

## The Sculptures on the Eastern Façade of the Holy Cross of Mtzkhet'a

by

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### I

Picturesquely situated high on a mountainside not far from Mtzkhet'a, the ancient capital of Iberia, is a monument of a particular type of Georgian architecture, the so-called *Mtzkhet'a Cross* (referred to in ancient historical sources as *Jvari Mtzkhet'isai*, *Jvari patiosani*, or simply *Jvari*), which for a long time has been an object of interest to travellers and scholars.

In literature dealing especially with the genesis of the *cruciform domed church* and the problems connected with it, Jvari became the subject of an animated discussion, which, however, did not extend beyond a superficial consideration of the monument — a simple gathering together of facts that has frequently led scholars to erroneous conclusions<sup>1</sup>. Only recently has a proper study and evaluation of Jvari been attempted<sup>2</sup>.

The building technique, the methods evolved in working out its structural details, the masterly application of appropriate artistic schemes, have all contributed toward making Jvari a "superb expression of artistic creativeness of its era in the sphere of architecture and a proof of the keen creative act, which shows the height and completeness of attainment"<sup>3</sup>. But the importance of Jvari does not end here, for it represents, too, the ultimate refinement of an architectural principle, which, at the period of its construction, had been developing for some time in Georgian architecture. Jvari deserves, therefore, special attention in any study of monuments of the type of the *Cruciform domed church*.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection it must be pointed out Strzygowski's evaluation of the Jvari church and his interpretation of its sculptures, are to say the least, superficial and in some cases incorrect. The so-called small church of Jvari, constructed by Kuropalat Guaram, was not built parallel to the big church of Jvari (J. Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* 1 [Wien 1918] 856, fig. 72); as Strzygowski's plan shows, the octogon construction is not geometrically centered (*ibid.*, fig. 72), and furthermore, his identification of the persons represented is confusing (*ibid.* 431). These are only a few of Strzygowski's inaccuracies.

<sup>2</sup> We refer to the study of the churches of Jvari type, published by G. Chubishvili, *Monuments architectoniques du type de Jvari* (Tiflis 1948) 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 25.



A general study of historical data, epigraphic details, the Jvari carvings, and a thorough investigation of the building itself date the monument at the end of the sixth century (before 604/5)<sup>4</sup>.

Of special interest in a consideration of the Mtskheta Cross are the carvings on its outer walls, one of the respects in which it differs fundamentally from Byzantine architectural monuments. These carvings are placed in accordance with certain principles, serve a particular purpose, and are an integral part of the whole architectural concept. The purpose of this study is to examine the carvings on the eastern façade, and above all to determine the identity of the personages represented in them.

The eastern façade projects from the square of the building in the form of a three-sided apse (fig. 1). Centered above the window on each of the three sides is a plaque, which, though rectangular, is narrower at the top than at the bottom, and in which are represented historical personages who played a part in the building of Jvari. The plaque on the central façade of the apse (fig. 2) presents Christ, standing, with a Gospel in his left hand. His right hand is placed on the head of a person richly dressed in an ornamented robe, who is kneeling before Him and who is represented in smaller scale than the figure of Christ. Above the plaque is an elongated, protruding stone block on which a hovering angel is represented. This block was evidently a cover for the carving below it, and is considerably damaged.

To the left of the center plaque, that is, in the plaque on the right wall of the apse, is a figure in a praying posture, and above it the Archangel Michael extends his hand as if pointing forward (fig. 3).

Finally, in the plaque of the third (left) wall, two persons are represented, one apparently a boy. A figure similar to the Archangel Michael is carved behind and above them, with wings spread wide and once more with extended hand pointing forward (fig. 4).

All these historical persons are dressed in elaborate robes and cloaks testifying to their importance. Each plaque consists of a single stone block. The figures are carved to a depth of about five centimeters, so that a natural frame is formed at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

Each panel contains a Georgian inscription, executed in a script named *asomt'avruli* (majuscule) or simply *mrgvlovani* (rounded)<sup>5</sup>. In contrast to

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 114/5; Sh. Amiranashvili, *Istoria Gruzinskogo isskustva* (Moscow 1950) 114; M. Chkhikvadze, *Arkitektura Jvari*, 20; J. Sauer, *Die Kreuzkirche bei Mtskheta (Georgien) in ihrer geschichtlichen Bedeutung*, = *Römische Quartalschrift* 39 (1931) 607-12.

<sup>5</sup> These inscriptions have been published many times; the first by M. F. Brosset, *Rapports sur un voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie, premier rapport* 1 (St. Petersburg 1850) 48-9; Bartholomaei, *Lettres numismatiques et archéologiques relatifs à la Transcaucasie* (St. Petersburg 1859) 79; G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 74-84, 142/8; also p. 75, note 1; A. Natroev, *Mtskheta i ego Sobor Sveti tskhoveli* (Tiflis 1901) 19; I. Javachishvili, *K'art'uli damts'erlobat'a mtsodneoba anu paleographia* (Tbilisi 1926) 158; *Akhlat' agmotshenili dzegebi* = *Bulletin de l'Université de Tiflis* 2 (1922/3), 332/5; M. Tarkhnishvili, *Les recentes découvertes épigraphiques et littéraires en Géorgie* = *Mus* 63 (1950) 249-60.



the earliest Georgian inscriptions, such as those of Bolnisi (478—493), the Jvari letters are not in relief (convex), but are incised (concave), and as at Bolnisi, they follow each other continuously without breaks between words.

In a very broad and general way the inscriptions identify the figures and read as follows: The six lines in the upper left corner of the middle panel, *Cross of the Saviour, have pity upon Stephanos, Patrikios of K'arthi*<sup>6</sup> (fig. 5b); in the panel on the left wall, *St. Archangel Michael, aid Demetre Hypatos*<sup>7</sup> (fig. 5a); between the figures in the panel on the right wall, *St. Archangel Gabriel, aid Adrnerse Hypatos*<sup>8</sup>, (fig. 5c) and down the left border of this same panel, . . . . . (*Adrn*)*erses son*<sup>9</sup>.

