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**Peculiarities of Georgian Sculpture Art of the Church Facades
(Middle of the 10th Century, Case of the Kumurdo Temple)**

Abstract of the PhD work

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Urgency of the topic: Middle of the 10th century became a turning point for the Georgian architecture. This was a period when a new common system of the facade decoration was formed and conceptual and artistic merger of the nature of sculptures with decorative accents took place.

Kumurdo Cathedral, which was built in 964, is one of the most enigmatic high profile architectural monuments. Based on its importance we decided to make it the main object of our investigation and use it as a basis for presentation of the findings about the major aspects of contextual and symbolic meanings of the facades and their shapes that were typical for the middle of the 10th century.

Kumurdo's architect suggests and uses numerous symbolic formulas in the facade decorations, which in the 10th century should have been more than obvious to understand for the parish of the church. As long as we witness a certain interruption, alienation and separation from the perception of symbols, it becomes an absolute necessity for us to follow each of the images in order to understand their essence.

Goal of research, its object and methods: The thesis intends to present conceptual symbolic meanings of the facade decorations in order to provide relevant understanding of old messages from our ancestors.

We used a complex approach in order to demonstrate not only symbolic meaning of specific compositions of the cult constructions, but to determine ideological side of each connecting nuance of the joint system of decorations and analyze semantic concepts from the historical perspective as well.

Research topic of the PhD thesis took into consideration necessity to conduct stylistic analysis and apply comparative method and focused on the study of characteristic features of the facade decorations from different Christian countries. The work also investigated the role of the carvings and figures and their synthesis with each other. Comparative analysis of peculiarities of each regional school and development stages of Georgian facade decorations made it possible to discuss Georgian art of the Middle Ages in the global context. Special interest was paid to the research of the symbols from the early Christian period.

Major findings and scientific novelties: Despite huge cultural and artistic value of the Kumurdo Cathedral, it has never been an object of an independent research in a form of a monograph. We made an attempt to study abandoned and lapidating monument to the most possible extent and cover all topics that are connected to its history and describe the current state.

Research proved that the church was constructed by a highly skilled master with a very good in-depth knowledge of tectonic side of the construction elements. Designer demonstrated great talent of combining ornaments and the shapes of figures and in parallel managed to preserve independent importance of both components: reliefs remained the leading element of the ideological side while decorative figures were used as their content fillers and beautifiers.

Main facade of Kumurdo is located on the Eastern side of the building. Correspondingly, it contains the most important ideological and symbolic aspects of the construction. Analysis of artistic composition provides enough proof to conclude that designer of the church had an amazing ability to apply all known methods (the second half of the 10th century) of producing Georgian facade decorations in order to share his ideological and semantic messages. He used color accents, ways of processing the space and relevant graphic, models of figures with strongly expressed shapes.

Decorations of Eastern wall present main semantic accents in a form of the ideological formulas: topic of the “three crosses from Golgotha”, which is emphasized by the purple cross of Christ in the middle of the composition and wicker crosses next to the lower windows unite the context. Later contextual and symbolic meaning of the decorations from Kumurdo is revealed in a wider way and connects to the surrounding ornaments of the central window. A very thorough study of all elements of decorations and managed to find one more fundamental meaning of the Christianity in “ordinary” images. These are the human masks that are located at the corners of the consoles of massive relief arcs. On the one side we can see ancient two-faced Janus - a symbol of the pagan beliefs, which are transformed in the Christianity and create links between the past and the future, demonstrate symbolic understanding of the Old and New Testaments. On the other side we find images of the protectors of the four sides of the world.

In addition, decorations include figures of four symbolic animals of annunciation. Facades often show separate figures of bulls and lions – protectors of the entrances and windows. And this fact brings us back to the ancient traditions. However, Georgian relief decorations do not know examples of four annunciators in a form of an angel, an eagle, a lion and an ox with

wings. The only examples are the fragments of the iconostasis from Artani and tetramorph images of the symbols of annunciators between the figures on the eight-faceted pillars from Oskhi.

Here Christian ideology is shown in a form of a formula – four annunciators will preach words of Christ on four sides of the world and Old and New Testaments will become basis for uniting the processes of glorification of Christ and eternal life in heaven. The latter is shown on the bottom of the cross in a form of a round window (symbol of eternity and irreversibility of life) that is decorated with the plants from the paradise. Figures of Adam and Eve from the vaults of the side facades demonstrate their free state and are shown through the symbols of eternity in the watted ornaments of the windows. They are surrounded by the world full of flowers and birds. This should be an appealing aspect and give hope to the parish that the god is gracious.

