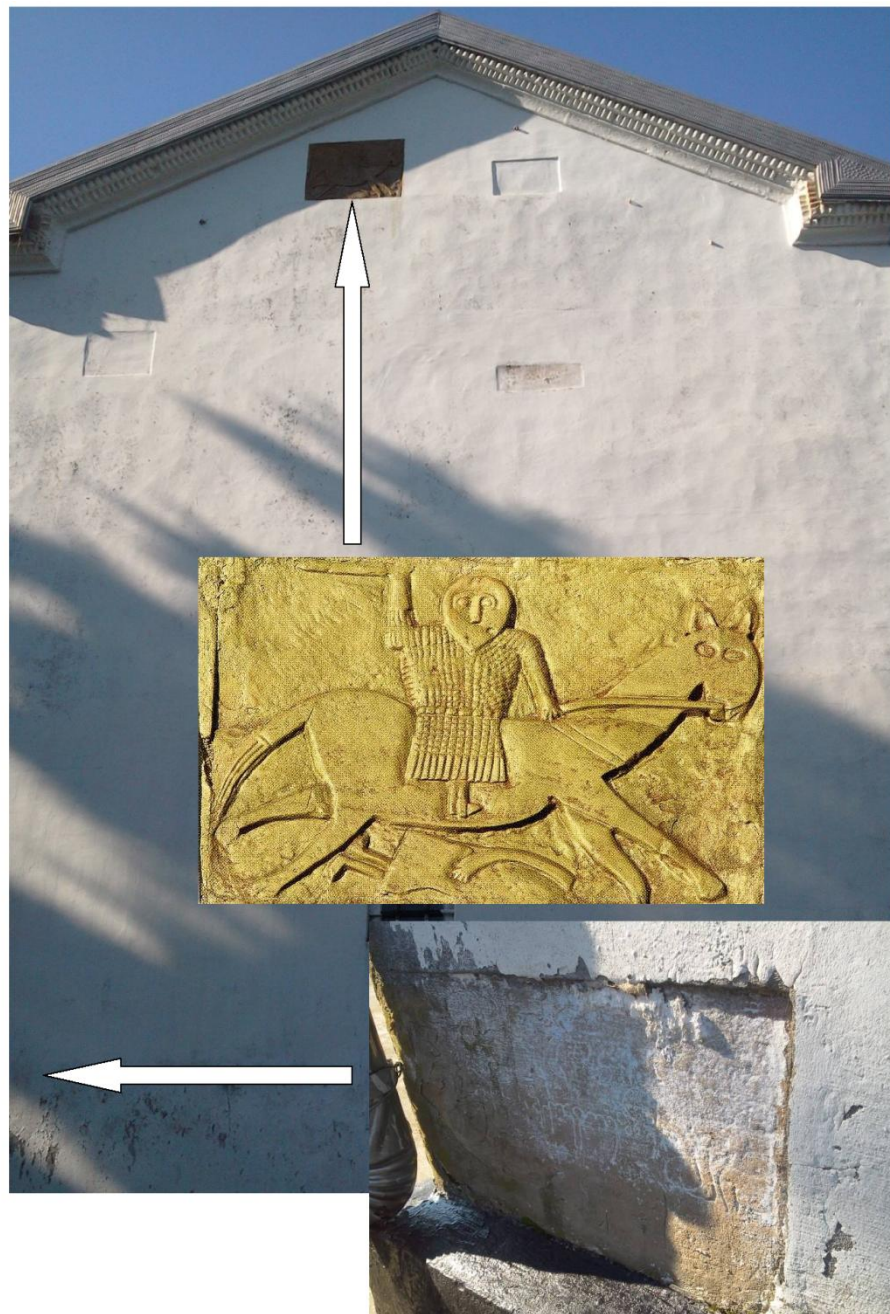
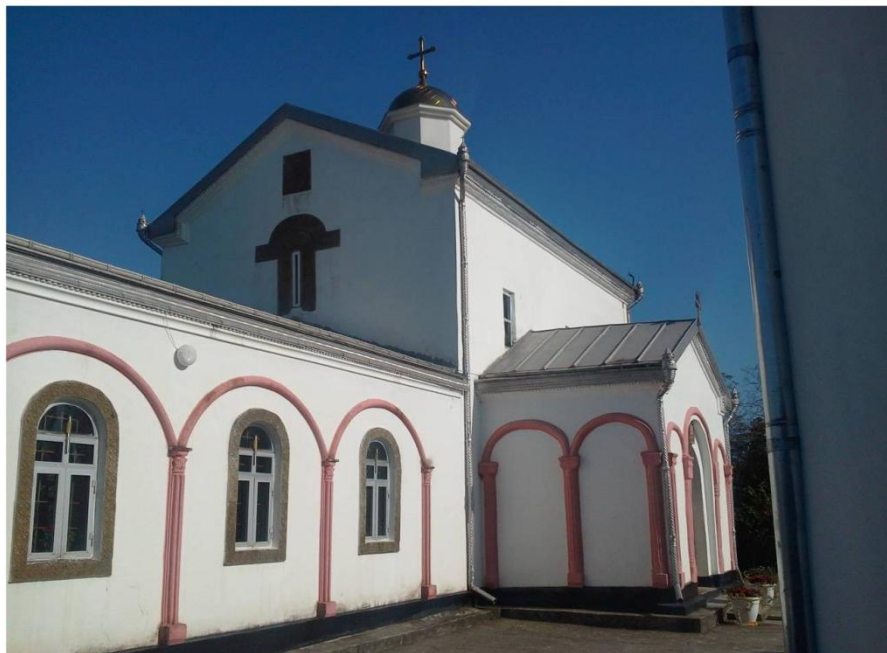
End of 19<sup>th</sup> c. photo