Here perhaps it would be well to point out again that these carvings played an essential role in the concept of the building as a whole, and that the placing of them here on the outside walls of the apse was not without significance. Evidently the architect included them in a definite, well-conceived design, in which they function as an integral part of the over-all architectural complex<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 143; M. Tarkhnishvili, *Découvertes* 252. Instead of *Cross of the Saviour* Brosset reads *St. Wrila* (*Voyage* 1, 48). This error was later repeated by Strzygowski, *Baukunst der Arménier und Europa* 1, 431.

<sup>7</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *ibid.* 143; M. Tarkhnishvili, *ibid.* 252; M. F. Brosset, *Voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie* (St. Petersburg 1850) 48/9. Apparently Brosset was able to read only one part of this inscription because the other part was covered with moss (Brosset 49).

<sup>8</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *ibid.* 143—144; M. Tarkhnishvili, *ibid.* 252; M. F. Brosset, *ibid.* 48.

<sup>9</sup> This border inscription, which is badly damaged, in fact nearly obliterated, is important for the determination of chronology of the Dukes of Iberia. Brosset does not mention this inscription at all, but it was noticed by the experienced eye of Bartholomaei, who was able to read the last two words as "Mt'avris dze" — (*Lettres numismatiques* 79). Recently this damaged inscription was restored by Prof. Chubinashvili, in whose opinion it should be read as follows: — "K'obul (Adrn)—erses dze." The only definite part of the inscription is "erses dze", which must mean, that the youth represented here is the son of Adrnerse (Adarnerse); as for K'obul, nothing can be said definitely because, as Prof. Chubinashvili himself notes, some letters are seen only in part, while others are so nearly obliterated that their definite restoration is impossible.

<sup>10</sup> Besides Jvari, the Bolnisi Sioni, Zromi, and many other Georgian architectural monuments between the fifth and seventh century contradict very clearly and convincingly J. Baltrusaitis' opinion: "Tout décor en Géorgie, que ce soit un décor architectural, un décor ornamental ou une sculpture figurée, se présente comme un hors-d'oeuvre. Il n'épouse pas la structure, il ne la souligne pas, il la cache. C'est comme un vêtement, destiné à couvrir un corps. (*Étude sur l'Art médiéval dans Géorgie et en Arménie* [Paris 1929] 96). Or: "Mais tandis que la sculpture romane est incorporée au mur et aux diverses parties de la bâtisse, la sculpture du Caucase n'a pas encore trouvé une place définie sur les vastes surfaces des monuments. Elle s'accroche au hasard sans qu'intervienne dans sa répartition un raisonnement du constructeur". (*Art Sumerien Art Roman* [Paris 1934] 88). Most certainly Baltrusaitis' drawings also are not helping to understand the substance of Georgian sculpture but create inextricable confusion.



It should be noted that in the carvings rhythm, balance, and harmony are preserved not only within each separate plaque, but also as they relate to each other: all the plaques are placed evenly and symmetrically at the same height from the ground; and Demetre and Adrnerse, as well as the angels of their respective plaques, are oriented toward the central carving of Christ and Stephanos (fig. 5), thereby creating, in addition to a sense of order and symmetry, an impression of unity and completeness, and an intimate union of composition.

We shall try now to establish more accurately the identities of the figures inscribed as Demetre, Adrnerse, and Stephanos, and represented here on the eastern façade of the Church of the Cross. About one hundred years ago Brosset offered the following identifications: in the central plaque Stephanos, the First, Duke of K'art'li; in the carving to his right Demetre Hypatos, (brother of Stephanos); and in that to his left Adrnerse Hypatos the First, Duke of K'art'li<sup>11</sup>. Later the question of identity was studied by Chubinashvili<sup>12</sup> and by Javakhishvili<sup>13</sup> who approached the problem principally from an epigraphical point of view. Both of them came to the same conclusion as had Brosset.

Recently however, an opinion expressed by Toumanoff disagrees with the previously accepted identification of the Jvari figures<sup>14</sup>. According to Toumanoff there was "onomastic confusion between Stephanos II, son of Adarnase I, and Stephen, son of Adrnerse and father of Mihr and Arch'il," and this, "together with the confusion between two Saracen invasions of Georgia, must have caused a redactor of Juansher's work to overlook a century of Iberian History"<sup>15</sup>. This, in turn, led Prof. Toumanoff to conclude that the figures must be: in the central carving, Stephanos II; to the right, Demetre, brother of Stephanos I; and to the left, Adrnerse II, son of Stephanos II, while the boy is Stephanos, son of Adrnerse II<sup>16</sup>.

In substantiation of the claim that Stephanos I, son of Guaram the Great (Guaram Kuropalat) could not have been one of the builders, much less the chief builder (Ktitor), of the church, four arguments have been advanced by Prof. Toumanoff.

The first is based on the negative characterization given to Stephanos I by Juansher, the Georgian historian whose work is incorporated in K'art'lis

<sup>11</sup> M. F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie* 1 (St. Petersburg 1848) 232; *idem*, *Voyage* 1, 49-50; *idem*, *Resumé* 6. Also J. Sauer 608.

<sup>12</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *Die kleine Kirche des Hl. Kreuzes von Mzcheta*, 1, I, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der georgischen Baukunst* (Tiflis 1921) 33-48.

<sup>13</sup> I. Djavakhishvili, *Akhlat' agmotshenili dsaglebi* = *Bulletin de l'Université de Tiflis* 2 (1922/23) 332/5.

<sup>14</sup> C. Toumanoff, *Iberia on the Eve of Bagratid Rule* = *Mus* 65 (1952) 205.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 207.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 206. For the chronology of these persons see also the *Genealogical Table of the Kings and Princes of Iberia* in the addendum to this work.



Zkhovreba<sup>17</sup>. "This Stephanos", writes Juansher, "was without fear of God; he did not serve God, nor did he aid the Faith and the churches<sup>18</sup>". On the subject of his death, Juansher adds: "God did this to prince Stephanos because he lived not according to God's grace; he was a foe to the pious and a friend to the impious<sup>19</sup>". Of Stephanos II, on the other hand, the historian says: "This Stephanos was pious, a purifier of the faith, a builder of churches, more so than all the kings and princes of Iberia<sup>20</sup>". The second argument, too, is based on Juansher's account, wherein he says that it was precisely Stephanos II who "surrounded with walls (boundaries) the church of the Holy Cross (Jvari)<sup>21</sup>".

