II. Abteilung

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger / Nina Iamanidze (eds.), Georgian Medieval Architectural Sculpture in Interaction with Byzantine, Persian, Seljuk and Armenian Art. Anton H. Konrad, Weißenhorn 2024. 148 p. ISBN 987 – 3 – 87437 – 630 – 3.

The entanglement of art and architecture with the movement of craftsmen across political, religious, and cultural borders is a complex phenomenon that has attracted considerable attention in recent decades. Current research into the monuments of the Caucasus region has highlighted the importance of the Georgian and Armenian evidence for understanding developments in the Byzantine and Islamic worlds and has provided new insights into the modes of interaction between the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia.[1] Studies focusing exclusively on stone carving are rare, but this perspective is particularly relevant to an interdisciplinary approach to the history of this broad region, as it raises diverse issues, from the transformation of the late antique heritage during the Middle Ages to the connections between visual languages across multiple continents.

The legacy of late antiquity, the interaction between various traditions, and the importance of complex functional, aesthetic, and socio-economic issues are among the topics treated in the edited volume *Artists and Craftsmen on the Road. Georgian Medieval Architectural Sculpture in Interaction with Byzantine, Persian, Seljuk and Armenian Art,* edited by Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger of Ruhr-University (Kunstgeschichtliches Institut), Bochum, and Nina Iamanidze of Collège de France (Institut des Civilisations). This is a collection of papers presented at an online conference organized by Ruhr University on 4 – 5 November 2022 within the framework of a research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Despite the digital format, the event proved to be a suitable platform for fruitful discussions and the exchange of ideas among scholars representing diverse disciplines. As is clear from the title, the main focus of the book is the sculpture of Georgian lands, but the fact that the two editors are experts in Byzantine and Georgian art respectively guarantees that the Byzantine element is properly contextualized and forms an important component of the discussion.

1 See for example the various studies in A.C.S. Peacock / B. De Nicola (eds), Islam and Christianity in Anatolia and the Caucasus. Farnham 2015 and A. Eastmond, Tamta's World: The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia. Cambridge 2017.

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger is the author of the opening essay of the book, "On the Angel Reliefs of Susuz Han and the City Walls of Konya and their Masters", which sets the tone by focusing on figural sculpture in Seljuk monuments in Anatolia, an unusual feature by the standards of Islamic art. The author offers a new view of the carved figures of angels adorning the gate of the 13th-century Susuz Han caravanserai near Burdur, by comparing them with the nearly contemporary reliefs of the now demolished city walls of Konya (two panels of which are now preserved in the Ince Minareli Medresesi in that city), as well as various other ensembles in Anatolia and the south Caucasus. This wide-encompassing investigation helps her establish that the workshop of the Susuz Han reliefs followed Byzantine iconographic models, the origins of which can be traced back to the art of late antiquity, but the graphic and linear style is closer to Georgian prototypes known from the Tao-Klarjeti region; this leads her to the conclusion that the workshop that was responsible for the Susuz Han included Georgian craftsmen. N. Asutay-Effenberger connects this fact with the textually attested migration of Georgian scholars from the lands of the Caucasus to Anatolia following the Mongol invasion.

Thanks to this analysis, the sculptures of the Susuz Han and related works are properly contextualized for the first time (they were usually regarded as crude imitations of Byzantine images). Although the author admits that additional comparable examples are needed to support her arguments and to elucidate the intermediate stages of the developments she outlines, the Seljuk – Georgian connection in the decoration of the Anatolian caravanserai is undeniable; this opens up new ways to approach the topic and can certainly help raise awareness to further examples. At the same time, her observations on the reliefs from the Konya fortifications contribute to a better understanding of Seljuk art and its relations to the Byzantine background. These conclusions can also help shed light on an enigmatic topic regarding Byzantine sculpture, namely the continuation of sculptural activity following the end of Byzantine rule in Anatolia at the end of the 11th century. Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger's approach suggests that the aftermath of Malazgirt was more complicated than is usually assumed, especially since building activity under the Seljuks was quite intensive. The mobility of Georgian artisans and the adaptability of their Byzantine colleagues must be considered when discussing 12th- and 13th-century architectural sculpture in Anatolia.