End of 20<sup>th</sup> c.



21<sup>st</sup> c.



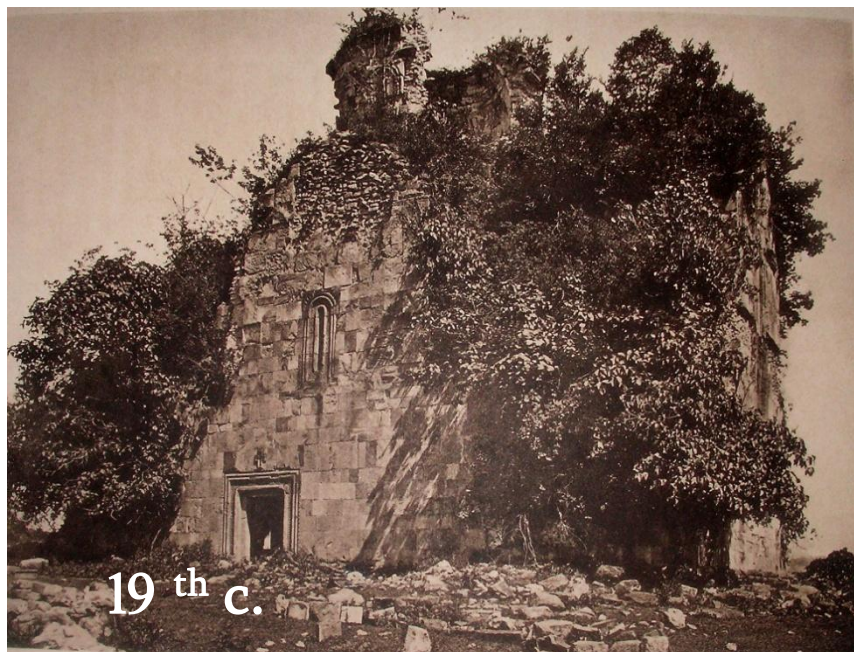
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# Surrounding of Ilori Church, 2013

