In 2006 a technical investigation of the so-called Four-column Monument has been conducted on the authority of the Austrian Archaeological Institute (Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, ÖAI). For the first time ever, both the inventory and the condition of the monument that had been partially rebuilt in the sixties of the twentieth century were to be measured and documented. The findings were gathered by using simple visual and haptic instruments such as acoustic imaging, raking light and low magnification.

Due to a very limited schedule not all of the problems could be investigated; furthermore, it was impossible to carry out detailed materials analysis. However, a technical and analytical investigation as well as a contemporary archaeological survey of the overall inventory seems appropriate.

The street, discovered during Austrian excavations in 1899 and named “Arkadiane” after an antique inscription, connects the harbour of the ancient Ephesos to the theatre in a straight line. Measuring more than 500 m in length and 11.5 m in width it ranks amongst the most prominent examples of Roman boulevards. Columned halls, measuring 5 m in width and containing shops, storages and so forth, lined the street on both sides [1, 2].

The Four-column Monument, located approximately half way to the city on Arkadiane, was mentioned for the first time in 1902 and described in a dedicated article in 1906. Following the author who discussed the capital shapes it can be dated to the sixth century AD [3, 4]. One of the original four columns was reconstructed on behalf of the local authorities in 1964.

The technological condition of the building consisting of base, round pedestal base (two metres high) and column with capital has been surveyed to detail. It consists of marble fragments originally used for the building (orange) and secondary parts of cement (green). While the two stepped base is almost complete in situ and in its original condition (featuring even workmanship marks and stonecutters’ tags), the reconstruction of the pedestal contains only 40%, and the column about 65% of original material.

It was not possible to figure out the exact technological concept of the pedestal’s recent reconstruction; most probably a massive concrete core has been used to fill the internal space, while the small columns on the outside were rebuilt of cement-coated bricks. The application of synthetic resins to rejoin original fragments is evident.

The overall condition of every building element has been assessed by character and intensity of its damages on a scale from I (very good) to III (bad), graphically illustrated by a colour scheme (I green, II yellow, III red).

The following damages have been registered by graphical mapping: cracks (red), ruptures and missing pieces (yellow), chromatic alterations and coverings (green, blue). The current condition and damaging of every single part of the monument has been described verbally. Afterwards, the various damages and their possible causes have been elucidated in detail distinguishing damages on secondary concrete or cement parts and original marble material.

The significant crack formation in the cement elements and the stained and aesthetically unsatisfying appearance caused by bio-organic discoloration as well as by traces of glue have to be emphasized. In terms of conservation the most alarming symptoms are the (thermic induced) fabric disintegration (of the marble grains) and the contour scaling at the head piece of the pedestal (with acroterion copulas and spandrel relief) and of the capital. The long cracks and large scalings with little adhesion to the subgrade give rise to serious concerns.

Dismantling and rehabilitating the Four-column Monument should be discussed.

References
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