According to the third argument, since Stephanos I abandoned the Roman alliance for that of the Iranians, it is hardly conceivable that he or his relatives would have borne any Roman titles<sup>22</sup>.

The fourth and final argument points out the inconsistency in the presumption that Adrnerse, head of the dethroned older Chosroids could have been depicted with the Guaramids, who, despite his obeisance to them, must have been considered usurpers by the legitimists of the day<sup>23</sup>.

Thus, Prof. Toumanoff's opinion, seemingly borne out by the above arguments, created a new problem, for it placed the building of the Church of Jvari, and of the carvings which are an organic part of it, in the Fiftieth of the seventh century.

Let us consider these four arguments in greater detail. First, in the argument that Stephanos was impious and without fear of God we have a serious charge against his character, but, in considering the point, it would

<sup>17</sup> *K'art'lis Tskhovreba*, or the *Georgian Annals*, represent a corpus of various historical writings, which, over a number of years, has included several sources, but if we consider all existing redactions, we find that the different historical sources in the corpus are about ten in number. One of the earliest codices of this corpus is that of Queen Mary (hereinafter: *QM*), copied in 1638-46 and edited by E. Takaishvili: *Kart'lis Tskhovreba Mariam dedop'lis varianti* (Tiflis 1906). The earliest redaction, however, namely the Queen Anna codex, which was copied in 1479-95, was published in 1942 by S. Kaukhishvili: *Anna dedop'liseuli nuskha* (Tiflis; hereinafter: *QA*). The Georgian Academy of Science has begun the publication of a new edition, which is based on all essential codices. The first volume of this two-volume work was completed and edited by Kaukhishvili in 1955: *K'art'lis Zkhovreba tek'sti dadgenili kvela dsirit'adi Khelnacerebis mikhedvit*, 1 (Tbilisi; hereinafter: *K*). The french translation of *K'art'lis Zkhovreba* was published by M. F. Brosset (*Histoire* 1). Concerning these historical sources cf. I. Javakhishvili, *Dzveli K'art'uli saistorio Mcerloba* (Tiflis 1916; <sup>2</sup>1945); C. Toumanoff, *Medieval Georgian Historical Literature* = *Traditio* 1 (1943) 161/6. M. Tarkhishvili, *Sources Arméno — Géorgiennes de l'Histoire ancienne de l'Église de Géorgie* = *Mus* 60 (1947) 37-42; *K*, pp. 7-54;

<sup>18</sup> *QA*, p. 145; *QM*, p. 193; *K*, p. 222; C. Toumanoff, *Iberia*, *op. cit.* 205.

<sup>19</sup> *QA*, p. 146; *QM*, p. 195-196; *K*, p. 226.

<sup>20</sup> *QA*, p. 147; *QM*, p. 197; *K*, p. 228.

<sup>21</sup> *QA*, p. 147; *QM*, p. 197; *K*, p. 228.

<sup>22</sup> C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 205.

<sup>23</sup> C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 205.



be unjust to rely solely on the words of Juansher and to accept his opinion unreservedly or without further investigation, especially as Juansher was himself a "scion of the Chosroid dynasty"<sup>24</sup>. Juansher's official position could explain, too, why King Wakhtang (a Chosroid), against whom the head of the church of K'art'li, Archbishop Michael, levelled equally serious charges<sup>25</sup>, and who, according to Juansher, must also have been cursed by the Archbishop<sup>26</sup>, is dealt with very leniently and represented as a peaceful and righteous man by Juansher<sup>27</sup>.

For a study of the character of Stephanos I, important information is contained in the "Story of the Miracles of the Holy and God-like Saint Shio"<sup>28</sup>, in which the enmity between Duke Stephanos I and Catholicos Bartholomew is described in detail. In the eighth miracle of this work, which offers very valuable historical information, it is stated that when Stephanos and Bartholomew visited the monastery of Shio Mgvimeli together, Stephanos was received with less respect than was Catholicos Bartholomew, who was greeted with deep obeisance and the lighting of candles. Observing the great reverence shown to Bartholomew, Stephanos "was filled with envy, because these slaves of God did not receive him with respect, and because he was a proud man and full of evil envy, and dealt very badly with churches"<sup>29</sup>.

Later Stephanos repented of his sins, became a believer, aided the work of restoring the Christian faith, contributed to the building of the Church of the Cross, "and immediately issued an order and confirmed it with his hand and decreed to the whole country of K'art'li that all churches were to be freed from all charges and that no one was to use force against them. And so, from this time on Stephanos paid respect to churches, bishops, priest, and nuns, and he also built much of the Church of the Cross . . .

<sup>24</sup> C. Toumanoff, *op.cit.* 65, 1-2, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> „შენ დაგიტეობია ქრისტე და ცეცხლსა ესავ.“ „You renounced Christ and worship fire, *The Life of Wakhtang Gorgaslan*, K, p. 196.

<sup>26</sup> „კრულ ყო მეფე და ყოველნი სპანი მისნი.“ „Cursed the King and all his knights“, *ibid.* 196.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 196; I. Javakhishvili, *K'art'veli eris Istoria* 1 (Tiflis 1951) 343. Latest research has made it clear, and now it can be said for certain, that the struggle between Mikhael and Wakhtang was on religious grounds, and in the opinion of Javakhishvili, Wakhtang and his fellow-believers should be considered as followers of a teaching opposed to Chalcedonianism.

<sup>28</sup> These "Miracles" were collected by Basil (son of Wache) later Catholicos Basil, (1090-1110), but only a small number of them has reached us. In spite of both the title and the "miraculous" character of this work, it contains many interesting historical facts and mentions some historical persons not revealed to us in any other sources. It was published by P. G. Sabinini, *Sak'art'velos Samotkhe* (St. Petersburg 1882) 253-64.