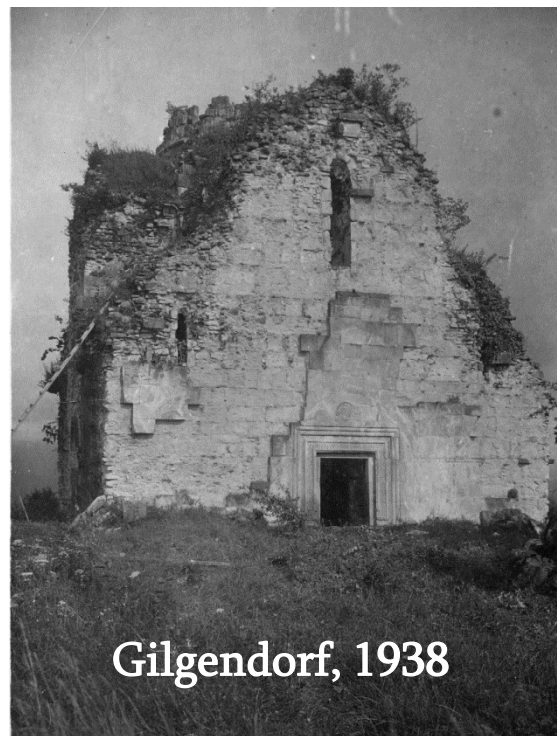


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# Bedia Church, 10<sup>th</sup> c.



19<sup>th</sup> c.