N. Asutay-Effenberger explores one more important topic involving the interaction between Seljuk and Georgian art in a second article titled "Remarks on some Seljuk Animal-Tendril Reliefs and a Georgian manuscript". Here she focuses on the ornamental subject of animal heads spouting out of S-shaped tendrils, which appears in the portals of four 13th-century–14th-century Seljuk buildings in Anatolia: the Friday mosque at Bünyan (dated 1256 or 1333), the Alemşah Mausoleum in Sivrihisar (1327–28), the Sungur Bey Mosque in Niğde (1335), and the Gök

Medrese in Sivas (1271). This motif is traditionally regarded as a combination of shamanistic and mystical elements, which several scholars attribute to influences from the art of the Ilkhanid period, thus linking it to the effects of Mongol rule in Iran and eastern Anatolia. The author revisits this view, by adducing the evidence of Seljuk-influenced reliefs in Dagestan, as well as textiles and tiles from the Seljuk world, which use similar spiral motifs, and demonstrates that S-shaped patterns were inherent in Seljuk art before the Ilkhanid period. She even suggests that similar tendrils which appear in a decorated Georgian manuscript (A-65 in the National Center for Manuscripts in Tbilisi, dated between 1188 and 1210) are the result of Seljuk influence.

N. Asutay-Effenberger's bold proposition is not unfounded – it is an opportune call to reevaluate the importance of Seljuk monumental art within the artistic exchanges of the Near East. By using the evidence of portable objects (tiles, textiles, manuscripts), she manages to bridge the gaps that occur in the monumental record and to bypass the religious (and resulting disciplinary) boundaries that tend to hinder comparisons between works in diverse media of different religions. Indeed, as demonstrated by Eva Hoffmann, focusing on the portability of motifs and subjects helps define broad areas within which works circulated and the networks which promoted inter-cultural exchange.[2]

Ömür Bakırer's contribution ("The Route of the Interlaced Geometric Compositions from Bukhara to Anatolia and the Georgian Position") shifts the focus towards Central Asia by exploring the wide geographic area between Bukhara and Anatolia and by examining affinities between Persian, Caucasian (Georgian and Armenian), and Seljuk decorative art. By bringing attention to similarities in the interlace ornament between monuments such as the 10th-century Samanid Mausoleum in Bukhara, the 11th-century Kharraqan tomb towers of Iran, and the 12th- century tomb towers of Nakhichevan, the relief decoration of the 11th-century church of the Holy Savior (Surp Prkich), the 13th-century Saint Gregory of Tigran Honents at Ani, and the Mengüjekid monuments of eastern Anatolia (for example the Sitte Melik tomb in Divriği, dated 1196), she is able to demonstrate the migration of interlaced patterns from Samanid and Gaznavid art to Anatolia through the mediation of the Christian traditions of the Caucasus (although it appears that Georgian monuments themselves were unaffected).

This is a crucial contribution with far-reaching implications, as the pathways from Transoxiana to Anatolia illustrate a vast web of networks encompassing different decorative traditions and construction techniques, from the arrangement of

2 E. R. Hoffman, Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century. *Art History* 24 (2001), 17–50 (https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.00248).

brick bands to stone carving. The already broad discussion can therefore be implemented for other motifs which traveled in a similar manner within the same regions. This approach can be expanded further east by dealing with the encounters between Islamic and Hindu art in northern India (which the author does mention in the footnotes), as explored in the pioneering work of Finbarr Barry Flood.[3]