Here we have to discuss aniconic paintings from the interior of the church too. Semi-circles of the vaults are made of the red stones and have “beams” that go in different directions. They are undoubtedly associated with the sun, which became one of the established symbols of Christianity based on its ability to provide light and warmth from the heaven.

Kumurdo’s designer is quite free in his decisions and boldly reserves hierarchically the most important symbolic location at the trompe of the cupola (usually determined for the inhabitants of heaven) for the donors of the construction. This has no analogue in church decorations. We tried to find the reason behind the decision and after having had analyzed all elements of décor and conducted structural analysis of forms and ideology, came to a conclusion that the image should show late King of Abkhazians Leon III who must have been close to the heaven (he is depicted bearing a halo) and the Queen Gurandukht who prays for saving of his soul. The church replaces traditional relief of the donors with a new approach of depicting instead of them the historic figures. Here we continue to deal with the main topic of the decorations of the constriction: saving of the human souls, combating of the death and finding an eternal place in heaven.

It has to be mentioned that the subject of the resurrection and victory of Christ over the death is quite organic for the monuments of the 10th century and is demonstrated through different types of symbolic compositions. However Kumurdo should be given a special place as here we encounter not only one formula but also a whole cycle of symbolic expressions where

each figure or ornament supplements each other and makes a statement about the essence of the Christian ideology.

After establishment of high value of Kumurdo as one of the unique monuments of Georgian architecture it is especially regrettable and painful to see its poor current state. The PhD thesis provides detailed description of the restoring works that took place in 1939-40 and 1970-80, discusses their importance and emphasizes the shortcomings – results of imperfectly conducted restoration works. The fact that different arms of the church were left without a ceiling is one of the reasons for the damage it is still suffering from nowadays.

Poor current state of the Kumurdo Cathedral indicates a need for rapid rehabilitation of the construction. It is of special importance to start archeological excavations on the territory of the church as it may reveal fragments of the Western façade and the cupola enabling researchers to restore full picture of the initial system of decorations.

Practical value of the work: The Case of Kumurdo proved that facade decoration of the churches from the second half of the 10th century and their ideological and symbolic meaning have to become subject of a complex research. Kumurdo's detailed study gives us a chance to learn about one of the most important monuments of Georgian architecture not only because of its multiple facades but also to investigate it as one of the first monuments with united system of architectural forms, composition and artistic side of decorations, conceptual and ideological issues.

Brief Summary of the Work

Chapter #1: History of the Kumurdo Cathedral and Description of its Architecture

1. 1. Overview of Scientific Literature

This part of the thesis focuses on discussion of the works that were dedicated to Kumurdo and reviews the issues of special interest from the side of the scientists.

Since the end of the 19th century researchers who studied Kumurdo were first of all interested in its multi-apse plan and rich lapidary inscriptions. The latter aspect is very important as Kumurdo preserved information about exact year of its construction (964). That fact gives

historians and art theorists an opportunity to learn more about general situation in the Southern Georgia of the second half of the 10th century and use the generated data for dating of the other monuments.

From the point of view of the art history we first of all studied Giorgi Chubinashvili's work "Kumurdo and Nikortsminda". It contains broad description of the church and analysis its artistic and tectonic appearance. During description of typical features of the development stages of the Georgian architecture Vakhtang Beridze mentions Kumurdo on multiple occasions as a monument of a turning point and emphasizes its high level of sophisticated architectural design.

Kumurdo is very interesting and important for multiple reasons. Different scholars narrow down their discussion to the components of the decoration: N. Aladashvili focuses on reliefs, R. Schmerling on ornaments, T. Virsaladze and Z. Skhirtladze on paintings. Kumurdo is mentioned in old periodicals as well.

1. 2. Overview of the Kumurdo's History

The chapter tells about the history of the cathedral, which is located in Javakheti region at a distance of 12 km from Akhalkalaki in the village Kumurdo. According to the one of the theories, the current multi-apse church was erected in 964 on the location of a former older construction. The theory is based on the fact that bishop of the Kumurdo Ioseb is mentioned among those who signed resolution of the Dvini Convention of the Georgian, Armenian and Albanian churches in 506.

As already mentioned, Kumurdo is rich at inscriptions that provide important information not only about the construction process but role of the Javakheti region in the history of Georgia of that time as well. Special importance is given to the inscription on the foundation stone (Southern entrance). It tells us that the church was built in 964 by the bishop Ioane and architect Sakotsari during the reign of the King of Abkhazs Leon.

