

A photograph of a steep, rocky cliff face. The cliff is composed of layered rock formations in shades of brown, tan, and grey. At the base of the cliff, there is a dirt path with some green vegetation. A person is walking on the path, moving away from the viewer. The background shows a valley with green hills and a clear sky.

Samshvilde

The University of Georgia

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"Samshvilde" – the project of the University of Georgia

Preamble

Project "Samshvilde" was initiated at the School of Humanitarian Sciences of the University of Georgia in 2012. The aim of the project was archaeological, historic and art research of this unique former settlement. Samshvilde archaeological expedition was established under the University the same year and was made of the faculty and the invited specialists of the University.

Former settlement of Samshvilde has the status of museum-reserve currently and is under the patronage of the state. Therefore, before starting active research works in 2013 a Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the University of Georgia and the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation which implies partnership and coordinated work in scientific researches of the former settlement of Samshvilde together with various directions. The Memorandum was signed in the conference hall of the University of Georgia, ceremoniously, by the President of the University, Professor M. Sanadze and the Director of the Agency at that time, Mr. M. Bochoidze.

Cooperation stipulated by the Memorandum between the University of Georgia and the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation continues successfully until now.

General context

Former settlement of Samshvilde is located in the historic Kvemo Kartli, at the distance of 2 km from village Samshvilde and represents a monument containing many cultural layers (pic. 1). Chronological range of the former settlement is wide and covers the period from the pre-Christian era through the late medieval period. Despite this fact, stationary archaeological excavations of Samshvilde which would make clear its stratigraphy, define the chronology more exactly and reveal the new archaeological materials, have not been conducted yet. Among the researches conducted in various periods the works carried out by the academician L. Chilashvili in 1968-69 should be mentioned when he conducted minor excavation works on the citadel and Sioni section; excavations carried out by the archaeologist G. Mirtskhulava when the former settlement of earlier stage of the Kura-Araxes Culture and a burial mound near Samshvilde Cape, to the north of Chivchava river were studied in 1968-70. Also, reconnaissance works performed by archaeologist N. Bakhtadze in the cave complexes developed in the river Khrami valley. Art researches of Samshvilde Sioni carried out by the 1930s by the art historian N. Chubinashvili were important. Works on the former settlement of Samshvilde were performed in various periods by Ts. Gabashvili, G. Japaridze, R. Gverdtseteli, T. Gabunia, G. Gagoshidze etc. but as mentioned above, they were not systematic and were not carried out within the framework of the unified plan.

This most important component was considered during processing of the theoretical part of the project "Samshvilde" of the University of Georgia. In particular, all kinds of researches – field-archaeological, art of paleographic, as well as lab and office researches are carried out within the framework of the unified plan so that the obtained results are most effective, informative and easily available for all interested persons. Therefore, researchers and specialists of wide scientific spectrum are engaged in Samshvilde archaeological expedition today and they work on the monument as well as in scientific institutions in a coordinated manner.

Samshvilde archaeological expedition

As it was mentioned in the preamble, Samshvilde archaeological expedition consists of the faculty and invited specialists of the University of Georgia which make up the main scientific core:

David Berikashvili – Professor, archaeologist. Head of Samshvilde archaeological expedition of the University of Georgia.

Manana Sanadze – Professor, President of the University of Georgia. Historic and source studies direction of the expedition.

Sergo Tsiramua – Professor of the School of Informatics, Engineering and Mathematics of the University of Georgia. IT Head of Samshvilde archaeological expedition.

Guram Grigolia – Scientific consultant-archaeologist of the expedition. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

David Odilavadze – Doctor of Physical Sciences, scientific researcher of M. Nodia Institute of Geophysics. Geophysical direction of Samshvilde archaeological expedition.

Irakli Ivanishvili, Vakhtang Lomidze – Topographic and cartographic direction of Samshvilde archaeological expedition.

Giorgi Gagoshidze – Director for Art Studies. Art research direction of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.

Tengiz Gabunia – Architect-restorer. Restoration direction of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.

Maia Bukhsianidze – Doctor of sciences, paleontologist. Osteological surveys of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. National Museum of Georgia.

Liana Bitadze – Doctor of sciences, anthropologist. Anthropological direction of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. Institute of History of Ethnology of TSU.

Nino Kebuladze – Doctor of History, restorer. Restoration-office works of archaeological discoveries of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. National Museum of Georgia.

Eliso Kvavadze – Doctor of geology-mineralogy sciences, palynologist. Palynological surveys of Samshvilde archaeological expedition. National Museum of Georgia.

Besides, the University students of various years majoring in archaeology, history and art studies play a significant role in the field and lab surveys of the expedition and participation in the above surveys is a mandatory practice for them. Student engagement in the surveys of the historic former settlement of Samshvilde represents one of the main, priority directions of the University of Georgia (pic. 2,3).