<sup>29</sup> „განისებრებოდა შურიტა, რამეთუ ამას არა რად ესე ვითარი პატივი უყვეს მონათა მათ ღუთისა, რამეთუ იყოცა კაცი ესე ამპარტავან და ბორბოტითა შურიტა აღსავსე და ეკლესიათა ფრიად ძვირსა უყოფდა.“ Sabinini, *op.cit.* 256.



and much good did Stephanos do for churches, and everybody glorified God and his slave Shio<sup>30</sup>. From this source it also becomes clear that the dispute between Stephanos I on the one hand and Bishop Bartholomew and other churchmen on the other was more a struggle for primacy than a religious dispute. Actually, after the end of kingship in Iberia the Church attained enormous influence. Economically it was the strongest contender for power, possessing great estates and wealth, and, because it was a united and centralized institution, it was more powerful than the several separate dukedoms which continued to exist<sup>31</sup>. In considering the character of Stephanos I, we should not forget one most important fact, he was the first among the Eristavs who dared to inscribe on the obverse of the Ibero-Sasanian drachmas minted by himself (fig. 7a, 7b) the initials of his name, symmetrically placed on the border in Georgian Mrgvlovani letters (Ste-PhaNoS), (fig. 7a)<sup>32</sup>. On the reverse of his coins, instead of the sacred flame (*Atashdan*), national emblem of Iran, he placed the Cross — symbol of the victory of Christianity. This was, of course, a political act of the first magnitude and points not to Stephanos' Iranophilia, but rather to his efforts to re-establish the political independence of Iberia and to strengthen the Christian faith. It is possible that this political act occurred between 590 and 607, when Byzantium wrested the Eastern part of Iberia from Persian hands.

The second argument against identifying the figure in the central panel as Stephanos I, as pointed out above, is based on Juansher's words: "It was precisely Stephanos II who surrounded with walls the Church of the

<sup>30</sup> „და ამასვე ჟამსა, დასწერა ჰროართაგი და დაამტკიცა ხელითა თვისათა და წარჰსცა ყოვლისა შინა ქუტყანასა ქართლისასა, რათა ყოველნი ეკლესიანი განთავისუფლდენ, მძლავრებისა და ხარჯისა მიცემისა. ესრეთ ამიერითგანცა, იწყო სტეფანოს ყოფად ეკლესიათა და პატივისა პერობად ეპისკოპოსთა, მღვდელთა და მონაზონთა და ამანცა ფრიადა აღაშენა ეკლესიასა ზედა ჯუბარისასა და მრავალსა კეთილთა უყოფდა ეკლესიათა სტეფანოზ და ყოველნი აღიდებდენ ღმერთსა და მონასა მისსა შიოს.“

Sabinini, *op. cit.* 258. This proves again the accuracy of the report K, pp. 222, 374), contained in Georgian historical sources and recorded by Juansher and Sumbat, son of David, that the rule of Stephanos corresponded to the period when Bartholomae, rather than Kyrion, was Bishop.

<sup>31</sup> K. Kekelidze, *History of Georgian Literature* 1 (1941) 36. Apparently certain members of the Church became so powerful that in some instances they took upon themselves the functions of dukes. This happened, for instance, after the death of Grigol Chorchaneli, and was reported in the *Life of Serapion of Zarzma*: „და ხელთ იდვა რაჲ განგებაჲ სამცხისაჲ და დააწყნარა ყოველი საბრძანებელი თვისი, ვითარცა წეს იყო, და დაიპყრა ყოველი მამუდი ლა ეკლესიანი, პირველთა მათ მეშფოთეთანი.“

S. Kubaneishvili, *Zveli K'art'uli literaturis Khrestomatia* (Tbilisi 1946) 96; P. Peeters, *Histoires monastiques géorgiennes* = *AnBoll* 36/37 (1917-19) 197/8.

<sup>32</sup> According to Pakhomov, *Monety Grusii, čast' I (Domongolskij period) Zapiski numismatisčeskago otdelenija Imperatorskago Russkago Arheologičeskago Obščestva*, 1, 4, pp. 28-29, these coins should be attributed to Stephanos I, and Toumanoff apparently accepts this view. Toumanoff, *Iberia*, *op. cit.* 254.



Holy Cross Jvari<sup>33</sup>. But surely this does not support the argument; on the contrary, it is more a contradiction than a confirmation of it. Let us turn to the historical data<sup>34</sup>.

It is positively stated in the *Conversion of Iberia* and by Sumbat, son of David (Sumbat Davitisdze) that the Church of the Cross was built by Stephanos, Demetre, and Adrnerse, and, in part, by the son of Adrnerse, Stephanos II<sup>35</sup>. The chronicle reads: "After him (Guaram) ruled his son Stephanos (Stephanos I), the brother of Demetre, and he continued the building of the Church of the Cross<sup>36</sup>". Sumbat Davitisdze tells us, "... after this Guaram, his son Stephanos, brother of Demetre, was Duke, and he continued the building of the Church of the Cross in Mtskheta<sup>37</sup>".

However, as we learn from the same source, Stephanos I and his brother Demetre did not complete the building of the church. We read, "... after him, Stephanos (Stephanos II), son of Adrnerse, was Duke; he completed the building of the Church of the Cross, and decreed that during the feast of the Cross, there should be a month's gathering there<sup>38</sup>". Sumbat Davitisdze bears this out: "... and he Stephanos II completed the church of Jvari, and decreed a gathering there<sup>39</sup>".

<sup>33</sup> C. Toumanoff, *ibid.* 205.

<sup>34</sup> Very interesting information on this question is contained in the ninth century historical work (based on even more ancient information and sources) *Conversion of Iberia*, published by T. Zhordania (*Chronicles*, 1, 1889, pp. 11-71). Also in *K'art'lis Zkhovreba*, edited by Kaukhtshishvili (Tbilisi 1955); C. Toumanoff, *Med. Georgian Hist. Lit. of the seventh-fifteenth centuries* = *Traditio* 1 (1943) 162, 166; idem, *Iberia* 1, 2, p. 18, note 5; M. Tarkhnishvili, *Sources* 29-42; and recently S. Kaukhtshishvili, *op. cit.*, 7-34; S. Janashia, *Uzvelesi erovnuli tsnoba K'art'velta p'irvelsazkhovreblis Shesakheb* = *Bulletin de l'Institut Marr de Langues, d'Histoire et de Culture materielle* 5-6 (Tiflis 1940) 637-45. Information of interest to us is contained in the following historical sources included in the *Corpus*: Juansher — *Zkhovreba, Wakhtang Gorgasalisa*; and Sumbat, son of David — *Zkhovreba da uckeba Bagrationi'a*. Unfortunately, the authors of these historical sources do not give us the dates of rule for these personages. Even the author of the *Conversion of Iberia* had apparently no exact date. As for the eighteenth-century historian Vakhushiti, for lack of documentary sources, he used the synchronization method. (Vakhushiti, *History of Georgia* 1, ed. Bak'radze, pp. 4-5). However, it is possible to reconstruct from these sources, the chronological sequence of the Dukes.