Gilgendorf, 1938



Zenko 1987

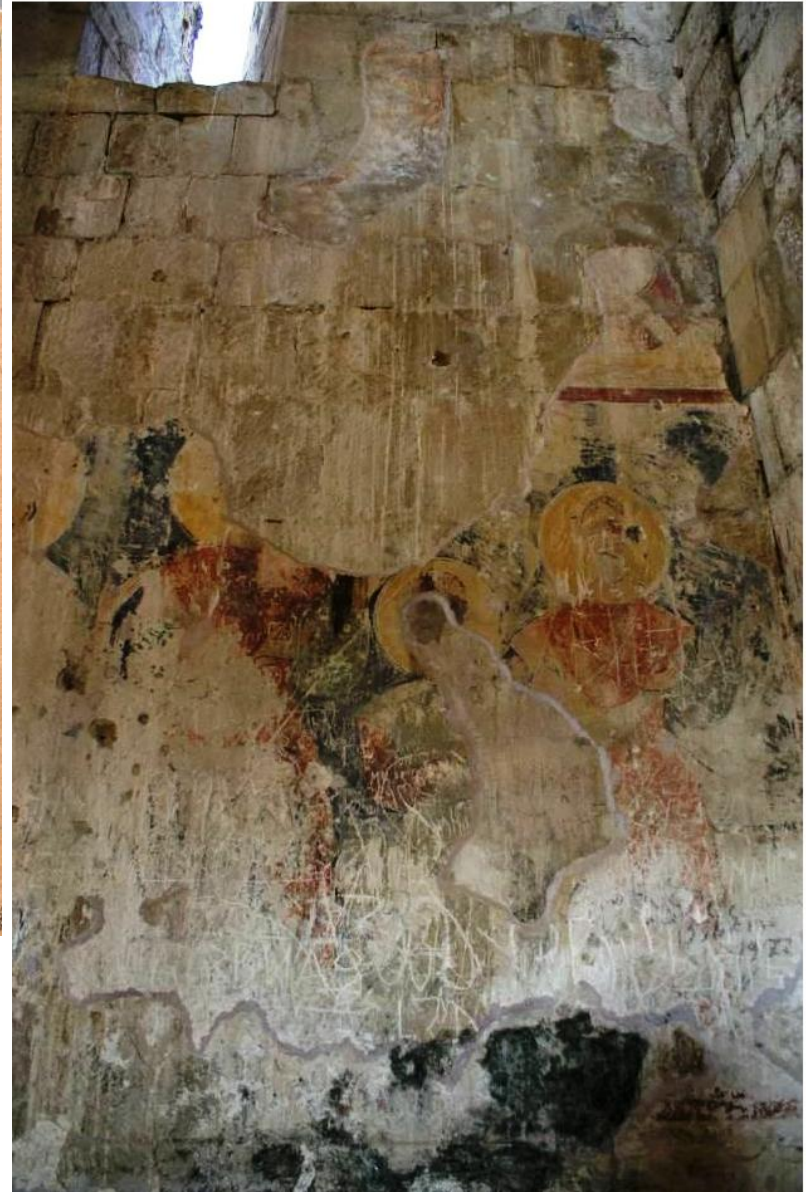


ICOM Russia report, 2011

## Depiction of Donors



Elsner (small sketch) beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> c.



ICOM Russia report, 2011



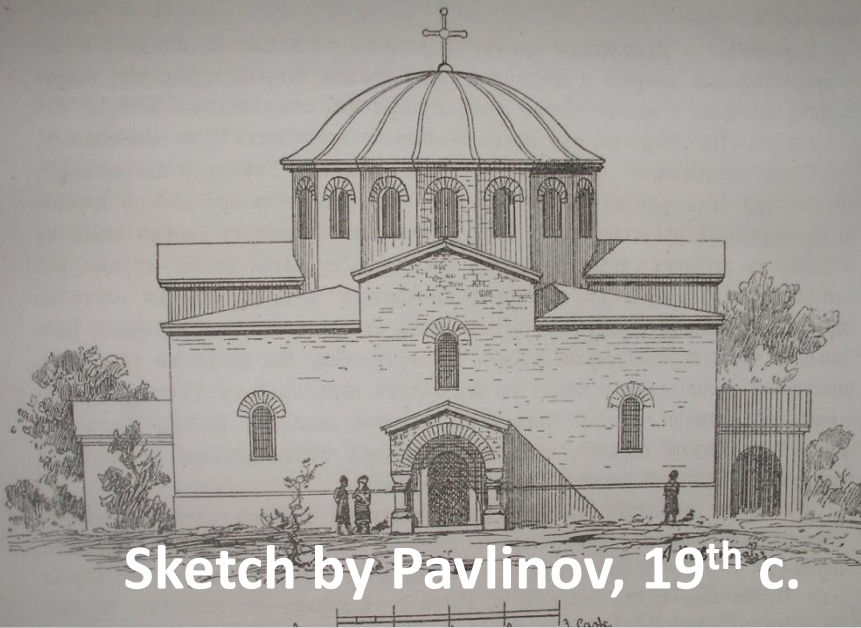
King Bagrat the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Quess Marekh, and Giorgi Dadiani, sketch by Elsner, 1910s



King Bagrat the 3<sup>rd</sup>, rewritten depiction of the donor. Natalya Tolmachevskaya 1927



# Dranda Church from 6-8<sup>th</sup> centuries



Sketch by Pavlinov, 19<sup>th</sup> c.



1860ies

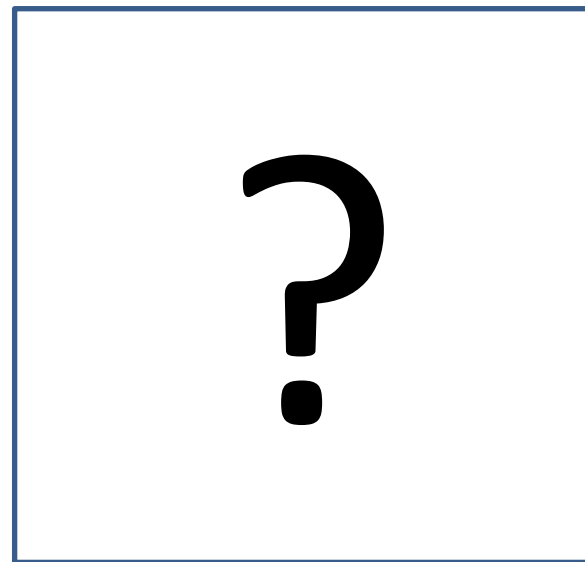


60ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.