Archaeological and geophysical surveys

Samshvilde archaeological expedition of the University of Georgia carries out archaeological works of the former settlement of Samshvilde. The expedition carries out the works in accordance with the unified plan and preliminarily developed strategy which implies establishment of the stratigraphic picture of the former settlement citadel and Sioni section. Three trenches were opened in the former settlement citadel (pic. 4) and two trenches were opened on Sioni section (pic.5) in 2015-2016 and the material obtained there mainly belongs to the developed centuries. The earlier materials are not found at this stage. It is noteworthy that during the field works archaeological excavations are carried out in full compliance with the technique and methodology approved in Europe and the US. In particular, the description of the revealed archaeological

context, accounting of the small discoveries, fixation of immovable objects etc. are performed separately. These trenches are covered by a protective layer after each field season.

In parallel to excavations, geoarcheolocational surveys are systematically performed which allows to find significant information in advance. Geophysical surveys conducted by the group of geophysicists in 2015 were actually entirely confirmed by archaeological surveys of 2016.

Protection and availability of movable archaeological objects

The artifacts discovered by Samshvilde archaeological expedition of the University of Georgia during the field works are saved in the "Archaeological Museum of the University of Georgia" after completion of the respective restoration-office works. This museum was founded in 2015 on the basis of the Decree of the Minister of Culture of Georgia No. 05/08-2598 and represents the main depository of materials obtained by Samshvilde archaeological expedition. Currently, several thousand units of things are registered in the Museum depositories, while some of them are exhibited in the exhibition space (pic. 6). It should be mentioned that the exhibition concept, exposition and design of the University Museum were entirely developed by the University students. The same students hold temporary and permanent exhibitions too, which is very important for their formation as professionals.

In addition, the University of Georgia actively cooperates with the National Museum of Georgia which represents not only the main treasure depository throughout the country but also is one of the most successful and experienced institution in the museum field.

Restoration-conservation of immovable objects

One more important direction of the project "Samshvilde" is the restoration-conservation of immovable objects of cultural heritage in the former settlement. Accordingly, the restoration-conservation group of Samshvilde archaeological expedition works in this specific direction. It must be underlined that in parallel to planning all types of field work, the restoration-conservation projects is developed from the beginning which excludes the possibility of leaving the newly discovered objects under the sky, without respective measures.

As a result of such type of coordinated work, full, comprehensive study of Samshvilde St. George Church and „Palati" Church was successfully conducted with joint efforts of the University of Georgia, National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and the Fund for Protection and Salvation of Antiquities of Georgia. Archaeological excavations of both monuments, office processing of the obtained material and publication of scientific results were funded and performed by the University of Georgia. In parallel, paleographic study of both churches was conducted and restoration projects were processed at the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation. In autumn 2014 the Fund for Protection and Salvation of Antiquities of Georgia carried out full restoration of Samshvilde St. George Church (pic. 7,8,9) and „Palati" Church (pic. 10,11,12).

The above cooperation is a vivid example of coordinated work of the higher educational institution, on the one hand and state and private organizations, on the other hand.

IT and GIS directions of the project

For popularization of scientific results of Samshvilde former settlement researches and their integration into the modern digital information database, a mobile application of Samshvilde former settlement was created by the IT and GIS group of the expedition placed on the website www.trsvvelgis.ge (pic.13). The above product represents a free, renewable application where all interested persons can review the photo and text material of the archaeological expedition as well as the main monuments of the former settlement and the adjacent area.

Also, a webpage www.samshilde.ge (pic. 14) was created by IT Master students of the University of Georgia which represents the main information portal of Samshvilde Archaeological Expedition and is integrated with the main webpage of the University - www.ug.edu.ge (pic.15)

Main purposes and action strategy of the project

As it was mentioned in the preamble, "Samshvilde" represents a mega project of the University of Georgia and its main purpose is to study this former settlement in accordance with the modern standards and newest technologies. To achieve this goal, the action strategy of the archaeological expedition of the University covers the following:

- Close and coordinated cooperation with National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation, various scientific-educational institutions and private sector.
- Close cooperation with foreign academic-educational organizations for the purpose of use of their intellectual resources and more popularization of scientific results of the researches.
- Direct and active engagement of Master program students of the University of Georgia and the youth in general in scientific researches of Samshvilde.
- popularization of obtained scientific results using academic printing and modern digital technologies
- restoration, inventory and exhibition of discovered archeological artifacts in the exhibition area
- Conservation- restoration of immovable archaeological or architectural objects using modern technologies and traditional material.

We think that only by such approach it is possible to successfully carry out the research project of large scale historic former settlement initiated, developed and funded by the University of Georgia for the first time in our reality.

Description of pictures:

1. General view of Samshvilde former settlement
2. Students of the University of Georgia during archaeological works in Samshvilde Citadel
3. Students of the University of Georgia on Samshvilde archaeological field
4. Samshvilde Citadel
5. Sioni District
6. Exposition of University of Georgia Archaeological Museum
7. Samshvilde St. George Church in 2013
8. Samshvilde St. George Church. Design drawing
9. St. George Church after completion of archaeological and restoration works in 2014
10. Samshvilde "Palati" Church in 2013
11. Samshvilde "Palati" Church. Design drawing
12. "Palati" Church after completion of archaeological and restoration works in 2014
13. Official webpage of Travel-Gis
14. Official webpage of Samshvilde archaeological expedition.
15. Official webpage of the University of Georgia.