<sup>35</sup> The information given by Sumbat, son of David: "... and he (Guaram) laid the foundation for the Church of the Cross, which is at Mtskheta" (*QM*, p. 339; *Chronicles* 67; Kaukhtshishvili 374); in *Conversion of Iberia*, (Mok'cevai K'art'lisai): "... Guaram Kuropalat laid the foundation of the Church of the Revered Cross" (*Opis* 2, 724; *Chronicles*, 1, 57); by Juansher: "... He (Guaram Kuropalat) began the Church of the Revered Cross", (*QM*, p. 192; Kaukhtshishvili, 221); all of which refers to — as has been pointed out in special literature — the small church at Jvari. G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 19, 25, also *Die kleine Kirche des Hl. Kreuzes von Mtschet'a* (Tbilisi 1921) 5-7; J. Sauer, *Die Kreuzkirche bei Mtschet (Georgien) in ihrer geschichtlichen Bedeutung* = *RQS* 39 (1931) 608.

<sup>36</sup> Takaishvili, *Opis* 2, 724; Zhordania, *Chronicles* 1, 58.

<sup>37</sup> *QM*, p. 340; *Chronicles* 1, 68; K. p. 374.

<sup>38</sup> *Opis* 2, 726; *Chronicles*, 1, 69.

<sup>39</sup> *QM*, p. 192, *Chronicles* 1, 68; K. p. 375.



Finally, let us consult Juansher himself. He mentions the builders of this church on two occasions, and from his words we can reconstruct the whole picture. He tells us: "... and the brother of Stephanos, Demetre, built the Church of the Holy Cross<sup>40</sup>". Later he adds: "... the Church of the Holy Cross and the Sion of Tbilisi were completed by the ruler of K'art'li, Adrnerse<sup>41</sup>". Thus it appears that the building of the church was finished during Adrnerse's rule, and, as mentioned above, Stephanos II completed only the remaining complex of buildings. Or, to use again Juansher's words: "... and he (Stephanos II) erected the boundaries of the Church of the Holy Cross, and built halls, and decreed a gathering every Friday<sup>42</sup>".

It is clear, therefore, that, in spite of Toumanoff's claims, the principal builders of the Jvari Church were: Stephanos I, son of Guaram; Demetre, brother of Stephanos I and Adrnerse I, and that when Stephanos II surrounded the Church with walls (boundaries), the reliefs on the eastern façade must already have existed.

Equally unacceptable is the theory that the boy represented on the eastern façade is Stephanos, son of the putative Adrnerse II and father of Mir and Archil, for as Toumanoff has it, Adrnerse II (or Nerse) took a wife in A.D. 645. The boy in the carving appears to be about ten years old, and consequently according to Prof. Toumanoff's theory, the figure could not have been carved until about A.D. 655<sup>43</sup>. By that time, however, Jvari had been completed.

It is true that the historical sources give only bare facts and that chronological indications are lacking, yet we can reconstruct the chronological order of this church's development; it belongs at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century<sup>44</sup>.

As for the third argument, Stephanos I's abandonment of the "Roman alliance for the Persian", it must be admitted that we have no conclusive evidence as to the reasons for this change of allegiance. Juansher has only a few words to say about it: "Stephanos, ruler of K'art'li, grew afraid of the King of Persia, abandoned the Greeks, and joined the Persians<sup>45</sup>". Apparently circumstances became so difficult for Stephanos I, and he

<sup>40</sup> QM, p. 194; Brosset, *Histoire* 237; K, p. 223.

<sup>41</sup> QM, p. 196; K, p. 227.

<sup>42</sup> QM, p. 197; K, p. 228.

<sup>43</sup> C. Toumanoff, *Iberia*, *op. cit.* 206, note 31.

<sup>44</sup> There has been a considerable difference of opinion as to the chronology of the personages mentioned here, and it appears impossible to establish exact dates. In his time, this task was attempted by the distinguished Georgian historian Geographer, Prince Wakhushiti (the King's son) — who had no exact chronological information, but used the synchronization method, Vakhushiti, *op. cit.* 4f.

<sup>45</sup> K, p. 222, „ბოლო სტეფანოზ მთავარი ქართლისა, შეუშინდა მეფესა სპარსთასა, განუდგა ბერძენთა მიეცა სპარსთა.“





Fig. 1. Mtskheta, Church of Jvari, eastern façade  
(photo Ermakov).





Fig. 2. Mtskheta, Church of Jvari, eastern façade (central plaque),  
Stephanos I, Patrikios, in front of Christ (photo Ermakov).





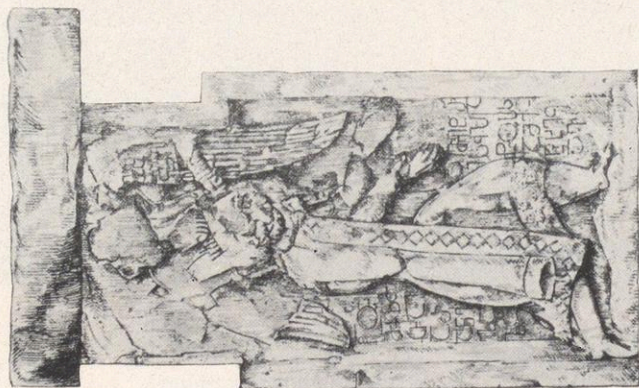
Fig. 3. Mtskheta, Church of Jvari, eastern façade (left plaque),  
Demetre Hypatos (photo Ermakov).