In the first half of the 16th century civil and religious society of Javakheti was still strong. This was the period when Kumurdo church underwent serious repairs. Information about the works is preserved in the inscription on the wall additions from the Western side. Most of the inscriptions that mention different persons or are of agape character date back to the beginning of the 10th-11th centuries. Historian Valeri Silogava gives perfect description of their individual history in his work. Because of this reason we won't focus on them here any more.

The second half of the 16th century has been a very tough period for the population of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Ottomans have killed large part of inhabitants, the rest have been forcefully resettled to the territory of Turkey and became Muslims. This was the time when the liturgy stopped in Kumurdo. As a result of the earthquake on the verge of the 17th and 18th centuries Kumurdo was destroyed to its current state. Abandoned church was gradually robbed of the loose stones. The process became more intense since the 19th century when Armenians from Erzurum started to settle down on this territory. Based on their needs, they first transformed the damaged church into a storage facility and later arranged a cheese factory in its stoa.

Luckily interest of scholars towards Kumurdo became very active from time to time. However the issue of its preservation is still pending. At the moment lack of interest towards safeguarding of the construction, protecting it from environmental influence and negligence contribute to the deterioration of the church.

1. 3. Architecture of the Kumurdo Cathedral

From the point of view of architectural composition Kumurdo is one of the most outstanding monuments of the Georgian architecture. It is a multi-apses building of the cross cupola style. The main space of the church has a form of a cross and creates a geometric silhouette in the exterior. In the interior the linear character of the walls disappears completely and “gets divided” into sections of apses. Exception is found only in the right-angled Western arm, which is relatively longer than the others. In the Eastern part we have a deeply located altar. Each of the side arms houses double apses that are located in parallel to each other. The cupola had been erected on the high, multifaceted pillars with the help of the tromps. Each arm of the cross-shaped plan has a double-sided cover of the stone tiles, which supports creation of highly proportional surface of the front walls.

Thesis presents detailed study of the traces of rehabilitation on each of the facades. It focuses on the specific areas and shows initial structure.

1.3.1. Description of the Facade Decorations

The main concentration of the facade decorations is to be found in the Eastern part of the cathedral. Two sharp-angled niches and their location determine space distribution of the whole facade. Between the niches we find an arched window of a medium size with sophisticated and complex decorations. Sides of the facade house two pastophorium windows that are located over one another and are decorated with different ornaments. On the top and in the middle of the facade there is a round window that is surrounded by decor and large-scale inscription. The text is written on one line and belongs to the bishop Ioane. The composition ends with the purple cross from Golgotha. However as one can see from G. Chubinashvili's description and N. Severov's drawings, prior to the reconstruction the image contained another cross as well. It was situated on the top of the cross, had a shape of a sword and was presented as purple rhombs. Unfortunately, we can only assume what the image could have been like as even old photos (ex. from 1902) are not helpful in this regard.

The high triangle niches and their endings in a form of semi-arches contain quite big heads of the men with the beards. Surface above the heads is covered with radially located curved lines (beams). According to the inscription the left side depicts the personified sky, and the right side shows the land. Characteristic features of both churches are absolutely identical. However difference between the radial beams is very obvious. On the right side the beams are convexed, on the left side on the contrary they are carved out.

The side facades have two windows each, that similar to the Eastern façade have one niche too. According to the inscription the Southern side of the niche contains an image of the head of Adam, and the northern part houses the image of Eve.

A special role is given to the gate of the church. It is located on the South and at the moment is in a very poor and damaged condition. Its architectural and constructive details are an absolute match of the main design. Arch over the gate is broken down, however the construction preserved minor trompes, which house the relief shaped figures of angels with voluminous nonseparated bodies. They are depicted in orans gestures and expressively big heads that are decorated with halos.

Regrettably it is impossible to say anything about the Western façade as it is completely damaged at the moment. There we can see the ruins of the gallery, which was built as an addition to the church at the beginning of the 11th century. The best-preserved part of the gallery is located

on the South. It attracts the visitors because of the different types of ornaments and evenly sized arches. The windows on the Northern façade (on both sides of the niche) are very dominant together with their ornaments and folded upper parts. As a result of the fungus that has been developing on the wall during the years, unique monument is in a very poor condition. The mostly affected area is located on the Northern façade.

1. 4. Interior of Kumurdo

Interior of Kumurdo is lined with the square basalt tiles of different sizes and colors. The dominant role here is given to the high pillars that originate as protuberances of the apses and create hexagonal broad upward space under the cupola. Slightly pointed arches reinforce vertical direction over the pillars. On the top of the pillars in the center, one can find some additional small, decorated “pillars” again.

