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**“ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN ON THE ROAD:
GEORGIAN MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE
IN INTERACTION WITH NEIGHBOURING CULTURES”**

-SUMMARIES-

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Photo: Doliskana Church, Artvin/Türkiye (Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger)

Neslihan ASUTAY-EFFENBERGER



From Georgia to Seljuk Anatolia: Figural Relief Sculpture on the Façades of some Seljuk Monuments and their possible Relation to Georgia.

From the 12th century onwards, the sculpted figurative imagery rarely appears on the facades of Georgian churches giving way to the murals inside the church. This tradition experienced a later revival in 15th century. Although not as dominating as in Georgia, the figural reliefs have been used to decorate the facades of Seljuk buildings in Anatolia as well, particularly in the 13th century and can also be recognized on sacred monuments. Some examples with Christian content seem to be stylistically related to the Georgian reliefs. My contribution aims to present selected examples of figural reliefs of Seljuk architecture and deals with the question of whether some Georgian masters or their Islamic pupils emigrated from the Georgian homeland to Anatolia after 1200 for economic reasons, since they could find here their future wealthy patrons.

Ömür BAKIRER



Geometric Interlace Patterns on Anatolian Seljuk Buildings: an Inquiry for Impacts from different Geographies

Geometric interlaces were designed for specific brick wall surfaces, then delineated and assembled as panels, with brick units and inserted as revetments. These interlace patterns were transmitted from brick to stone surfaces and were the focus of early architectural ornament used on Anatolian Seljuk buildings between the late 12th and 14th centuries.

This paper will present examples of geometric interlace patterns applied on brick and stone surfaces on Anatolian Seljuk buildings and will investigate possible impacts coming from three different cultural centres that have used related examples of interlaces, between the 10th -13th centuries.

The subject: geometric interlaces applied on narrow bands, forming the framework on portals, on surfaces of pointed niches and others. In 12th -13th century Anatolian architecture, examples are found on all types of buildings in Konya, Sivas, Kayseri, Niğde and environs.

1. Source: Bukhara, Samarkand area: where the naked brick style first flourished, in the 10th century, brick bonds and brick revetments were used on all types of monumental buildings.
2. Memory: South and East of the Caspian Sea: Brick examples encountered in the architecture of the Great Seljuk's in central Iran and Azarbaijan; the lands where the Seljuk Turks' lived before migrating to Anatolia. Did they carry this knowledge in their memories?
3. In passing: West of the Caspian Sea: Georgia, Armenia. Stone examples, from the 10th -13th centuries, which the migrating groups perhaps encountered while passing from these lands
4. Keywords: geometric interlaces, brick, stone, Anatolia, Seljuk architecture.

Patrick DONABEDIAN



The blind Arcade, a Major Decorative Device in the Medieval Architecture of Armenia and Georgia

The principle of rows of vertical elements (columns, pilasters), slightly projecting or creating flat niches, surmounted by an arched band, to decorate the façades of monuments, was known both in the West and the East, since late antique Roman and Persian Sasanian periods. This device was also present in early Christian Ravenna through flat pilasters and arched niches. In the early Christian East, for example at Flaviopolis in Cilicia, Resafa in Syria, Tekor in Armenia, the blind arcade had more monumental interpretations of Roman inspiration. On 7th century churches of Armenia this principle received the form of a blind arcade on thin pairs of half-columns. At the moment, it only adorned curved surfaces: apses and drums. In the 7th - century Georgian church of Tsromi, a central arched niche set between two dihedral niches created the illusion of a blind arcade applied for the first time to a flat (straight) façade.

From the 10th century, the blind arcade maintained its presence on cylindrical drums, and at the same time was also applied to plane (straight) façades, in Armenia, Georgia, and in the province of Tayk-Tao, as well as in Byzantine Asia Minor.

In Armenia, the principle of a colonnade-arcade slightly protruding on the façades was preferred, whereas in Georgia, both formulas – the projecting arcade and the row of flat niches “hollowed” in the wall – coexisted. The architectural school of Tayk-Tao played an important role in elaborating innovative solutions like the progressive elevation of the arcade on gable façades. This “dynamic” formula was often adopted in 11th-century Georgia, whereas Armenia remained faithful to a more horizontal layout. The blind arcade also served as a base for the creation of original formulas.

The communication proposes to observe the ways of development of the blind arcade, and its diversity, from a comparative study of Armenian and Georgian practices, particularly rich in this field.

Irene GIVIASHVILII



Form and Function of Sculpture in Tao-Klarjeti

Tao-Klarjeti served as the centre of the Georgian Kingdom in ninth to 11th centuries where ideas of a Georgian state accumulated, accelerated and spread across the country and its surrounding world. It defined the strategies and aspirations of the Kingdom as well as its visual arts. Development of the monastic organization, and cultural interaction with the surrounding world shaped the form and function of the architectural sculpture, the most “authentic” media in the medieval Georgian art, which became symbol of identity, reflection of the political, spiritual and cultural changes of the Georgian Kingdom. Simultaneously, marking the borders of the Georgian Kingdom and conveying the messages of the patrons, faith and mission, these architectural monuments embellished with the sculptures turned into a visual representation of aesthetics and quality of craftsmanship.