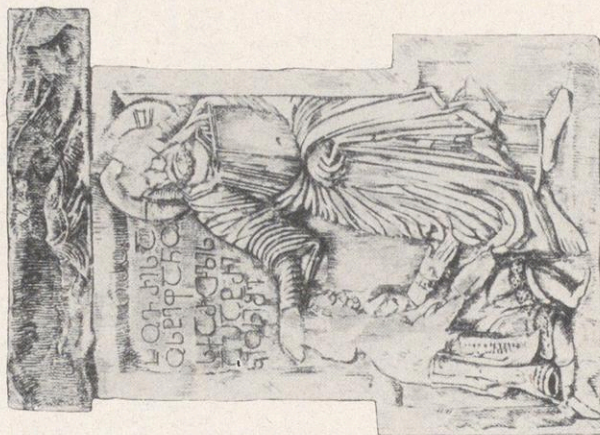


Fig. 4. Mtskheta, Church of Jvari, eastern façade (right plaque)  
Adrnerse Hypatos with his son (photo Ermakov).

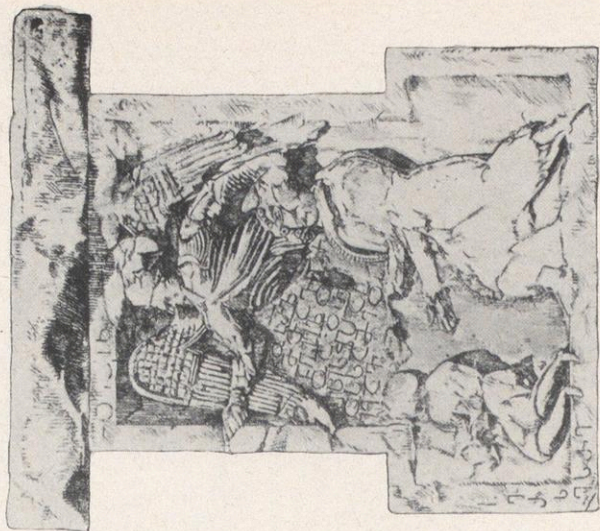




A



B



C

Fig. 5. Mrzkheta, Kitorreliefs of the eastern façade of Mrzkheta  
(designed by R. Schmerling after Chubinashvili).





Fig. 6. Mtskheta, Church of Jvari, southern façade.  
K'obul Stratig in front of St. Stephen (photo Ermakov).

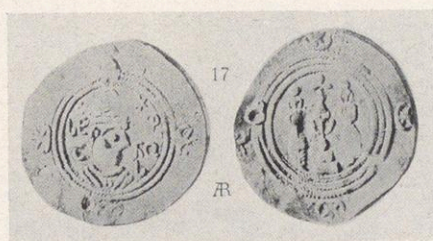




a



b



d



c



e

Fig. 7. Ibero Sasanian Silver coins:  
a) Gurgun; b) Javakhos (?); c) Anonymous; d) Stephanos II;  
e) Stephanos I; (after Pakhomov).





Fig. 8. Naksh i Rustem near Persepolis Sasanian rockrelief IV,  
Emperor Valerian defeated, before King Sapor I (after 260 A. D.). After Sarre.



became so fearful of the Persians that he was compelled to break with the Romans. Here we must bear in mind the disturbed situation in Byzantium in the sixth and seventh century and the strong reaction to Justinian's absolutism. There was considerable social and religious turmoil, internal struggle, and even armed conflict, the results of which were the insurrection of Phocas and the dethronement of the Emperor Maurice<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, there had been twenty years of continuous Persian military victories. All of this contributes toward an understanding of Stephanos' break with Byzantium<sup>47</sup>. Besides, we must remember the struggle between Persia and Byzantium for the possession of Iberia, as well as the ability of Iberian Kings and Eristavs to Profit from the struggle between these two powers and thus to improve their own position<sup>48</sup>. That Stephanos I was trying to restore the Kingship in K'art'li is clear from an unequivocal statement by Juansher: "... (Stephanos I) did not take the title of King for fear of the Persians and Greeks, but called himself only the Duke of Dukes<sup>49</sup>". He received the title, "Duke of Dukes" after going over to the Persian side, which might indicate that his change of allegiance may have been part of an attempt to reunify Iberia<sup>50</sup>.

Regarding the Byzantine titles of Stephanos and Demetre, these must have been given to them during the first years of Maurice's reign (in the 590's) when Georgia was under the influence of Byzantium. As we know, Guaram Eristav not only held the Byzantine title of Kuropalat, but was known as Guaram the Great. It seems logical therefore, that his son Stephanos I should have been given the lesser title "Patrikios"<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates* (München <sup>2</sup>1952) 68/9.

<sup>47</sup> P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam* (Paris 1951) 229-30.

<sup>48</sup> Javakhishvili, *Istoria* 270.

<sup>49</sup> K, p. 222.

<sup>50</sup> C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 200.

<sup>51</sup> Relying mainly on numismatic sources, the beginning of the rule of Stephanos is considered to have been between 591 and 604. The views expressed recently by Toumanoff more or less accept these dates. He says "late 590". C. Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasasia between Byzantium and Iran* 174f. According to Čhubinashvili, however, Stephanos must have received the title Patrikios in 584/5 (*Monuments* 22).

Finally, we can say that Stephanos may already have received the title Patrikios by 591, when Khosro II gave the larger part of Iberia, as far north as Tbilisi, to the Emperor Maurice. It is possible, too, that at the same time the brother of Stephanos, Demetre, received the title Hypatos, one grade lower than Patrikios, (Sebeos, p. 45; Javakhishvili, *Istoria* I, 262). Relying on a Georgian hagiographical source, Zordania published some interesting comments on the relations between Stephanos and Maurice (*Chronicles* I, 62, 64, 67).

In trying to establish the dates of the rule of Stephanos, one must not ignore Armenian historian Movses Kagankatuac'i, who gives a detailed description of the conquest of Tbilisi. His account differs greatly from that of the Georgian chronicles. I add merely that, when speaking of the siege of Tbilisi in 627, Kagankatuac'i writes only of the punishment meted out to the Georgian Prince and to the representative



We come now to the fourth and last argument — the incongruity of having Adrnerse I and the Guaramides represented together<sup>52</sup>.

