Tskaltubo (Prometheus) Cave System
Some Issues of Research
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Nama Bolashvili, Omar Lanchava, Kukuri Tsikarishvili – Tskaltubo (Prometheus) Cave System (Georgia)

In 1980s a speleological expedition of the Institute of Geography of Georgian Academy of Sciences started studying the caves that had not been discovered before on the Sataplia-Tskaltubo limestone massive, in the densely-populated village Kumistavi vicinity. After the declining narrow passages and short steps on the floor of one of the swallow hole were overcome, the group of speleologists managed to intrude into a gigantic hollow gaping at them standing on a horizontal floor, what put the first stone in the fundament of opening, exploration and development of this unique cave system.

In the following years expedition teams of the Georgian Academy of Sciences such are: Gr. Tsulukidze Mining Institute, M. Nodia Geophysics Institute, Al. Janelidze Geology Institute, Hydraulic Engineering and Melioration Scientific-Research Institute and other scientific organizations performed important exploration and research works together with the personnel of Geography Institute.

This work deals with and describes the environment and factors of the cave system formation, the geomorphological and landscape peculiarities of the massive, hydrometeorological monitoring of the catchment area, the main results of researches of the electric properties of the cave air and of some of the elements, the mechanism of determining the minimal and maximal number of the visitors admissible into the caves contemporaneously.

In May, 2012 the developed and improved karst object was opened for tourists. The cave had 80700 visitors the first year, while the number of its visitors in the second year were 45300. It welcomed more than 200 thousand tourists in a short period of time, among which over 50000 were foreign visitors from different European countries. These figures greatly exceed the average annual index of sightseers visiting up to 800 developed caves throughout the world – 37500 visitors.

The exciting years of discovering, exploration and improvement-development of this unique cave system reclined to belong to the history – the new life of the fairyland of the underground world started to breath.
In 1980s, the speleological team of the Institute of Geography (consisted of the leader Mr. Jumber Jishkariani and the members: Tamaz Kobulashvili, Amiran Jamrishvili, Vakhtang Kapanadze, Kote Nizharadze) have discovered and researched a complicated cave system with multiple stories and entrances, which has been unknown before for the scientists, located 150 m above the sea in the Village Kumistavi area, the Tskaltubo Municipality. In May 2012, the developed and improved karst object was opened for tourists. The cave had 80 700 visitors the first year, while the number of its visitors in the second year were 45 300. It welcomed more than 200 thousand tourists in a short period of time, among which over 50 000 were foreign visitors from different European countries.

Nana Bolashvili - Director of the Institute of Geography of Tbilisi State University. President of Georgian Geographical Society. The main directions of research: karst hydrology; sustainable management of water resources; study of environment's negative changes caused by natural hazards and elaboration of their mitigation measures.