As already mentioned, trompes on the Eastern side house reliefs and figures of the donors. On the left side of the altar a female figure could easily be considered to be the Virgin Mary in the process of entreaty if not for the inscription, which states that this is the queen Gurandukht. On the other side there is a male figure without any text next to it.

Foundation of the cupola starts immediately from the sail-like trompes. Unfortunately the cupola is damaged and its former appearance can only be a subject of our assumptions and result of the design of the churches from the same period. Small part of the preserved ruins makes it possible for us to imagine that the Western arm should have been a two-story construction with inner gallery.

1.4.1. The Paintings of Kumurdo Cathedral

At first in Kumurdo it was only the upper ceiling of the altar that was decorated by the aniconic paintings (red semi-circle and the outgoing “beams”). These kind of graphic paintings are very common for the monuments of architecture in Tao Klarjeti (church of Oshki and its semi-circle ceiling). However they are mostly found on the facades (Doliskana, Oshki, Parkhali). At the beginning of the 11th century apses of the altar in Kumurdo was fully decorated with a three-layer composition of glorification.

Fragment of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the South-eastern part of the apses is very interesting as it is created in an unusual way: reliefs of the figures are sculpted from plaster and later covered with color. We can still see significant traces of a flying angel in the left upper part of the composition. This is an extremely plastic body, which is made with the use of the soft modeling and thanks to its expressionistic character makes the initial value of the entire composition quite obvious. It clearly responds to the period of development of the Georgian architecture when it became possible to create spacious, plastic figures and that turned into the main practice in the first half of the 11th century.

A very interesting small fragment of the composition from the Northeastern apses depicts the mourning scene. It shows Virgin Mary who kneels next to the body of Christ. The painting is made with great mastery: forms of the bodies, interaction of the figures, movements, and character – all these components create a very fine and emotionally loaded composition. Here, on the bottom of the image one can see contours of half turned figures. These have to be the female ointment masters. However extensive damage of the image makes it hard to make any definite conclusions. Fragments from the Northeastern apses and their stylistic features drastically differ from the altar frescoes. That fact should bear an indication that here we have to do with the mural painting from a later period. Mariam Didebulidze dates the scene of the mourning with the 13th century.

1.5. Rehabilitation of Kumurdo Cathedral

Wine-colored, pink and yellow dressed stones of Kumurdo are beautifully sonorous under the sunlight. However, without the dome it looks like a crownless king. Its destroyed west wing and fallen stones with ornamental fragments reflect the severe history of the temple. Nevertheless, one can notice that time by time the temple underwent certain conservation-restoration works. These include two expeditions held by the Department of the Cultural Heritage Protection of Georgia in 1938-39 years under the leadership of Nicholas Severov and in 1970-80 years under the leadership of Rusudan Gvertseli and Tamar Nemsadze.

In the 1938-39s the Department of the Cultural Heritage Protection of Georgia carried out the restoration works on Kumurdo. Despite of Kumurdo's masonry pink and reddish stones, gray stones were used, introducing visible dissonance in the façade decoration mosaic shape. This

way upper and lower part of the east facade as well as the interior and cornice were restored. The working team also tried to restore the roof of the side wings, however failed to correct the mistake made during the restoration of XVI c. when the radius of the vaults of south and north apses were enlarged.

On the facades of Kumurdo we can see newer pink stones as well, which represent restoration-conservation works held in 1980 by architect Tamar Nemsadze. During this period important details of the upper part of the building were restored and roof covering was almost finalized. But as T. Nemsadze in private speech regrets (2003), again a mistake was made and the team could not finish roof covering on the east wing. As a result, because of this detail, the rain damages East wall.

One of the biggest problems of Kumurdo remains its destroyed west wing. As not even a fragment of the facade decoration is survived, we have no opportunity to imagine its appearance. As for the interior of the west wing, according to some survived fragments and parallel Georgian monuments, significant reconstruction drawings were made. N. Severov thinks that it has two floors surrounded by inner gallery (*Issues of Art History, I vol., Tbilisi 1970, pg.242*).

The dome, unfortunately, is another part of the cathedral with no survived fragments. Severov remarks that supporting elements of the dome represent the resemblance with chronologically parallel other Georgian monuments (Oshki, Xaxuli, Katskhi, Gogiuba, etc.). Thus he thinks that Kumurdo's cupola had twelve facets with six windows. He also considers that its height conforms to its width alike to other monuments of the same period (*Issues of Art History, I vol., Tbilisi, 1970, pg. 243*).

Architects Gia Tsitsishvili and Tamar Nemsadze according to their researches, represent reconstruction drawings. They almost agree with Severov's consideration about the interior of the West wing, but have a slightly different opinion regarding the cupola height and its interior. They consider it to have been decorated with arcade.