End of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

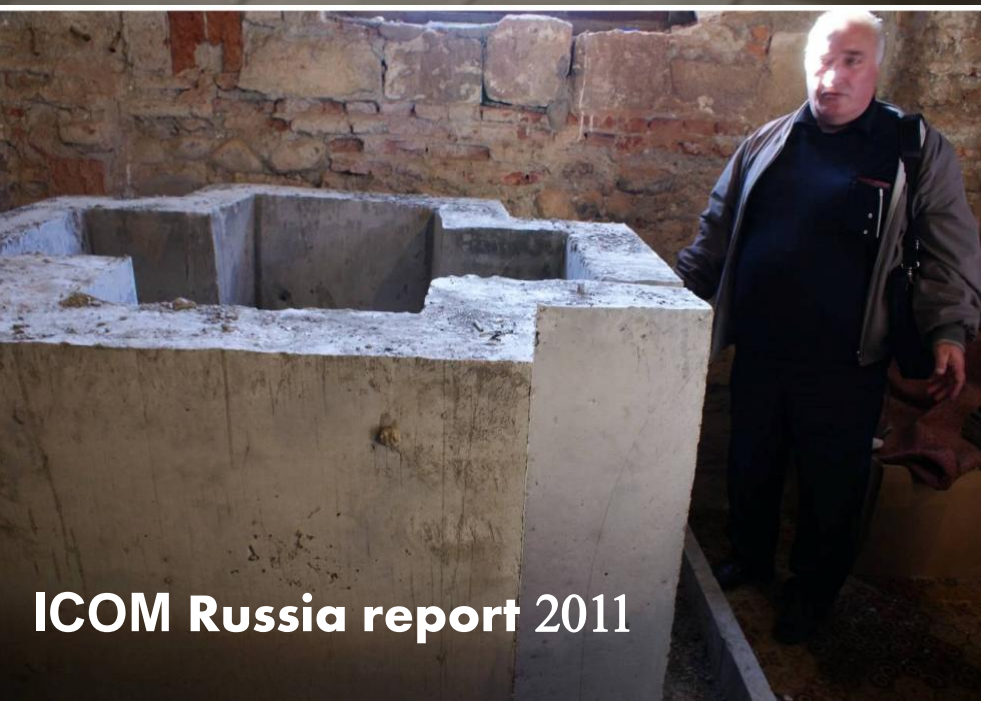
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9



Archaeological remains of 7<sup>th</sup> c.  
baptismal font, 2005



ICOM Russia report 2011



2013

VOA

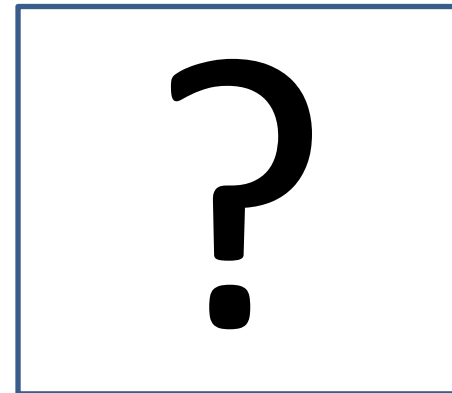
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10

Interior of the dome



2013



ICOM Russia report 2011 ѓ.

# Simon Canaanite Church, 9-10<sup>th</sup> c., New Athens

11

Beginning of 19th c.



Beginning of 20th c.



End of the 20th c.