Patrick Donabédian, one of the main authorities on Armenian architecture, confronts another challenging topic, by exploring the similarities between blind arcades on façades in Georgian and Armenian architecture, as well as analogies with other traditions, in Byzantium, the Medieval West, and the Islamic East in his article "The Blind Arcade: A Major Decorative Device in the Medieval Architecture of Armenia and Georgia". The author's analysis traces the roots of this decorative element from the antique origins of Roman and Persian architecture to the Early Christian period and the monuments of Syria. He continues by describing how it entered the Armenian architectural vocabulary during the flourishing 7th century in the form of the colonnaded arcade projecting from the façade; this version appears in the classical examples of Dvin and Zvartnots. In this early period the blind arcades are found primarily on curved surfaces, but in the 9th century rows of blind niches became the norm on flat surfaces in Armenia, Georgia, as well as in Byzantine areas. In the Byzantine decorative system however, the main type was that of the recessed niches formed by flat arcades resting on (likewise flat) pilasters and not the projecting colonnades of the Armenian monuments (for example, in the Eski Imaret Camii and Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessalonike). By contrast, the prevalent form of the blind arcade in Armenia was that of the protruding colonnade throughout the Middle Ages, as exemplified by 11th-century monuments, such as the church of the Savior in Ani and at Ani Cathedral. P. Donabédian draws attention to the innovations introduced by the Tao Klarjeti workshops, which developed the Armenian arcade into tall blind arches accentuating gabled facades, the most famous example being the main church of the monastery of Oshki (built 963–973). The Armenian version of the blind arcade was later adopted in the funerary monuments (*türbe*s) of Seljuk Anatolia. This article is an enlightening analysis which clarifies important facts about this common feature of Byzantine, Georgian, and Armenian façade articulation.

Nina Iamanidze (one of the editors of the volume) offers a broad survey of monuments with painted relief decoration in her paper "Painting the Stones: the Value of Color in Georgian Medieval Architectural Sculpture". The author insists on the apotropaic character of the color red, which she rightly connects

3 F.B. Flood, Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter. Princeton 2009.

with the red coloring of inscriptions, an extremely interesting aspect linking words and images and their respective meanings. The discussion continues with instances of polychromy in monuments such as the 10th-century monastery of Oshki. The main colors are what N. Iamanidze refers to as the "archetypal" red, white, and black, with the occasional gold (especially at Oshki, where it highlights the importance and spirituality of the images). In general, the author points out that applied color was an indispensable aspect of designing the sculptural decoration of Georgian religious buildings, which was used to draw attention to and enhance the visibility of the sculpted themes. N. Iamanidze subsequently explores the meaning and origin of color in sculpture: she argues that Georgian craftsmen were aware of the symbolic associations of specific colors and that they appropriately utilized them to enhance the spiritual contemplation of the images. The final part of the article investigates the origins of this tradition: the author attributes the practice of applying color to sculpture to multiple influences and demonstrates that it was embedded in the Georgian artistic language already since the first Christian centuries.

Although some of the arguments about the symbolism of color appear somewhat overwrought, there is no doubt that color was an inherent stylistic feature of Georgian sculpture, as it was in the Byzantine and Islamic traditions and related monuments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East since Antiquity. This has been a crucial topic in recent art historical scholarship and is the subject of ongoing research into the perception of color in medieval art, the impact of light in sacred spaces, and the sensual experience of medieval visual arts.[4] Iamanidze's analysis is an important addition to these developments as she rightly addresses the topic from a multi-cultural perspective, which takes into account diverse traditions and places the monuments into a broad Eurasian context. In any case, color lent a particularly decorative flavor to representations of the human figure, as it reinforced the linearity of the images.

Thomas Kaffenberger tackles the complicated interaction between architecture and sculpture by focusing on sculpted crosses formed in the vaults of Georgian medieval churches ("Dome and Cross: Form and Meaning in Sculpturally Decorated Centralized Vaults in Medieval Georgia"). According to his analysis, the development began with the monuments of the 7th century, where sculpted crosses appeared in the central domes, which gradually received painted decoration replacing the relief ornament, appropriately consisting of expanded relevant

4 See most recently, V. Ivanovici / A.I. Sullivan, Natural Light in Medieval Churches. *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450.* Leiden / Boston 2023; S. Pedone, Bisanzio a colori. La policromia nella scultura bizantina. Rome 2022.

themes, such as the elevation of the cross with its triumphal and eschatological meanings; the sculpted cross-shaped vaults subsequently migrated to subsidiary spaces. This development heralded a change from the powerful message of the triumphant cross overseeing the congregation to the function of the cross punctuating crucial liminal spaces.