The abovementioned demonstrates that rehabilitation issue of Kumurdo has been widely researched. Considerable researches are made about total restoration as well, which implies erection of the dome and rebuilding of the west wing.

Having briefly reviewed all the works carried out with Kumurdo, it is clear that the cathedral has never been left without attention of various researchers. However, unfortunately, it did not prove enough since the monument still faces daily risk of damage. I believe that

successful decision making on re-erection of the dome and restoration of the West wing is highly dependent on the increased knowledge of the monument, which is still missing since Kumurdo has not yet been studied archeologically. Invoking provisions of the Venice Charter, restoration, aiming to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument, must be preceded by an archaeological study of the monument. (The Venice Charter 1964, Restoration, Article 9. available at <http://www.icomos.org/> link accessed on 20 June 2011).

Indeed, the archaeological study is vital for the study of the inner space as well as surrounding area of the cathedral, which might lead to the discovery of the architectural details, itself significantly contributing to the elaboration of the restoration project of the monument.

As for now, whilst no such works have been carried out, it is difficult to favour or dislike any of the options and firmly state one's point. I believe that firstly, a call for project proposals needs to be announced and the commission should identify the most acceptable proposal. Only after this can one discuss which option - conservation or full reconstruction - will best preserve cultural-esthetical value of the monument.

Worth of remembering is the fact that by 2006 the Fund for Monument Protection and Salvation of Georgia was interested by Kumurdo cathedral expressing its readiness to finance the works, however, as mentioned above, the works were postponed. I believe that currently the general situation on the field is changed, time has passed and it is time to start taking steps towards salvation of our cultural heritage. Surely, all rehabilitation projects have stages of accomplishment. Therefore, the first thing to do is to clean the monument, conduct its archeological study and further refer to conservation.

Having in mind the historical-cultural importance of the monument, it is obvious that the issue needs to be treated with responsibility and professionalism, avoiding its discussion on surface, especially noting the mistakes already made.

Chapter #2.

2. 1. Stylistic Analysis of the Inner Space of the Kumurdo Cathedral

This chapter discusses characteristic features of the churches with multiple apses, which are quite rare in Georgian architecture. There are only eight known examples of the style. Chronology of their construction covers a period of the 10th-11th centuries and almost all regions of Georgia.

Research of symbolism of religious architectural forms is based on symbolism of geometric forms. Correspondingly square space of the church is associated with the worldly life and four directions. Semi-circle of the arched roof and rounded cupola serve as an indication of the divine life. In Kumurdo semi-circles that originate from the apses and spacious hexagonal spaces under the cupola are dominant over the clearly presented four directions of an “earthly” space. Differently than in other Georgian multi-apses churches, where apses are arranged in a radial way, Sakotsari’s artistic instinct is directed towards showing of the obvious contrast. He does not absorb the plan of a cross in the inner space of the church like it is made in Nikortsminda, but shows us coexistence of angled and semi-circle forms, their merger and at the same time dominance of the latter. “Divine eternity” does not experience the victory only in the Western direction. As known in Christian architecture the West was associated with the darkness. This is why Sakotsari preserves its “earthly” forms and confronts not only the altar (similar to the hall churches or the right angled churches), but all other parts as well.

This way the noble people would pass through the central Southern gates and immediately merge with the “divine world”. The right-angled entrance from the West gave the entering person an opportunity to walk certain distance and surprisingly find himself in a space that was created through harmonious architectural correlation of components of the wider upward space under the cupola and experience the eternity.

We can come to a conclusion the structure of the architectural composition in Kumurdo is as saturated by the semantic concepts as its general system of decoration.

Unfortunately, because of the damaged cupola we cannot imagine the effects of the shadows on the inner space, but even in the current state it is obvious how the light in the central area and between the apses arms would have been. Even today when the major part of the church is left open because of the lack of the ceiling the sunbeams penetrate the side arms in a very contrasting way. We can allow ourselves to imagine effect of dynamic shadows from the baroque

times. That makes Kumurdo's architect Sakotsari an innovator and introducer of a new style when dynamic side interchanges with and supplements the balance.

2.3. Artistic and Stylistic Analysis of the Facades

In parallel to the stylistic analysis of the facades in Kumurdo, thesis discusses typical features of its contemporary monuments from Tao Klarjeti region as well. Especially interesting are the Eastern facade of the Ekeki Church, Doliskana and the cathedral of Oshki.

