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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Topic 1: Characterization of historic mortars and masonry structures. Sampling and test methods
Imperial Styles, Frontier Solutions: Roman Wall painting technology in the Province of Noricum
Anthony J. Baragona, Pavla Bauerová and Alexandra S. Rodler
A discussion on service life prediction methodologies for external mortar cladding in
historic buildings
Eudes Rocha and Arnaldo Carneiro
Study of first cements of boulogne-sur-mer used in anhistoric aqueduct from the XIXTH century
Marwa Jebbawy, Vincent Thiery, Myriam Bouichou, Elisabeth Marie-Victoire, Catherine Davy,Laurent Izoret, Cyrille Albert-Mercier and Myriam Moreau
Characteristics of Byzantine period lime mortars and plasters from Anaia church (Kadikalesi)
Tuğçe Işık and Elif Uğurlu Sağın
The Decorative Plastered Relief in the Baroque Villa of the Argotti Botanic Gardens, Floriana, Malta: Characterisation of Original Materials and Techniques
Stephanie Parisi, Gianni Miani and Chiara Pasian
Plaster characteristics of Byzantine wall paintings in Western Anatolia
Kerem Şerifaki and Hasan Böke
Decomposition temperature of calcium carbonate in lime binders aged at elevated
carbon dioxide concentration monitored by TGA/MS analysis
Dita Frankeová, Jan Válek and Zuzana Slížková
Czech Mosaic Pioneer Viktor Foerster and the Mortars of His Mosaics
Pavla Bauerová, Magdalena Kracík Štorkánová, Dita Frankeová, Zuzana Slížková and MartinKeppert
A study on historic mortars for restorative applications in persepolis world heritage site: curing in site vs laboratory
Parsa Pahlavan, Stefania Manzi and Maria Chiara Bignozzi
Making ancient mortars hydraulic. How composition influences type and crystallinity of reaction products
Simone Dilaria, Michele Secco, Jacopo Bonetto, Giulia Ricci, Gilberto Artioli
Physico-chemical characterization of historic mortars from the Venetian Arsenals of
Chania (Greece) Pagona-Noni Maravelaki, Kali Kapetanaki, Anastastis Kaditis and Themis Krasoudaki
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walls of ancient buildings Ana Isabel Marques, Maria do Rosário Veiga, António Santos Silva, João Gomes, Ferreira and Paulo Xavier Candeias
Paulo Xavier Candeias
Mineral, chemical and petrografic characterization of hydraulic mortars & chronological building correlation of the Baths of Porta Marina in Ostia Antica (Italy)
Sarah Boularand, Marcello Turci and Philippe Bromblet
Characterization of lime mortar and plasters of the fortress of concepcion de La Vega,
first mining town in America
Esteban Prieto-Vicioso, Virginia Flores-Sasso, Sagrario Martinez-Ramirez, Letzai Ruiz-Valero, Gloria Perez
Characterization of Natural cement in the buildings of the beginning of 20th century in Portugal: Casa Barbot
Hamid Maljaee, Rosário Veiga, António Santos Silva and Ana Velosa
Characterization of old mortars for the formulation of replacement mortars
Isabel Torres, Gina Matias and Nilce Pinho
Characterization of "Terranova" render samples as a contribution to XX Century heritage conservation
Cesare Pizzigatti and Elisa Franzoni
Pre-screening of lime mortars for 14C dating – preliminary results
Wojcieszak Marine, Fontaine Laurent, Hayen Roald, Elsen Jan, Van den Brande Tess, Oostvogels An, Ligovich Gaia, Rich Mohamed and Boudin Mathieu
Topic 2: Historic production, processing and application of mortars, renders and grouts. Lime technologies.
Atlas of traditional lime kilns in the Spanish territory: settlement, constructive typology and production process of lime as a historical material
Elena Galdó-Ceballos, María Lourdes Gutiérrez-Carrillo and Anna Arizzi
From high-performance pozzolans to proto cements: 1500 years of hydraulic binders in
Padua and its surroundings
Michele Secco, Simone Dilaria, Giulia Ricci, Matteo Volpin, Enrico Garbin, Sergio Tamburini,
Caterina Previato, Gilberto Artioli and Jacopo Bonetto
Characteristics of traditional korean lime plaster after the addition of perilla oil
Sanha Kang and Soyeong Kang
Mortars and binders during a time of emerging industries: 19th Century Austro- Hungarian fortifications in Montenegro
Johannes Weber, Lilli Zabrana, Andrea Hackel, Susanne Leiner and Farkas Pintér

