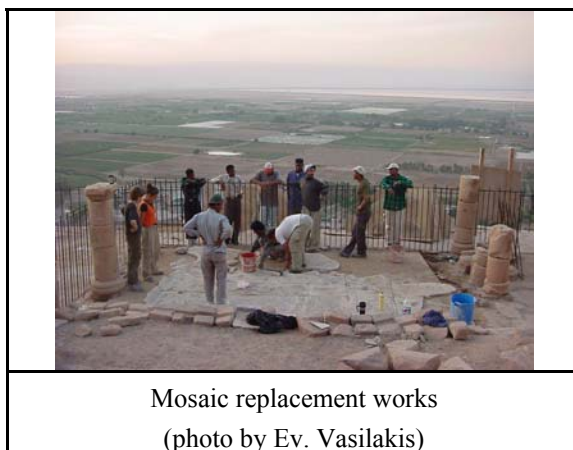


Latest report (December 2002) by Stephania Chlouveraki

The conservation project for the mosaic pavements at the basilica of Agios Lot in Jordan was conducted from February to April 2002. They were directed by the author and the director of excavations, Konstantinos Politis, The project was funded for the third consecutive year by the Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments (EKBMM) in collaboration with HSNES and with the permission of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan.

A. The Replacement of the Nave Mosaic

Work to replace the Nave mosaic was begun on 3 February and completed by the end of March. The foundations for the basilica had already been replaced to the desirable level. The new bedding was laid similar to the old, taking into consideration the stratigraphy, particularly of the first layer. At the same time the sections of the mosaic that were stabilised with new mortar and assembled as a puzzle on the floor of the workroom, were now fully conserved. During this preparatory phase the joins fit together well, indicating that the replacing the mosaic back on site would not be very problematic.



Aside from the pavement belonging to the nave of the church, sections of the earlier mosaic that were only preserved under the ambo and immediately to the north, were also reassembled. These sections do not need to be replaced on site as the ambo and the later-period mosaic concealed them.

B. The Replacement of Sections of the Chancel Mosaic

Small sections of the Chancel mosaic were removed in 1996 in order to protect them from damage until the protective shelter was erected. These section had become detached from the pavement and had sunk to a lower level resulting in a deterioration of their bedding and mosaic cubes. Aside from the detached sections, some were found upside down in the course of excavations in the chancel area. These sections were worked on by Valerie Munday (British Museum) in 1996 and determined that they probably belong to a depiction of second lamb opposite the one in situ on chancel mosaic.

C. The Area A.V Mosaic

The mosaic in Area A.V was discovered in February 2000 and excavated over a course of two seasons (2000 and 2001). This pavement which was found collapsed and destroyed on the south side outside the basilica, was probably adorned the main entrance to the church. About 900 sections were recovered and consolidated with gauze and soft lime mortar and have been taken to the workroom. Many of the sections that were found during the first season, were cleaned and inspected for possible joins between them. In spite of the difficult field conditions, enough large sections were recovered to make it possible to determine the depictions as well as the inscription on the mosaic. Along with the physical inspection of the sections, digital photography of all the pieces enabled an assembly on the computer to determine the design. Following digital and traditional photography, the sections were laid out on sand in a 30-metre square area in order to facilitate finding more joins and study the general design.

On 4 April a formal presentation was made of the work by the Greek team at the Basilica of Agios Lot. This was organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan and the Greek Embassy in Amman in the King Hussein Cultural Centre at Amman. Konstantinos Politis and Stefania Chlouveraki made video and CD-Rom presentations about the project's work. Comments were also made by H.E. Dr Taleb al-Rifai, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan, H.E. Mt Constantin Karabetsis, Ambassador of Greece in Amman and Professor Giorgios Lavvas, representative of the European Center for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments. The event was also in the presence of His Holiness Venedictos Bishop of Philadelphia, Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director-General of Antiquities and other members of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, and the staff of the Greek Embassy as well as the Ambassadors of Spain, Italy, Canada, India and other countries.

On 6 April the Basilica of Lot was blessed in order to celebrate the replacement of the Nave mosaic 8 years after its removal from site. His Holiness Venedictos Bishop of Philadelphia made the blessing along with other members of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jordan. The ceremony was also attended by the Director-General of Antiquities, the Undersecretary-General of Tourism, the Vatican Representative, the staff of the Greek Embassy in Amman, Professor Lavvas, representative of EKBMM, Dr Yiannis Meimaris (Hellenic Research Foundation), Professor Michele Piccirillo, local politicians and the staff of the Basilica of Lot Project.



The Blessing (photo by Ev. Vasilakis)