The author raises a series of complex questions at the intersection of architectural form and meaning, by borrowing (in the title, at least) terms from linguistics and semiotics. What is most important is that the examples used and the development described in the article clearly show how the cross became embedded into the fabric of the architecture and was integrated into the buildings under discussion – building techniques and iconographic messages related to the cross merged into a single, multifaceted process. Thus, the author unravels craftsmen's intent (and perhaps that of their aristocratic patrons) to repeat the sign of the cross in all available spaces of their buildings, including passageways. The question why sculpted crosses were ostracized to secondary spaces and painting emerged as the protagonist in the central domes, to which T. Kaffenberger dedicates considerable space, seems unnecessary (it would be more appropriate for a general theoretical study), but here again the author is right: the effects of light (natural and that produced by candles) on carved surfaces and on fresco paintings are probably the main reasons why each medium was assigned its special place in the decoration.

Tamar Khundadze and Krist'ine Sabashvili in their article "Royal Portraits and their attributes" offer new insights into the iconography of sculpted representations of medieval Georgian rulers. They begin with a general chronological survey of the most important monuments and a description of the most important regalia (attire, scepters, headgear) to show how their rendering in sculpture reflect changes in the visualizations of power by Georgian rulers of various principalities over the decades from the early 10th to the late 11th centuries. As the authors state from the outset, these images were effective visual means to legitimize the power of patrons, conspicuous witnesses of their piety, as well as ways to voice their hope for salvation (which they aimed to secure by means of their patronage of religious foundations). The main examples mentioned are the Cathedral of Kumurdo, which features a portrait of king Leo III of Abkhazia (957–967) and the monastery of Dolisq'ana (built by Smbat I of Tao-Klardjeti). The famous church of Oshki monastery (963–973) is a special case: here the patrons David Kouropalates and king Bagrat III are distinguished by a multitude of Byzantine attributes. Indeed, the Oshki portraits, with their style and iconography (especially their elongated proportions reminiscent of ivories of the Macedonian period), clearly signal the patrons' aspirations to be included in the Byzantine power system.

The authors point out that it is hard to establish any specific rules concerning the placement or the main characteristics of these royal images: initially headgear was rare, but in some later instances crowns and sometimes even haloes appear. Despite the lack of a synthetic approach to the monuments discussed, the article shows in a succinct manner that these images are important for understanding figural sculpture within its architectural context and how the materiality of sculpture conveys powerful visual messages. It is surely worth pursuing further the interplay between Byzantine and Persian elements in relation to the political realities of the 10th and 11th centuries in the region, ideally supported by the evidence of painted portraits.

Athanasios Semoglou, the author of the article "The Exterior Relief Decoration from the Apse of Saint George at Joisubani in Rach'a (Georgia): A Hybrid Pattern of the Last Judgement", deals with the iconography of the relief decorating the east façade of the church of Saint George at Joisubani in western Georgia, dated to the 9th or the first half of the 10th century. The subject has been identified in the past as a condensed version of a Last Judgment, but A. Semoglou sets out to challenge this interpretation by asking whether this is indeed a Middle Byzantine parousiac type or a continuation of the Early Christian habit of placing eschatological themes in apses. The starting point of his discussion is a set of unusual features, which are incompatible with a Last Judgment: the placement in the east façade, the presence of a donor portrait, and the absence of distinction for the righteous. The author admits that there is a triumphant meaning reinforced by the equestrian saints in the lower register, that the placement in the exterior is consistent with the eschatological and apotropaic nature of the theme (reinforced by the protective function of the ornament), and that there are formal and iconographic analogies with a 12th-century icon of the Last Judgment on Mount Sinai, but other elements connect the Joisubani reliefs with the apse decoration of 6th-century monuments from the Byzantine world: the figure of the donor (apparently a local high-clergyman) recalls images such as those at San Vitale in Ravenna, whereas the triangular scheme of the Georgian monument is reminiscent of compositions of the Traditio Legis. In addition, the iconography of the sculptures adorning the other façades at Joisubani further supports this analysis: as the Mariological scenes carved on the south façade illustrate the Incarnation in the historical sense and the procession of the prelates depicted in the north façade refers to the intercession in its liturgical dimensions, the decoration of the east façade can be interpreted as a divine vision with eschatological implications. Thus, the author concludes that in this Georgian monument the Middle Byzantine iconography of the Last Judgment was superimposed on old patterns of eschatological visions, in a way reminiscent of analogous ensembles in Cappadocia, where elements of the Maiestas Domini persisted until the 9th century and perhaps even later.