სურ. 1 Pic.



სურ. 2 Pic





სურ. 3 Pic.



სურ.4. Pic.



სურ. 5. Pic



სურ. 6 Pic.

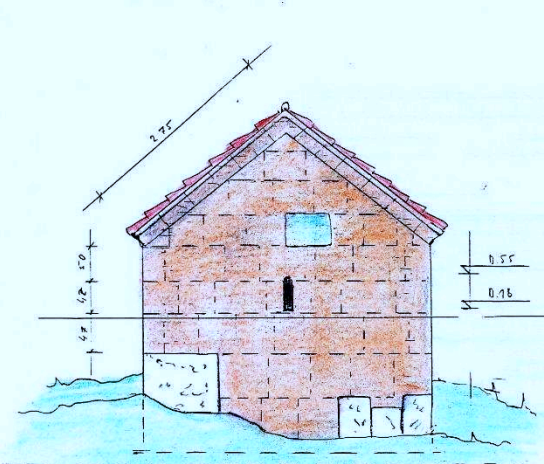
სურ. 7 Pic.



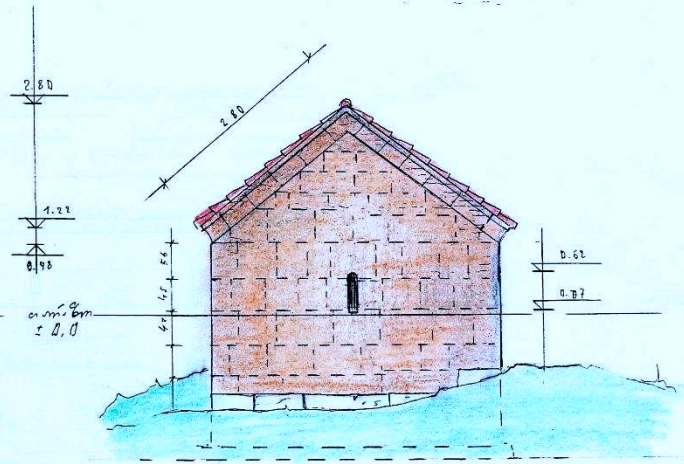
სამშვილდის წმ. გიორგის ეკლესია
საპროექტო ნახაზი. არქიტექტურული თ. გაბუნია

სურ. 8 Pic.

აღმოსავლეთ ფასადი



დასავლეთ ფასადი



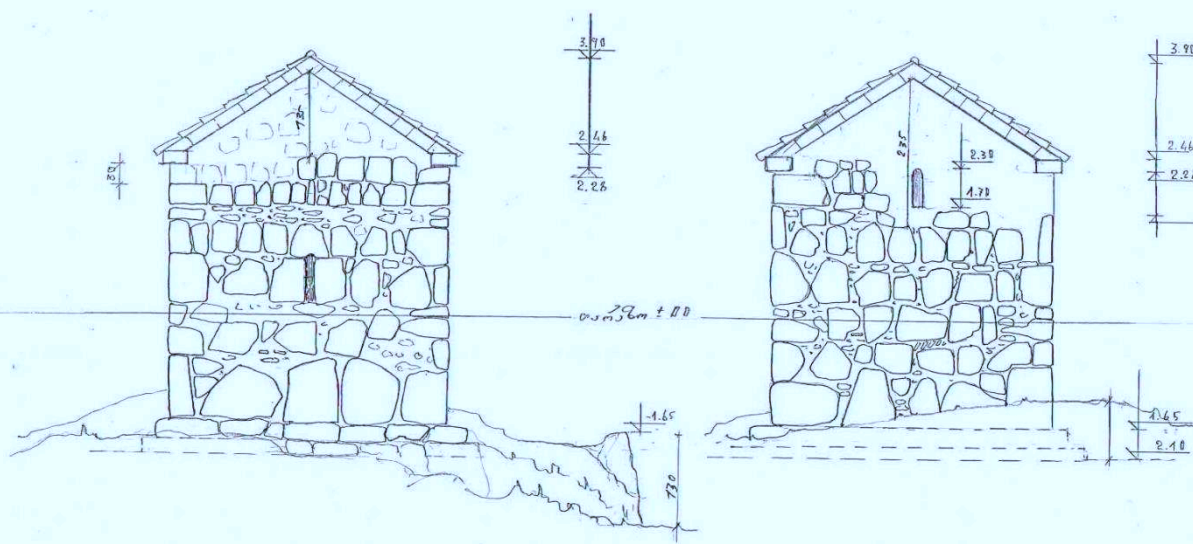
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სურ. 9 Pic.



სურ. 10 Pic





აღმოსაველით ფასადი

დასაველით ფასადი



სურ. 12 Pic.

