

## The Monastery of Saint Nicolas

Country or territory:  
ALBANIA

Name of organisation  
compiling the information:  
Institute of Monuments of Culture

Contact name:  
prof. Gjerak Karaiskaj

email address:  
imk@albmail.com



Name and address of building(s) or site: THE MONASTERY OF SAINT NICOLAS,  
Saranda

Inventory reference number(s): 365

Building type(s): Architectural ensemble, monastery

Main date(s): 6<sup>th</sup>, 11-13<sup>th</sup> century

Current use(s): religious

### Significance:

The monastery of Saint Nicolas in Mesopotam is the largest on the Albanian territory. The main characteristic of the monastery, is its distinctive defense features. The fortified wall surrounding the monastery includes rectangular towers. The monastery is mentioned in historical sources starting from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The architectural style of the church and the surrounding walls seem to confirm that the ensemble dates back to the 11-13<sup>th</sup> century.

Being located near the National Park of Butrinti, a very important archaeological site, famous for its archaeological remains and environmental beauty, inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO, the monastery could attract numerous visitors .

### Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance

### Categories of ownership or interest:

The church is of particular interest to the Orthodox religious community since it is occasionally used for religious celebrations, according to the agreement with the Local Directorate of Monuments.

### Documentation and bibliographic references:

Full documentation is available in the archives of Institute of Monuments of Culture.

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Condition:

Poor: The structural condition of the surrounding walls on the south and east sides is deteriorated. There are cracks on the exterior side. Partial rescue works have been undertaken on the east side but there is an urgent need for interventions for all parts of the wall and the towers, in particular to reduce the pressure of the fillings from the archaeological excavation. There is also a need to conduct a geophysical study or to use any other method to define the situation of the underground architectural remains. Then, consolidation works of the ruins, walls and towers, conservation of artworks, which might be found, such as mosaics or frescoes, should be undertaken.

Risk:

Risk is related to bad state of conservation and lack of funds.

Condition risk:

Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration, solution partially implemented.

Technical assessments and costing:

There is need for preparing a restoration project. The estimate cost for the preparation amounts to approximately 30 000 EUR, and the implementation cost: the evaluation of which is approximately 200 000 EUR.

Ownership:

The monastery is State property until the Law on ownership is drawn up and implemented in Albania. The Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania collaborates with the Institute of Monuments for maintenance works, since the ensemble is under the protection of the Institute of Monuments of Culture

Occupation:

The church is used only for Liturgy celebrations during religious festivities.

Management:

The Institute of Monuments of Culture through the Local Directorate of Monuments of Saranda, is responsible for management, administration of funds and supervision of restoration works.

Summary:

The monastery of Saint Nicolas is the largest on the Albanian territory. The main characteristic of the monastery is its distinctive defense features. Since the monastery is located near the World Heritage site of Butrinti, the monastery could attract numerous visitors already visiting this area. Conservation works are needed to stabilize the surrounding walls on the south and east sides and there is need to protect the archaeological remains. The priority level for intervention is *high*.

Sign. and date:

prof. Gjerak Karaiskaj  
10.03.2004.