This sophisticated analysis combining the liturgical with the apocalyptic overtones of the iconography of sculpture demonstrates how the entire exterior of the church under discussion is transformed into a three-dimensional illustration of the theme in question. From the methodological point of view, the article also exemplifies how combining evidence from painting and sculpture can illuminate the meanings of iconography and shed light on the various uses of sacred space for the deployment of religious art. It also reveals the deep roots of Georgian figural sculpture in the tradition of Early Christian art and successfully contextualizes the monuments of the Caucasus region within the dense artistic networks of the Near East.

Zaza Skirtladze, a leading expert in medieval Georgian art, also concentrates on one particular relief, a tympanum preserved in the museum of Rize (in Türkiye), originally from the Ishkhani cathedral ("The Donor Relief from Ishkhani and Its Prototypes"). The relief shows the figure of the Virgin and Child being presented with the model of a church by a donor. The author rightly stresses the high relief and the degree of detail in the rendering of the composition, especially the painterly effects of the floating drapery. Z. Skirtladze hypothesizes that the tympanum may have been intended for one of the chapels excavated west of the cathedral (where it was found), which accommodated burials (it would have been placed above the doorway). The iconographic investigation leads Z. Skirtladze to identify the type of the Virgin as a copy of a fresco of the Virgin of the Gate, an image that is not extant, but is attested in inscriptions. As the author rightly observes, placing icons and frescoes at entrances was by no means unusual in Byzantine and Georgian art and their devotional function is well attested; this is consistent with the relief discussed in this article.

The proposed identification of the relief and its patron, as well as the analysis of the iconography and of the function of the sculpted images, offer a plausible solution to a quite complicated puzzle. What is particularly interesting is the way the author addresses the issue of the portability of images across various media (the iconographic types he discusses migrated between icons, frescoes, and relief sculpture) and their veneration under various circumstances. The importance of entrances as liminal spaces surely supports the interpretation and enhances the role of these powerful compositions which adorned crucial parts of religious buildings.

The final paper of the book, the one authored by Manuela Studer-Karlen ("The Structuring of Liturgical Processions and Sculpture in Georgian Churches of the 13th and 14th Centuries"), examines the significance of sculpture in religious buildings in the context of processions. The author discusses two monuments in the Samtskhe-Saatabago region founded by members of the Jaqeli family in the 13th and 14th centuries, which thus form a coherent group suitable for reliable conclusions: the chapel and katholikon of Zarzma monastery and the church of Saint

Sabas at Sapara. M. Studer-Karlen argues that the special sculptural and vaulting treatment of the south porch of the church of Zarzma monastery, which gave access to the building, was due to the porch's role as a gathering point for processional entrances. At Sapara, the tympanum above the west portal with its elaborate relief geometric and floral ornament had an analogous function, as it would be viewed by congregants upon entering the building. In both cases, the importance of the respective entrances was enhanced by inscriptions and the sculpted crosses were deliberately designed to imitate processional crosses. In short, in these two late medieval monuments the sculpture forms part of the setting and punctuates the stages of the processional movements.