The Tao-Klarjeti tradition of carving two-dimensional sculptures into a stone took even more important meaning during this period. The representation of donors, royals and nobles, monks and builders together with images from Biblical or other Christian iconographical scenes survived in great numbers. A special emphasis was made on the representation of saints and their lives. These sculptures marked the sacred space of worship and place for the dignitaries. They met the beholders entering the churches at the entrances, emphasizing the symbolic accents of the facades, starting from the porch to the dome. The scale and the forms of these sculptures were rarely matched throughout the Kingdom and never took the same level of expression as it did in Tao-Klarjeti.

Nina IAMANIDZE



Painting the Stones: the Value of Colour in Georgian Medieval
Architectural Sculpture

The issue of the use of colour in architectural sculpture is still recent and new for Byzantine world and not yet well determined for medieval Georgia. However, the combination of carved and painted forms was a clearly identified practice in Byzantine world and especially prevalent in medieval Georgia. The richness of this material proves that the use of colour on Georgian reliefs is more the rule, than an exception.

With the aim to outline some possible avenues for research on the polychromy of medieval Georgian sculpture, the interest will be focused on the variations in the use of colour, its function, reception and liturgical use, its role in the construction and perception of architectural space. This brings to the question of the origin of the tradition of painting the stone images, to the problems of cultural transfer and the possible adaptation and interpretation of external models. Can we retrace their transmission routes in Georgia? This presentation will attempt to provide some answers to these questions.

Thomas KAFFENBERGER



Dome and Cross. Sculpturally Decorated Centralized Vaults in Medieval Georgia

One of the most characteristic elements of 11th to 13th century Georgian architecture is the presence of richly ornamented centralized vaults - umbrella domes and segmented sail vaults - which exclusively adorn liminal, small-scale spaces such as porches or subordinate private chapels. They are decorated with a wide range of ornaments and cross symbols. Formally and technologically, the origins of those decorative vaults can be traced back to the major monuments of 7th century Caucasian architecture, such as the church of St. Hripsime in Vagharshapat. The architecture of 10th century Tao, it seems, was the decisive catalyst for the new vault type that then appeared on a group of around five Georgian monuments of the early 11th century. Further developments and copies of the early models can be traced up to the 14th century.

The proposed paper intends to first present the migration of the architectural approaches and ideas through the Caucasian zone. Particular attention will be given to the presence of sculpted crosses embedded in the ornamental framework of this dome type, a motif evidently surpassing purely decorative qualities. The latter can help us to grasp potential reasons for the use of this vault type over thresholds and memorial places, permitting the attempt of an ‘iconographic’ reading. In a last step a brief comparative glance at the development of centralized vault types in Armenian *žamatuns* and *gavits* will permit to perceive shared and unique sculptural elements in 11th/12th century Caucasian architecture.

Tamar KHUNDADZE / Kristine SABASHVILI



Royal “Portraits” and their Attributes as Represented in 10th -11th c.
Georgian Sculpture

In medieval Georgian Art, along with scenes of purely religious content, images of supreme secular authorities - kings, queens, feudal lords - represented with vestments and insignia, occupied an important place and often denoting their royal and social status. These persons of high status were often accompanied by the images of divine beings in symbolic compositions manifesting the legitimation of their power as being derived from God.

The earliest samples of such stone sculptures in 5th- 11th c. Georgian art have been preserved. There are sample images of supreme secular authorities found on early medieval stone crosses, chancel barriers, and church facades. This paper will examine images of the above-mentioned persons and their representation in Georgian architectural sculpture during the 10th -11th centuries, and the nexus with neighbouring countries, and within a cross-cultural context (Byzantine, Armenia, and Persia).

Through the images of secular authorities, their attributes and accompanying inscriptions the local regalia as Georgian medieval rulers’ power expression, will be demonstrated, as well as the state condition, including the political and cultural influences, and connections of different adjoining to Georgia countries.

The research will also focus on the location of sculptural images on church façades and their artistic characteristics; more specifically, how the artistic tendencies of 10th-11th centuries - local artistic traditions and stylistic innovations, Byzantine and Eastern influences - were reflected on these reliefs

Annegret PLONTKE-LÜNING



Spätantike Stifterbilder in Kaukasien

In Georgien und Armenien haben sich zahlreiche steinerne Pfeiler und Basen und auch die Kreuze, die sie einst trugen, erhalten. Diese mit Reliefs geschmückten Denkmäler werden ins 6. bis 8. Jh. datiert. Einige zeigen neben Heiligenfiguren auch Darstellungen der aristokratischen Stifter, die von großem Interesse für die Lebenswelt in den ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten in Kaukasien sind. Diese Stifterfiguren werden, soweit möglich, in ihrem historischen Kontext vorgestellt.