Decorations of the Eastern facade of Kumurdo house a composition of "three crosses". Thesis contains analysis of the development of the topic in the Georgian architecture. Separate discussion is dedicated to ornaments of the windows. The author compares Georgian architectural school and the Western European styles from the Preromanesque architecture.

We can see diverse decorations of the Eastern façade: simplicity, balance, strictness are never disrupted here but at the same time demonstrate very deep conceptual ideas, which make it necessary to take a closer and a more concentrated look at every seemingly unimportant detail.

Chapter 3. Symbols of the Kumurdo Cathedral

3.1. Beginnings of the Christian Symbolic

Symbols of the Kumurdo Cathedral mainly focus on depiction of pagan figurative signs. At the very beginning of the use of symbols Christians based them on the works of Clement of Alexandria and his contemporary priests. Signs that were selected by Saint Clement from the old Egyptian symbols were added features from the Old and New Testaments and other religious works. It has to be noted that different combinations of each of the symbols had different meaning.

3.2. Study of the Common Concept of Architecture in Kumurdo

Decorations of Eastern wall present main semantic accents in a form of the ideological formulas: topic of the "three crosses from Golgotha", which is emphasized by the purple cross of Christ in the middle of the composition and wicker crosses next to the lower windows unite the context. Later contextual and symbolic meaning of the decorations from Kumurdo is revealed in a wider way and connects to the surrounding ornaments of the central window. A very thorough study of all elements of decorations and managed to find one more fundamental meaning of the

Christianity in “ordinary” images. These are the human masks that are located at the corners of the consoles of massive relief arcs. On the one side we can see ancient two-faced Janus - a symbol of the pagan beliefs, which are transformed in the Christianity and create links between the past and the future, demonstrate symbolic understanding of the Old and New Testaments. On the other side we find images of the protectors of the four sides of the world.

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the Queen Gurandukht who prays for saving of his soul. The church replaces traditional relief of the donors with a new approach of depicting instead of them the historic figures. Here we continue to deal with the main topic of the decorations of the constriction: saving of the human souls, combating of the death and finding an eternal place in heaven.

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Chapter 4.

4.1. Common Features of the Façade Decorations in the Georgian Architecture of the middle Ages

A given subchapter discusses the main trends of the façade decorations in Georgian architecture of the 10th century, increased use of ornamental motifs and the space they occupy on the facades. Decorations of the windows that were located at the corners gradually occupied their whole surroundings, themes of the ledge ornaments became more diverse and the emphasis has been shifted to the portals. The chapter discusses in detail the most important churches like Doliskana (Tao Klarjeti region, church with the central cupola) and basilica of Eredvi priest (consists of three churches).

Separate analysis is dedicated to different stages of development of the ledge decorations at the arches and the rows similar to the spearheads. Chapter presents the parallels about the ornaments in Armenian and Romanesque churches. From this point of view it is very interesting to study the case of the façade decorations from the San Salvador De Arnosó Monastery in Portugal (second half of the 12th century), where the ornaments of wattled double strap and the spearhead motives surround external arched façade of the central portal. Next to the diverse ornament decorations the ones that resemble the spearheads are allocated a very wide line in the portal of the church of Igreja de Manhente from Portugal, Barcelos Municipality. Available information about the church reveals that character of the decorations was highly influenced by Santa Maria das Júnias. Inscriptions date its erection with 1147, however according to another

theory the church already existed at the end of the 9th century. And indeed, portal decoration of the latter demonstrates its more archaic form. Existence of the similar parallels is very important and needs a more in-depth research.

4.1.1. National Character of the Facade Decorations in Georgian Church Architecture and Their Comparison to the Other Architectural Schools

It is obvious that facade decoration from Kumurdo has a systemic character. However it is so different from the other ornaments and so individual that it has not managed to become the sample of the “general Georgian” appearance. Situation is different in the case of Oshki (in Tao Klarjeti), which is named among the first perfect samples of the facade systems of Georgian architecture. Here all trends are presented in a very persuasive way and create a harmonious perfect decorative composition. According to the break down of the architectural types and facades, decorations are focused in the central part of the church where they emphasize vertical lines and reinforce the arches that are directed towards the center of the facade.

It is interesting that differently than in the examples of the Georgian school one of the main features of the monuments of the Greek architecture from the same period (Hosios Loukas, 10th century; Nea Moni, 11th century, Daphni Monastery, 11th century) focuses on representation of the exterior with the help of the construction materials, architectural compositions, fine forms of construction. Here architecture practically rejects ornaments on the facades and uses the interchangeable polychrome distribution of the stones and bricks. In order to make the walls lighter and more artistic architects apply layout of bricks that are directed in different directions.