Processing while slaking? Hot applied lime mortar (HAM) and hot lime wash revisited
Thomas Köberle and Heiner Siedel
Limewashes with vegetable oils: water transport characterization
Cristiana Nunes, Paulina Faria and Nuno Garcia
Topic 3: Mortars in archaeological sites. Construction history. Archaeometry.
Dating of historic mortars.
Revisiting the chronology of early Christian architecture through mortar dating: the case of Paleochristian church in Bordeaux
Petra Urbanova, Pierre Regaldo, Pierre Guibert, Phillipe Lanos, Gwenael Herve and Phillipe Dufresne
Chemical and mineralogical characterization of lime plaster from 6th Century stone- chamber tomb of Baekje, Republic of Korea
Eunkyung Kim and Soyeong Kang
Characterisation of historic mortars related to the possibility of their radiocarbon dating, Mikulčice and Pohansko archaeological sites
Petr Kozlovcev, Kristýna Kotková, Dita Frankeová, Jan Válek, Alberto Viani and Jana Maříková- Kubková
Pulvis puteolana beyond the Maritime architecture. the use of Phlegrean Pyroclasts in
structural mortars of Roman Nora (Sardinia, Italy).
Simone Dilaria, Caterina Previato, Jacopo Bonetto, Michele Secco, Domenico Miriello, Donatella Barca, Gilberto Artioli
Mortars of the Roman frontier on the Danube
Emilija Nikolić, Ljiljana Miličić, Ivana Delić-Nikolić, Mladen Jovičić, Nevenka Mijatović, Snežana Vučetić
Plasters of Augusta Raurica Roman Theatre: a petrographic characterisation
Maria Thaís Affonso, Thomas Hufschmid and Philippe Rentzel
Topic 4: Historic renders and plasters. Gypsum-based plasters and mortars. Adobe and
mud mortars. Rammed earth constructions. Natural and Roman cement mortars. Assessment.
Repair mortar for a coloured layer of sgraffito render – a technological copy
Jan Válek, Olga Skružná, Zuzana Wichterlová, Jana Waisserová, Petr Kozlovcev and Dita Frankeová
Evaluation of the hygroscopic and CO2 capture capacities of earth and gypsum-based plasters
Tânia Santos, António Santos Silva, Maria Idália Gomes and Paulina Faria

Characterization of tapia materials from the Hospital San Nicolas De Bari, first hospital in
the west Indies (1503) 33
Virginia Flores-Sasso, Esteban Prieto-Vicioso, Sagrario Martinez-Ramirez, Letzai Ruiz-Valero,Gloria Perez
Influence of natural sand replacement by mineral wastes on earth and air lime plastering
mortars, and professionals training 39
Tânia Santos and Paulina Faria
Evaluation of physical and mechanical parameters in commercial NHL-based green plaster for the preservation of historical buildings 44
Cristina Tedeschi, Maria Cecilia Carangi
Topic 5: Historic Portland cement-air lime mortars. Historic Portland cement mortars.
Historical and production study of the cement and hydraulic lime factory N\$ Seńora De Los Dolores in Atarfe, Granada (Spain) 43
Jorge Adolfo Porta Igual, Anna Arizzi and Eduardo M. Sebastián Pardo
Characterization of mortars and concretes from the Mirante of Quinta da Azeda, Setúbal (Portugal). A case study from the beginning of the 20th century 43
Luís Almeida, Ana Rita Santo, António Santos Silva, Rosário Veiga, Ana Velosa
Concrete from the Rupnik military line 44
Tilen Turk, Petra Štukovnik, Marjan Marinšek, Violeta Bokan Bosiljkov
Early age properties of hydraulic lime mortar prepared using heavy metal contaminated aggregate
Tilen Turk, Maks Alič, Violeta Bokan Bosiljkov and Petra Štukovnik
Mineralogical-petrographic study of terrazzo from selected works of Plečnik heritage (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
Sabina Dolenec, Maruša Mrak, Andreja Pondelak, Katarina Šter, Boštjan Rožič, Nina Žbona
Topic 6: Conservation issues concerning mortars, plasters, renders and grouts.
Diagnosis. Decay and damage mechanisms. Case studies.
Gaji, a gypsum-earth plaster in the wall painting technology of The Church of St.Demetrios of Thessaloniki, David Gareji, Kakheti, Georgia44
Mariam Sagaradze, Joshua A. Hill, Sophia Mikaberidze, Nana Khuskivadze, Manana Kavsadze, Stephen Rickerby, and Lisa Shekede