This argument is no more tenable than the others, for the Georgian historical sources, quoted above, clearly and definitely name Adrnerse as one of the builders of Jvari. We find corroboration and some confirmation of these sources in an inscription on a stone pedestal of one of the church's relics, the cross. The pedestal was discovered in the church itself in 1938, and seems to be of the same date as the church<sup>53</sup>. The inscription is executed in Georgian sacerdotal script called "*Khuzuri asomt'avruli*" (ecclesiastical

of Persia, but does not mention Stephanos' name. *Մովսէս Կաղանկատուացի, Պատմութիւն Եղուանից Աշխարհի* (Tiflis 1913) 159-60. According to the Byzantine sources, the name of the Georgian Prince was Varsamuse (Theophane's *Chronographia* 1, 315). According to Markwart, it must have been "Vahramashusha", (Markwart, *Osteuropäische Streifzüge* 104). However, Toumanoff says that it was Stephanos, which is confirmed by the Georgian Annals (*K.* p. 224<sup>11-12</sup>; p. 226<sup>1-2</sup>). As concerning the title patrikios, the following is to be said; it was introduced by Constantine I and Zenon in the fifth century (474-491). This rank was given to those who in the past had been Consuls and Prefects. In distinction from the rank of Consul — which was given for a certain period of time only — the rank of Patrikios was given in perpetuity. In the seventh century, the Patrikioses were hierarchically higher ranking. E. Hanton, *Lexique explicatif du Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie mineure* = Byzantion 4, 115/6. In regard to the grades of dignity, especially ὑπατος, πατρίκιος and κουροπαλάτης, see J. B. Bury, *The Imperial administrative System in the Ninth Century, with a revised text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos* = British Academy Supplemental Papers I (1911) 22ff. Hirschfeld, *Die Rangtitel der römischen Kaiserzeit* = Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie (1901) and Koch, *Die Byzantinischen Beamtentitel von 400 bis 700* (1903) were inaccessible to me.

<sup>52</sup> Georgian historical sources give us no information about the dates of Adrnerse's (*Արներսէ*) rule as a Duke, although his name is mentioned in the correspondence relating to the Armeno-Georgian religious dispute. This correspondence was a result of an appeal by the Bishop of Tsurtavi to the assistant of the Armenian Catholicos Ukhtanes. In the letters we find Adrnerse's name is always given the first place. (*Book of Letters* [Tiflis 1901] 133, 138). In a letter to the Catholicos of Georgia, Kirion, the Marzapan of Gurgan, Sumbat, refers to Adrnerse as the "ruler of the country" or, more exactly, he addresses himself . . . "to the princes of your country of Adrnerse and all the nobility." „*իշխանաց աշխարհիդ Արներսէի եւ ամենայն լաւաց*" = *գիրք թղթոց* 54-168. The head of the Georgian church in turn addressed his replies to Sumbat in the name of Adrnerse and other rulers (*Book of Letters* 170, 174).

Thus, from these letters, it seems that at that time (604-607) Adrnerse was already a well known political figure, and was held in the highest esteem by the Georgians, though it must be pointed out that his title of Hypatos is never mentioned in the letters although Movses Kagankatuac'i reports that Adrnerse the rules of K'art'li was thrice honored by the Romans. (*Պատմութիւն Եղուանաց Աշխարհի*, 1912, pp. 203, 204). Toumanoff gives us additional data (*op. cit.* 201). See also Markwart, *Osteuropäische Streifzüge* 439.

<sup>53</sup> In his work, *Monuments* 42-44, Chubinashvili gives a full report on these excavations.



majuscule), or simply *Mrgvlovani* (rounded)<sup>54</sup> and reads in translation: “(This Mtzkheta Cross was erected) in prayer for Stephanos Patrikios, Demetre Hypatos, and Adrnerse Hypatos to save their souls and bodies and to protect their whole house<sup>55</sup>”.

However, the importance of this inscription is not limited to the fact that it mentions these persons, in the same order as before. Its importance lies also in the fact that it considers all those named as belonging to the same family, and suggests that whatever antagonism might have existed between the Guaramids and the Chosroids it did not prevent members of both families from being depicted together. Unfortunately the carvings of the Eristavs of K’art’li on the eastern façade are so damaged, especially as far as their faces are concerned, that it is rather difficult to make a stylistic analysis or to compare them one to another. However, an examination of undamaged fragments — robes, hair, certain remaining facial features — shows that the artist was not satisfied with a hackneyed, stereotyped, and impersonal representation, but must have portrayed his contemporaries with their distinctive individual facial characteristics. This becomes clear with a stylistic comparison of the overall images. The figure of Christ has the traditional features of early Christian art; the representation of the Eristavs, however, an attempt at individuality is evident. For here the master used not stereotypes, but original creations. These are not abstract, impersonal figures, they are attempts at a “portrait representation” of the Eristavs of K’art’li who played a part in the building of Jvari. These Eristavs were close to each other in time, and it is entirely possible, as Strzygowski has noted, that the artist did try to portray them as individuals<sup>56</sup>. If so, it follows that the persons represented on the eastern façade, Stephanos I, Demetre, and Adrnerse I, were very likely contemporaries of the sculptor. On the other hand, Adrnerse II, whom Prof. Toumanoff identifies as one of the figures, is completely unknown to us. Not only Juansher, but even the author of the *Martyrdom of St. Archil*, the notable historian Leonti Mroveli, fails to

<sup>54</sup> The second form of Khuzuri will be *Nushkuri* or minuscule. Khuzuri, an adjective, is derived from *Khuzesi* — a priest. But, contrary to what many still think today, this does not mean that the Khuzuri script was designed especially for use by priesthood or for use in churches only. Beginning with earliest times, during the prevalency of Khuzuri and even for a while after the introduction of Mkhedruli (eleventh century), not only books of sacerdotal character but also those of a secular nature were written in Khuzuri. Similarly, after the introduction of Mkhedruli, both kinds of books were written in this script. The terminus *Kkuzuri* itself is first used very late in 1365.

On this term see R. P. Blake and Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *The Gospels of Bert’ay, an old-Georgian MS of the tenth century* = Byzantion, 16 (1942-43) 228, note 6. See also I. Javakhishvili, *K’artuli damcerlobat’a mcodneoba anu palographia* (Tiflis 1926) 188-230. K. Kekelidze, *K’artuli literaturis Istoria* 1 (Tbilisi 1941) 29, 30.

<sup>55</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 43, cf. 82-84, fig. 10. In the second volume of the same work (pl. 31) a photograph of the postamentum is reproduced.