From this point of view Armenian architecture creates absolutely different aesthetics. Typologically it is quite close to its Georgian counterpart. If we follow development of different Armenian monuments we will see almost identical trends of facade decorations. However the difference between the schools is obvious and expressed in perception of general architectonics as well as in the ratio of forms.

It is interesting for us to discuss facade decoration system of architecture from Vladimir-Suzdal too as its decorative system of the domed cathedral is of a high artistic value. Chronologically it belongs to a later period of 12th-13th centuries. The most significant monuments unite the Church of Saint Dimitry in Vladimir (1193-1197) and Church of Saint

George in Yuryev-Polsky (1230-1234). Here the walls are entirely covered with the ornaments and the facades are fully decorated with different figures.

It is interesting to compare Georgian sculptures with their Western European Romanesque counterparts that are presented on the facades of the churches where they create a unity and show a common program. Centre of the content focuses on the large composition that is located in a triangle over the entrance. The other scenes and figures extend and supplement the central topic as well. Romanesque sculptural decorations demonstrate different approaches. Here one sees the main composition and the images that depend on it. It has to be noted that disproportionate shape of the figures in Georgia, expressive character of the gestures, dynamic of the lines – all these moments do not have any exaggerated character like this was the case in the Romanesque art where dramatism of the subject was shown through expressive features of the figures and aggravated disruptions of proportions. If Romanesque reliefs are full of certain tension, Georgian examples demonstrate their discreet and calm side.

4.1.2. Conjunction of Figurative Language of Preromanese Style in Georgia and on Iberian Peninsula

During discussion of typical features of the facade decorations in different countries we mentioned the differences that are prompted by national self-consciousness. However we also come across the cases when tastes and priorities for selection of the main artistic languages of different countries coincide.

The best parallels of the phenomenon are to be found in the Preromanese Spanish architecture where we encounter an amazing likeness of composition, expressive side of the modest, ideological, symbolic concepts, laconic and simple presentation of completed forms. Especially interesting church of Santa Maria de Cuintaline de Quintanilla de las Viñas is located on historic territory of Spain La Tierra de Lara. The facade is mainly decorated with continuous ornamental bands of twisted vine circles and figures of fantastic animals, birds and intertwined chains of rings, which encircle isolated sculptures.

It needs to be noted the church houses very interesting examples of relief compositions and figures as well. For us it is very important to study their creative artistic language, which is marked by the graphical flat style. Decorative expression here is shown through frequent, short, diversely directed lines. One would also immediately notice distorted proportions. Based on the

characteristic features these compositions have close parallels with its contemporary counterparts from Georgia of the 9th-10th centuries (later replaced by more spacious and rounded forms). This trend of development reached its highest point in the Romanesque architecture where the figures are already almost three-dimensional. Our national school also introduced modest, traditionally shaped rounded forms, however it still preserved the line as a tool of the main communication language.

In parallel to the ways of expression, it is interesting to study the interconnection of the figures too. Here similar to the sculptures of the 9th-10th centuries, the main method of uniting the figures, transmitting the expressions or telling the story was the language of gestures. Frozen frontal expressionless faces and weightless, flat bodies are given the expressive forms through introduction of plastic contours and the soft modeling of the hands. We witness development of the facade decoration system in time and space and follow the tasks that are faced by the masters: each of them moves from the flat images to the spacious bodies. Over the time graphic style is replaced by elements that are full of painting and interplay of shadows. Respectively role of the ornament and relief compositions increases on the facade surfaces despite the fact that beyond the general trends we also see compositions, forms and dynamic that are based on local tastes and determine different features of individual schools.

4.1.3. Stylistic Features of the Georgian Monumental Sculpture of the 10th Century

The subchapter focuses on identifying of the features of the Georgian facade figures in the 10th century.

First of all we discuss the “standard” three-figure relief of Opiza (9th century, relief is dedicated to the donors). It shows flat bodies of figures with distorted proportions. Because of their frontal character the only thing that connects the figures are the gestures. The main decorative function is given to the curved frequent lines that cover the three figures and form their clothes. Apparently it was not only the structure of the composition from the Opiza relief but types of the figures as well that influenced church decorations from the later periods. Examples of the same style can be found in the fragments of reliefs from the abandoned Church of Assumption in Sapara, composition of Georgian Tkhaba-Erda Church in Ingushetia etc. We use the method of comparative analysis in order to conduct detailed study of the given relief compositions.

