



EUROPEAN CENTRE

FOR BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE MONUMENTS

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PRESS RELEASE

Conservation study in the church of Agios Nikolaos in Mesopotamos

Following the recent visit of the Greek Minister of Culture and Sports, Ms. Lina G. Mendoni to Albania and her meeting with the Albanian counterpart Minister, Ms. Elsa Margariti, the collaboration between the two countries in matters of cultural interest has begun in the most productive way. In September 2021 the President of the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, Prof. Natalia Poulou, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania concerning the conservation of the mural decoration in the byzantine church of Agios Nikolaos in Mesopotamos.

The church is, in fact, the catholicon of a monastery dating back to the 13th Century and constitutes an exquisite example of the architectural style of Epirus' Despotato, evolved during the late byzantine years around the city of Arta. Inside the church one can still find fragments of mural decoration, as well as significant marble elements and marble slabs in the floor.

The monument has been recently restored by the Ministry of Culture of Albania. What remains to be done is the conservation of the murals, the marble floors, and the marble elements, which will be carried out by the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments (EKBMM) and funded by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports.

From the 12th to the 15th of July 2022, a staff of experts and scientists, led by the director of EKBMM, Dr. Flora Karagianni along with Ms. Sarrigiannidou Chara, archeologist, as well as a number of conservators employed by the Directorate of Conservation of Ancient and Modern Monuments of the Greek Ministry of Culture (Dr. Ekaterini – Zoi Ftikou, Panos Aggelides and Alexandros Lekkas), under the coordination of the head of their department and alternate member of the Board of Directors of EKBMM, Ms. Maria Mertzani, already visited the monument.

After receiving the necessary authorization by the Albanian authorities, the staff was transported to the site, in order to document and research the current state of the monument - the conservation, the pathology and the technology of its decoration. The data collected will promptly contribute to the study for the conservation of the decorative elements of the temple.

The study, after being completed, will be submitted for approval by the Ministry of Culture of Albania. Following the respective approval, the conservation project will be conducted by the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments with the expenses of the Greek ministry of Culture.

Throughout each step of organizing and planning this project, the support and contribution of the Greek Embassy in Tirana have been of great significance.