M. Studer–Karlen's arguments highlight the performative aspects of medieval Georgian sculpture in its architectural context and establishes connections between relief decoration and the liturgical action in the buildings it adorns. Although she misses the opportunity to emphasize the orality of the accompanying inscriptions (which she does adduce as evidence), and to elaborate on the interplay between recited prayers, inscriptions, relief ornament, and processions (which would aptly reinforce her line of thought), thanks to her sophisticated analysis of liturgical practices and the placement of sculpture, she succeeds in showcasing the role of sculpture in the two buildings she discusses and her analysis can serve as a paradigm for similar cases in Georgia and in Byzantium. Drawing attention to the congregants (i. e., the audience) who viewed the reliefs (to which the patrons should be added, as she rightly points out) helps answer several questions regarding the meaning of the reliefs: in these burial chapels, where memorial services were regularly held, it is certain that patrons and their families would have been consistently present, making them the primary beholders of the decoration, which they witnessed when they participated in the offices.

The discussion of the monuments treated in the book is further enhanced by the rich illustrations and drawings, most of them in color, and the attractive layout of the volume, which follows the standards of a high-quality art historical publication. Given the emphasis on topics such as the mobility of sculptors and the interaction between diverse regions and cultural traditions, the inclusion of maps depicting these itineraries and highlighting the geographical component would have reinforced the arguments of the artistic and textual material. Architectural and topographical plans are also missing from most texts; these would have helped contextualize the sculptures discussed in the articles dealing with liturgical and performative matters, in which authors focus on the placement and visibility of the reliefs. In general, however, this is a beautifully illustrated publication and the excellent book design does justice to the thoroughly researched articles.

Altogether, the ten articles paint a fascinating picture of medieval sculpture across a broad geographical spectrum, elucidated by the narrative describing

the movement of carvers and ideas. For Byzantine art historians the good news is that Byzantine sculpture is included in this international melting pot. There is more to be done in this direction, especially now that the study of Byzantine sculpture has made considerable progress thanks to the appearance of numerous systematic publications dealing with its stylistic development, ornamental uses, and architectural role.[5] For example, carved interlace displaying affinities with the ornament of Seljuk monuments is also present in Middle and Late Byzantine buildings, whereas sculpture plays a key role in porches and doorways in the Aegean and Balkan regions, as it does in the Caucasus. The volume edited by Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger and Nina Iamanidze has therefore established an important precedent for this type of interdisciplinary project; it is thanks to enlightened scholars such as the two editors that a holistic approach to medieval sculpture in its Eurasian dimensions can be implemented.

Dr. Nicholas Melvani: Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Historisches Seminar, Arbeitsbereich Byzantinistik, 55099 Mainz, Germany; nmelvani@uni-mainz.de

Chryssa Ranoutsaki, Purpur in Byzanz. Privileg und Würdeformel. Wiesbaden, Reichert Verlag, 2022. 288 S., 188 Farbabb. ISBN 978-3-95490-528-7.

Chryssa Ranoutsaki widmet sich einem Thema, das gemeinhin als weitgehend erforscht galt. Doch gibt es – wie in vielen Bereichen der Byzantinistik – immer noch Gebiete, die der systematischen Bearbeitung harren. Purpur durchzieht alle Bereiche der kaiserlichen Herrschaft – von der Geburt bis zum Tod. Die Legitimität des kaiserlichen Nachfolgers wird durch die Geburt in der Porphyra unterstrichen,[6] und auch am Ende werden die verstorbenen Machthaberinnen und Machthaber am Goldenen Horn in Porphyrsarkophage gebettet.[7]

Die Autorin teilt ihre Studie in fünf Hauptabschnitte. Kurz behandelt sie in Kapitel I die Herkunft und die Terminologie dieses Farbstoffes. Die klassischen Altertumswissenschaften haben das antike Material umfassend aufgearbeitet, anschaulich

5 Most recently: C. Vanderheyde, La sculpture byzantine du IXe au XVe siècle. Contexte – mise en oeuvre – décors. Paris 2020; P. Niewöhner, Byzantine Ornaments in Stone. Architectural Sculpture and Liturgical Furnishings. Berlin/Boston 2021.

6 G. Dagron, Nés dans la pourpre. *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994), 105–142 (= ders., Idées byzantines. Paris 2012, 445–486).

7 N. Asutay-Effenberger, Die Porphyrsarkophage der oströmischen Kaiser. Versuch einer Bestandserfassung, Zeitbestimmung und Zuordnung. Wiesbaden 2006.