	An
Overview of the Assessment Methodology.	
Simeon Wilkie Ana Paula Arato Goncalves, Susan Macdonald, Elisabeth Marie-Victoire, N	
Bouichou, Jean Ducasse-Lapeyrusse, Nicki Lauder, David Farrell, Paul Gaudette, Ann Har	rer
Influence of thickness of covering and boundary conditions in bonding of rebars	used to
repair and reinforce masonry structures.	
Esperanza Rodriguez-Mayorga, Fernando Ancio and Beatriz Hortigon	
Traditional techniques on Post-Civil War in Spanish Modern Architecture: the cer wall on OSH pavilion in the Casa del Campo (Madrid)	ramic
María del Mar Barbero-Barrera and José de Coca Leicher	
Waha der War Barbero-Barrera and Jose de Coca Leicher	
Measuring water absorption in replicas of medieval plaster assessing their reliab models for conservation trials	oility as
Mette Midtgaard	
-	
The sgraffito in Križanke - interdisciplinary approach to the conservation-restora	tion of
coloured historic plaster	
Maja Gutman Levstik and Anka Batič	
Topic 7: Preservation. Consolidation materials and techniques. Development of	
new products. Preventive conservation.	
new products. Treventive conservation.	
Experimental study on properties of hydraulic mortars with mixed in crystallisati	ion
inhibitors	
Ameya Kamat, Barbara Lubelli and Erik Schlangen	
Utilization of lavender waste in traditional mortars	
Maria Stefanidou, Vasiliki Kamperidou, Chrysoula Kouroutzidou and Petrini Kampragkou	
Restoring historical buildings amid climate crisis: hydraulic, waste-based lime	
Restoring historical buildings amid climate crisis: hydraulic, waste-based lime Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars M. Stefanidou, F. Kesikidou, S. Konopisi, E. Tsardaka, V. Pachta and E. Tsampali	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars M. Stefanidou, F. Kesikidou, S. Konopisi, E. Tsardaka, V. Pachta and E. Tsampali Development and testing of lime-based mortars using perlite by- products	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars M. Stefanidou, F. Kesikidou, S. Konopisi, E. Tsardaka, V. Pachta and E. Tsampali	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars M. Stefanidou, F. Kesikidou, S. Konopisi, E. Tsardaka, V. Pachta and E. Tsampali Development and testing of lime-based mortars using perlite by- products	
Jelena Šantek Bajto, Nina Štirmer, Ana Baričević Criteria for the utilization of perlite by-products in traditional mortars M. Stefanidou, F. Kesikidou, S. Konopisi, E. Tsardaka, V. Pachta and E. Tsampali Development and testing of lime-based mortars using perlite by- products	

Topic 8: Repair mortars and grouts. Requirements and design. Compatibility issues.
Durability and effectiveness. Adequacy of testing procedures.
Long-term mechanical properties and durability of lime-spongilite mortars 6
Martin Vyšvařil, Martin Krebs and Patrik Bayer
On the effect of near quality aggregates on the physics machanical performance
On the effect of poor-quality aggregates on the physico-mechanical performance
of repair lime-based mortars 6 Revecca Fournari, Loucas Kyriakou and Ioannis Ioannou 6
Fine pumice as pozzolanic additive in restoration lime mortars
Tomáš Žižlavský, Martin Vyšvařil and Patrik Bayer
The relationship between natural stone joint design, surface area and the properties of
lime mortar joints 6
Matthew Cook
Comparative evaluation of repair mertars for the concervation of historic maconry
Comparative evaluation of repair mortars for the conservation of historic masonry6Divya Rani and Manu Santhanam6
Development of a gypsum-based grout for the stabilisation of gypsum-based plasters
Gvantsa Potskhishvili, Chiara Pasian, Francesca Piqué
Morphological evolution of calcium carbonate crystals in dry hydrated lime mortar 6
Anupama V.A. and Manu Santhanam
An investigation of the salt weathering resistance of heritage repair mortar mixes
Anupama V.A., Divya Rani S., Swathy Manohar and Manu Santhanam
Design rationale and field testing of a gypsum-based grout for wall painting stabilization
in the Chapel of Niketas the Stylite, Cappadocia, Turkey 7
Jennifer Herrick Porter, Yoko Taniguchi and Hatice Temur Yildiz
Componenting and water of an antice of laboratory test and income for managements
Comparative evaluation of properties of laboratory test specimens for masonry mortars
propared using different compaction methods 7
prepared using different compaction methods 7 Vadim Grigoriev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie
prepared using different compaction methods 7 Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie 7
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation 7
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation Marlene Sámano Chong, Alberto Muciño Vélez, Ivonne Rosales Chávez and Luis Fernando
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation 7
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation Marlene Sámano Chong, Alberto Muciño Vélez, Ivonne Rosales Chávez and Luis Fernando Guerrero Baca
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation Marlene Sámano Chong, Alberto Muciño Vélez, Ivonne Rosales Chávez and Luis Fernando
Vadim Grigorjev, Miguel Azenha and Nele De Belie The challenge on development of the repair mortars for historical buildings in severe marine environment: Paimogo Fort, a case study Maria do Rosário Veiga and Ana Rita Santos Practical test for pozzolanic properties by A. D. Cowper: implementation and innovation Marlene Sámano Chong, Alberto Muciño Vélez, Ivonne Rosales Chávez and Luis Fernando Guerrero Baca Determination of the salt distribution in the lime-based mortar samples using XRF and