Comparison of these two compositions shows the change and development of the artistic forms of expression over the centuries. Trend that started in the second half of the 10th century and focused on introduction of movement of the static figures is analyzed based on the figure of donor from the Sapara Church of Assumption and composition of the Kologli Church. In both cases we witness the process of liberation of the body and introduction of more free movements.

Angels from the Assumption Church in Sapara are very interesting for the study of the sculptures from the 10th century. Here figures are so voluminous that they create an impression of being three-dimensional. This feeling is even more aggravated in the case of the angel with six wings. The bottom part of the figure down the waist is completely round and while being observed from the side one can see the space. Next to the other features this sculpture is a big step forward for the epoch. It says a completely new word in the history of development of Georgian monumental sculpture.

If we compare with each other the figures from the same epoch and two bordering regions – Meskheti and Javakheti we will see a very deep creative potential of the masters. In the Church of Assumption there is a figure, which looks more like a block. Its parts are less separated from each other, but the carvings on its surface are deeper. One can witness attempts to make the form more sophisticated (especially artistic side of the wings). In Kumurdo the only function of the lines is to “cover” the convex body. It has to be noted that in the case of the Church of Assumption the main accent is put on the wings of the angels. Here on the contrary the wings are “hidden” and the master does not use their “effective potential of expression” shifting the main focus to the body of the figure.

Angels of Kumurdo are restrained and strict. Their figures are absolutely static and this state is even more aggravated by the downward form of the wings. In the case of Sapara on contrary the viewer feels dynamics, which is a new word for the epoch. Despite the fact that the figure is still shown from a frontal perspective and preserves the posture of static orans, leaving the viewers on mercy of the hints, the open massive wings still create a sharp angle and actively participate in establishment of an artistic image. All existing features of the relief sculptures that were available until the second half of the 10th century are presented in the church of Oshki with a special mastery. Isolated figures or multi-figure decorations of the eight-faceted pillars show plastic voluminous bodies where under the clothes one can feel dense bodies. This way we

can retrospectively follow the change of the ways of expression methods and modeling of the sculptures and get aware of the stages of their development in the period of the second half of the 10th century. From this point of view figures from Lamiskana can be considered to be the first samples where linear and surface modeling still remains the main expressive method. In Kumurdo we meet dominance of a spacious, rounded body even in the cases when parts of the figure are not separated from each other and preserve an appearance of one block. The same way as in the Georgian engravings flatness is exchanged with the introduction of sharp volumes. In the Church of Assumption in addition to the volume architects introduce dynamics of the forms as well. In Oshki the process goes even further: figures from the church resemble Hellenistic sculptures and the samples of small plastic from Byzantine. Similar to the reliefs from Jvari in Mtskheta the figures become very sophisticated, calm and fine.

The study clearly demonstrated that the 10th century was a very interesting and important period for the development of the Georgian architecture. Masters from these times accumulated experience while working in classical and experimental styles, presented their works in accordance with the strivings of their epoch and mixed them with the feelings of the divine glory and the festive appearance. The best example that unites all these factors is the Kumurdo Cathedral, which was constructed in 964. Its study enabled us to generate an in-depth understanding of religious architecture from the period when it focused not only on the buildings for prayer or creating of a huge place that showed grandeur of the country but developed an architectonic and decorative system that encompassed the main teachings and symbols of Christianity.

Analysis of the common features of the façade decorations in Georgian architecture demonstrated once again the national character, taste and temperament. It showed a big difference with the national characters of other architectural schools be it Byzantine, Armenian, Russian or Western European architecture of Romanesque style.

Separate analysis of one of the main components of the façade decorations – reliefs, gave us an opportunity to present evolution of the flat images and dimensional expressively exaggerated and disproportionate figures in the second half of 10th century. It is interesting to witness the dominance of the line dynamics as a foundation of the reliefs that acquire complete originality. Search for the parallels in this specific aspect brought us to discussion of examples of Preromanesque architecture from Iberian Peninsula (Pyrenees). This is a very interesting issue

especially if analyzed in the light of the theories about connections between the Georgian tribes and inhabitants of Iberian Peninsula (specifically Basks). We have accumulated materials that demonstrate shared trends and may be based on genetic and cultural closeness.

Conclusion

Kumurdo's detailed study gives us a chance to learn about one of the most important monuments of Georgian architecture not only because of its multiple facades but also to investigate it as one of the first monuments with united system of architectural forms, composition and artistic side of decorations, conceptual and ideological issues.

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KUMURDO CATHEDRAL (964)



East Façade Central window decoration



„Scy”



Adam



“Earth”



Eva



Altar, Symbolic figures in the consols decoration



Interior of the Kumurdo Cathedral



Relief sculpture of Donors



South Gate