Brigitta SCHRADE



Persian Imprints: Svan Church Facades in their Intercultural Context (9th-11th centuries)

The Georgian mountainous province Svaneti is a treasury of art. Protected but never isolated, the Svan valleys in the Central Caucasus participated in Georgian art and culture throughout the Middle Ages. At the same time, their inhabitants brought them into line with their own needs. Of special interest are the Svan churches. Their architecture and decoration, including wall paintings, icons, monumental crosses and, last but not least, sculptural elements, show local particularities as well as general traits of Georgian art passed on to Svaneti.

This paper examines church facades dating from the 9th to the 11th centuries - a particularly interesting period for the formation of Christian architecture of Svaneti. In this epoch, the interior and exterior facades of the small village churches, used for worship and cult, were adorned with reliefs and paintings. Some motifs of the sculptural decoration are often understood as pagan. But they can also be seen as Persian reminiscences of the time when the West Georgian kingdom of Lazika and Svaneti were under Sasanian rule, Svaneti the latter being the last controversial issue in the 6th century Roman-Persian peace negotiations. In this paper, the Persian motifs, before all else animal protomes and flat reliefs, are compared with parallels from the Georgian lowlands where they appeared in Persian influenced regions from the 5th and 6th centuries onwards. They are examined in connection with Persian traces in Svan popular cults and the organization of the kev, the communal valley system. Prominent examples are the khylish festival, as celebration of the victory over the Persians, and the Svan banner lem, the lion windsock, as counterpart of the draco, the dragon standard of the Roman cavalry. They are also discussed in their new liturgical context when they appear at the east facade of a church together with painted Christian motifs. This liturgical aspect is further substantiated by parallels in the iconographical layout of Svan pre-altar crosses and icons.

Athansios SEMOGLOU



The exterior Relief Decoration from the Apse of Saint George of Joisubani in Raca: A hybrid Pattern of the Last Judgment

In the present paper we will focus on the iconography of the exterior relief decoration of the apse of Saint George's church of Joisubani in Raca, Western Georgia, which has already been published by Dr. Nina Iamanidze and dated to the 9th-10th century. The Georgian relief is amidst the oldest examples of the Last Judgement composition preserved today from the Eastern world and it is of great interest from the iconographical point of view. This is because it attempts to apply the new schema of the Last Judgment to the old pattern of the eschatological vision. The concept of granting justice is only latent and the absence of a clearly antithetical scheme of the sinners with their punishments on the one hand and the reward of the righteous on the other characterize its iconography mostly as an eschatological remain and less as a formulation of the Last Judgment during the Second Coming. Also, the placement of the composition in the space of the sanctuary gives it the quality of a vision similar to the known apsidal visions of the first Byzantine period. This is why we consider the Joisubani relief as a transitional vision of the first millennium and not as a complete and definitively formulated scene of the Last Judgement. Our analysis will also take in consideration other similar early visions as for example the scene from the wall decoration of Içeridere in Cappadocia dated by Catherine Jolivet-Levy to the second half of 9th century or the almost contemporary or slightly later composition from Saint Stephen church in Kastoria (Greece) in order to better understand and illustrate the transition from the early Christian eschatological vision to the Second Parousia context of the Last Judgment.

Zaza SKHIRTLADZE



The Donor Relief from Iskhani and its Possible Prototypes

The stone tympanum with the donor composition is one of the most distinguishable finds revealed during the restoration of Iskhani Cathedral and the excavation of the area around it. The relief has been delivered to the Rize Museum where it is currently exhibited.

Initially the relief of the tympanum was decorated with the ornamental pattern. Later – presumably soon after its execution – the aim was changed and the donor composition notable by its high artistic merits was carved on it. Chronological boundaries of both layers of the relief decoration of the tympanum seems to be limited by the eleventh century. The place of discovery of the stone, as well as the scale makes it evident that it was designated for placing over the door opening of one of the small burial chapels placed to the south-west of the Cathedral.

The identification of the figure of the donor – a secular person, presumably the representative of the supreme ruling circles of the Kingdom of Tao-Klarjeti – due to the lack of the evidence remains impossible. The general compositional scheme of the scene points to the existence of certain prototypes, once existing in the cathedral, as well as in Byzantine and Eastern Christian monuments.

Manuela STUDER-KARLEN



Architectural Sculpture as a Frame for the Rite

Often, monastic complexes in Georgia have various architectural sculptures that date from different eras. This sculpture is mostly found in the *katholikon*, but also in the vestibules, entrances or other important spots of the monasteries. Among these, the sculptures that stand out are those that have inscriptions or that give significant evidence of an intensified artistic exchange. What is striking is that these sculptures ultimately form a homogeneous whole within the monastic structure, as they are integrated into the ritual setting of the monastery. As a special case, this presentation will analyse the three monasteries in Sapara, in Ch'ule and in Zarma, all located in the Samtskhe district. Furthermore, all three churches bear witness to the power of aristocratic families of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in western Georgia, where such families suffered less under the Mongols than did their counterparts in the eastern region. The members of the Jaqeli family are depicted in all three churches and they are also linked to some of the sculptures. Thus, the sculptures can also illuminate the socio-political and historical background as well as the cultural interactions of the monasteries.