Developing a lime-based injection grout with no additives for very thin delamination: role of aggregates and particle size/morphology
Chiara Pasian, Jennifer H. Porter, Mariia Gorodetska and Stephanie Parisi
Enhancement of latent heat storage capacity of lime rendering mortars
Andrea Rubio-Aguinaga, José María Fernández, Íñigo Navarro-Blasco and José Ignacio Álvarez
Obtaining of repair lime renders with microencapsulated phase change materials: optimization of the composition, application, mechanical and microstructural studies
Andrea Rubio-Aguinaga, José María Fernández, Íñigo Navarro-Blasco and José Ignacio Álvarez
Time-dependent deformations of lime-based mortars and masonry specimens prepar with them
Ioanna Papayianni and Emmanuella Berberidou
Adhesive strength assessment of lime injection grout using standardised and modified test method
Andreja Padovnik and Violeta Bokan Bosiljkov
Influence of methyl cellulose in injection grout on mould growth on mural paintings - preliminary results
Andreja Padovnik, Violeta Bokan Bosiljkov, Polonca Ropret and Janez Kosel



Topic 3: Mortars in archaeological sites. Construction history. Archaeometry. Dating of historic mortars.

MORTARS OF THE ROMAN FRONTIER ON THE DANUBE

Emilija Nikolić¹, Ljiljana Miličić², Ivana Delić-Nikolić², Mladen Jovičić¹, Nevenka Mijatović², Snežana Vučetić³

- (1) Institute of Archaeology, Serbia, e.nikolic@ai.ac.rs
- (2) Institute for Testing of Materials, Serbia,
- (3) Faculty of Technology, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Keywords: Roman mortars, Danube Limes, mortar characterization, conservation mortar, conservation science

Abstract: The mortars have been always one of the most interesting topics for the researchers of Roman building constructions. The knowledge on this complex building material used in Roman architecture is mostly based on the research of the monumental structures in the territory of today Italy. However, many mortar examinations were executed by the researchers of provincial Roman archaeology as well, who tried to find evidence of the quality of building activities in the provinces. The territory of today's Serbia, except for the existence of scarce studies, was never in the research focus. Even the monumental bridge over the Danube, built at the beginning of the 2nd century that made Trajan's conquest of Dacia possible, was not researched thoroughly enough when we speak of its building materials. During the last few years, the interest in the Roman buildings at the Danube territory has grown. Mortar Design for Conservation - Danube Roman Frontier 2000 Years after (MoDeCo2000) project is funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. Its aim is to investigate the mortars used in Roman buildings along the former Danube Limes in Serbia, as well as to offer mortar recipes for building conservation practice. The project includes 24 archaeological sites, dating to the period spanning from the 1st to the 6th century, with more than 120 different mortar samples that originate from 40 buildings of military and civilian function. The project results are intended to be an important contribution to the nomination dossier of a cultural property tending to be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, named "Frontiers of the Roman Empire – Danube Limes in Serbia". Conducted laboratory analyses showed a great diversity of mortar samples. Immensely important are the results offering the characterization of some local raw materials known to date as used for masonry, as important components of the mortars, but also the possibility to conclude that the mortars for the most important buildings in this territory were made using the rare or imported raw materials. After sampling and research, laboratory models of mortars were done, the most promising recipes were chosen, and the application of new mortars was performed in real environmental conditions and on historic walls. The project results formed a database on archaeology, architectural and construction history, conservation science, technology, geology, and chemistry of raw materials and mortars, that will contribute to heritage protection in Serbia, as an exceptionally important input for conservation practice. The objectives of the MoDeCo2000 project are connected to the research of physical elements and social aspects of the creation of Roman fortresses and cities in Serbia, as well as to the conservation practice and contribution to contemporary engineering. Its biggest scientific significance is in the revealing of different aspects of building technologies in the Roman period at the mentioned territory, but also of the economy, trade, and everyday life of its inhabitants. Acknowledgements: This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, PROMIS, #6067004, MoDeCo2000.





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