

Lesново Monastery, Konak I and Konak II Buildings

Country or territory:
"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC
OF MACEDONIA"

Name of organisation
compiling the information:
Institute for the Protection of the Cultural
Monuments of the Rep. of Macedonia,
Skopje

Contact name:
Julija Trichkovska, M.A.
Marula Nikolovska, Ph.D.

Email address:
rzsindok@mt.net.mk



<u>Name and address of building(s) or site:</u>	LESNOVO MONASTERY, KONAK I AND KONAK II BUILDINGS, near the village of Lesново, Zletovo region.
<u>Inventory reference number(s):</u>	4-281-021/003 R-ND
<u>Building type(s):</u>	Architectural ensemble, economic and residential buildings
<u>Main date(s):</u>	Second half of the 19 th century; church from the 14 th century
<u>Current use(s):</u>	Monastery with a monk community
<u>Significance:</u>	

The Lesново Monastery, a very famous Medieval literary centre, was founded by the hermit Gabriel of Lesново in the 11th century. The monastery's church, constructed in 1341, is dedicated to the Archangel Gabriel. The founder of this temple, a representative of the Serbian aristocracy, the despotic Jovan Oliver, was the master of the region of Ovche Pole and Lesново.

A narthex with a dome was built on the western side of the church in 1349. In the 17th century, monks cells and the monastery's refectory were built around the church. An inscription confirms that the fresco paintings of the nave were executed in 1347-48. Among the most significant paintings are the portrait of Jovan Oliver with the model of the church in his hands, in the company of his wife Oliverina, the portraits of the king Dushan and his wife Elena, and numerous portraits of Zletovo's bishops. The figure of the hermit, St. Gabriel of Lesново, the patron of the church, is the dominant feature of the southern wall, near the altar. The scenes of the Psalms of David, very rare in the iconography of our Medieval churches, are depicted in the narthex of the church. The carved iconostasis, sculpted between 1811 and 1814, is counted among the masterpieces of the school of Peter Philipovich-Garkata, active in the Balkan region during the first half of the 19th century.

Dwellings were built around the church in the 19th century. These buildings are rather traditional than monumental in style. They are two-storey buildings with the *chardak*, a platform on the second floor, and a wooden balcony opened onto the monastery yard. The

bell tower is the most monumental structure of the ensemble. It was built of blocks of stone, and of wood in the upper part. The commercial building is partially preserved only the northern wing remains. The modest architecture of this building corresponds to its original function. The bell tower, the dwelling, and the commercial building (on the eastern part of the monastery complex) are the only ones recently restored. The works were carried out in the 1990s. In the 19th century, a monastic school, now completely ruined, was built on the eastern part of the monastery.

Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance

Because of the remarkable architecture, the wall paintings of the church and of the wood carved iconostasis, dating back to the 14th century, as well as of the dwellings from the 19th century, this monastic complex is a representative ensemble of the famous traditional art of Orthodox monasteries in the Balkans.

Categories of ownership or interest:

As an active monastery since 1991, this ensemble is of utmost importance to the Orthodox community. As a cultural heritage ensemble, the monastery is listed in the first category of cultural monuments of outstanding national importance. It is protected by the new Law on protection of cultural heritages, adopted in 2003.

Documentation and bibliographic references:

Documentation

Architectural documentation of the current condition (north-east part) of the house, named Konak I, and of the commercial building (on the eastern part of the church), named Konak II. The Conservation Project for Konak I and Konak II was undertaken in 2002 by the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments of the Rep. of Macedonia. The project is in progress.

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Condition:

Very bad: complete structural failure, deformation of the supporting pillars. Large parts of the wooden construction between the first and the second floor, and the roof tiles are severely damaged. There are serious damages to the interior of the dwelling and of the commercial building: demolished wooden ceilings and floors. Other architectural elements made of wood, such as doors, window frames, staircases and staircase fences are in the process of decay. There is also a number of inappropriate interventions on the buildings, such as the construction of reinforced concrete panels, intended to strengthen the seriously damaged parts of the construction system.

Good: projects for the conservation of the church, the dwelling (the north-western part), the bell tower and the monastery walls (on the western and southern side of the church), were executed in the 1980s and 1990s. The present condition of these structures is good.

Risk:

The extremely bad condition of the two buildings (Konak I and Konak II) calls for immediate conservation measures.

Condition Risk:

Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration and loss of materials in the case of Konak I and Konak II.

Technical assessment and costing:

The conservation project is still in progress. The technical assessment has not been completed yet.

Ownership:

The house and the commercial building, as a part of the monastery complex, are owned by the Macedonian Orthodox Church, i.e. the monastic community.

Occupation:

Currently, due to their extremely bad condition, the two buildings are not in use.

Management:

The monastic community is managing the entire monastery complex but, in case funds were made available, the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Macedonia would undertake and manage the conservation activities.

Summary:

Even though the buildings, proposed for the inclusion in the Prioritised Intervention List, are not among the most impressive of their type, they are, nevertheless an integral part of one of the most important monasteries in the Eastern part of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The 14th century frescoes are considered as a remarkable accomplishment of the Byzantine art.

Considering the value of the ensemble, taking into account interventions already completed on the other structures of the monastery complex, the continuity of the protection measures and the adequate presentation of its components, the potential priority level for intervention is *high*.

Sign. and date:

Julija Trichkovska, M.A. and Marula Nikolovska, PhD.
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