ICOM Russia report 2011

12

## Likhne Church, 10th c.



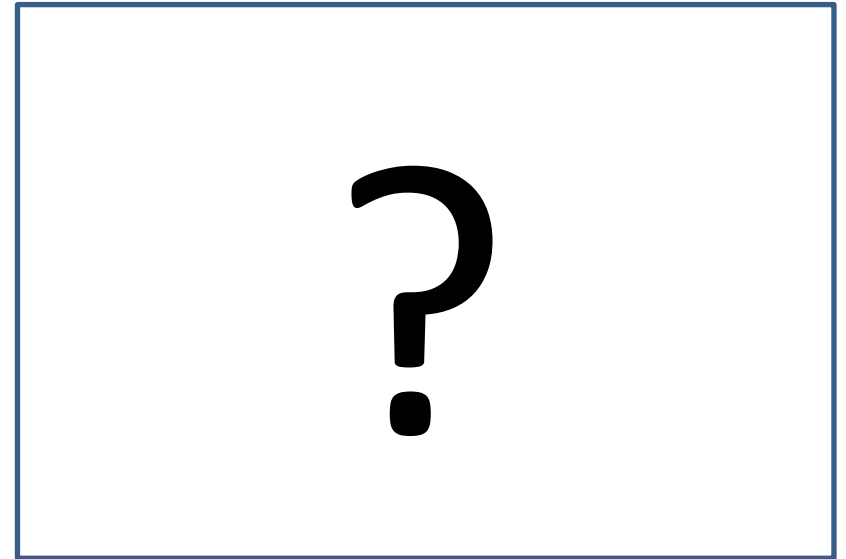
17th c. Sketch



Second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

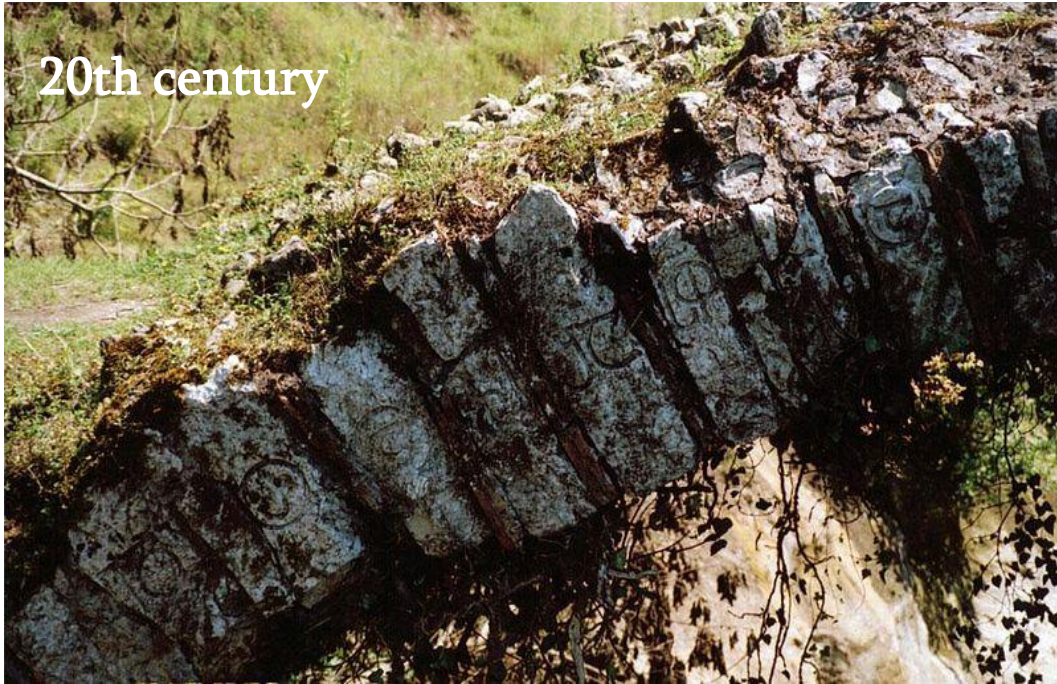


ICOM Russia report, 2011



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## Besleti Bridge, 12th c.



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