<sup>56</sup> J. Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* 1 (Wien 1918) 431.



supply us with adequate information on this subject<sup>57</sup>. "Nerse, Prince of Iberia, son-in-law of Kamsarakan," mentioned in a note to an Armenian manuscript<sup>58</sup>, and whom Prof. Toumanoff tries to identify with Adrnerse II, is not a possible candidate because Armenian sources call him Nerse and not Adrnerse, and in those days the two names were not considered identical either in Georgian or in Armenian. The names Nerse and Adrnerse are not synonymous<sup>59</sup>. In substantiation of this, we know, for instance, that in the second half of the eighth century, an Eristav (Kuropolat) Adrnerse was succeeded by his brother Nerse<sup>60</sup>, and that when the *Book of Letters* and other sources speak of Adrnerse I, they always refer to him as such and never as Nerse<sup>61</sup>. It is, therefore, impossible to identify the person who is known in Armenian sources as Nerse with Adrnerse represented on the Jvari relief.

Prof. Toumanoff is quite correct, however, in believing this Nerse to have been the son of Stephanos II. In this connection an argument is provided by the church of Atenis or "Atenis Sioni" which is a replica of Jvari. On the eastern façade of Atenis there are sculptures, as there are on the eastern façade of Jvari, but for our purpose only the two male figures, probably "Ktitors", represented on the northern façade are important. At the feet of these figures, pictured in richly ornamented robes, there are proper names, discovered in 1938<sup>62</sup>, which are inscribed in Georgian Mrglovani. One inscription says: "Stephanos", the other "Nerse". These could

<sup>57</sup> In Georgian historiography, Leonti Mroveli has long been the subject of different opinions; Marr, Janashvili and recently Tarkhnishvili (*Sources Arméno-Géorgiennes de l'histoire ancienne de l'église de Géorgie* = Mus 60 [1947] 37-42) and Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 17-18, note 1, placed Leonti Mroveli in the seventh to eight centuries; on the other hand, Javakhishvili, *Dsveli K'artuli saistorio mtserloba*, 1916, p. 170, and Kekelidze, *Leonti Mrovelis Literaturuli C'karoebi* = Bulletin de l'Université de Tiflis 3 (1923) 27-56, insisted on eleventh century. In 1957, near the Georgian town of T'rekhvi, an ornamented plate was found, bearing a Georgian inscription, which proves that Leonti Mroveli cannot be placed in the seventh to eight centuries, but as Javakhishvili and Kekelidze claimed, in the eleventh, that is during the reign of King Bagrat IV (1027-1072). The inscription reads: "St. Archangel Michael ... I, Leon Mroveli under great difficulty built this cave for the icon of the Lord, to serve as a haven for the flock of the church of Ruisi, in the days of misfortune during the times of ravages by Sultan Alparsalan in the chronicon SPW" (= 1066).

„წმიდად მიქელ მთავარანგელოზი, -მე ლეონტი მროველმან, დიდითა მოჭირვებითა აღუაშენე ესე ქუაბი, ხატისათვის ღმრთეებისა და დღესა ჰირი-სასა, ნავთსაყუდელად რუისისა საყდრისა შვილთათვის, ჟამთა შინა აღფარსალან სულტანისაგან ოხრობისთა, ქორონიკონსა სპვ.“ (= 1066).

<sup>58</sup> Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 207, note 33.

<sup>59</sup> About the Genesis of the proper noun see F. Justi, *Iranische Ortsnamen* 3-4; H. Adjarian, *Hoyotz Anznanunneri paravan* (Armenian) 1 (Erevan 1942) 61, 62.

<sup>60</sup> P. Ingorovka, *Mertchule* (Tiflis 1955); C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 209-13.

<sup>61</sup> *Book of Letters*, pp. 133, 138, 168, 170, 174.

<sup>62</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 161.



be Stephanos II and his son Nerse, the latter of whom, according to Armenian sources, was married to a princess of the House of Kamsarakan<sup>63</sup>.

This suggestion is valid if we take into account, first, that the architect of "Atenis Sioni" was an Armenian named T'odos, and, second, that both Georgian and Armenian inscriptions and single letters are found on the walls of this church. Here is further proof of an intimate and close relationship between Georgians and Armenians at that time. "Atenis Sioni" is truly a reproduction of Jvari; that is, it was built after Jvari, and since Nerse was married to Princess Kamsarakan about 645, only Adrnerse I could have been represented at Jvari.

A similar question of identity arises concerning Stephanos, the father of Archil and Mir. Was he really a son of an Adrnerse II? We have no proof of this whatsoever<sup>64</sup>.

Thus, taking all the above into consideration, it is clear that the fourth argument for identifying the builder of Jvari as Stephanos II cannot be substantiated. The central thread, traceable throughout the whole investigation, leads to the inescapable fact that on the eastern façade of Jvari, the figure in the right plaque represents not the hypothetical Adrnerse II, but Adrnerse I, father of Stephanos II.

The fourth argument does not justify itself and creates uncertainty and confusion. Why should the representation on the eastern façade be considered not Adrnerse I, but Adrnerse II? If we accept Toumanoff's view that the persons represented at Jvari are of the Chosroid dynasty, how can we explain the omission of a figure of Adrnerse I, who restored that dynasty? If a representation of him in the company of Guaramids is unlikely, the same would hold true for Adrnerse II, a Chosroid. Finally, Toumanoff's claim that the figure in the center of the eastern façade is of Stephanos II, rather than of Stephanos I does not hold up either, and the identification of the figure as Adrnerse I is still admissible<sup>65</sup>.

To help solve the question of the figures' identity an indication of their proper hieratical order would be helpful. The outer figures of the eastern façade of Jvari, i. e. Demetre and Adrnerse are called Hypatoi in their accompanying inscriptions. In contrast to Demetre, Adrnerse is called *Erist'avi K'art'lisai*, i. e. Duke of K'art'li. Nevertheless, Demetre occupies the place of honor on the heraldic right, while Adrnerse, who is hierarchically superior, is placed on the left.

<sup>63</sup> C. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 207, note 33.

<sup>64</sup> It would not be out of place to mention here that, in opinion of Kekelidze, Stephanos, father of Archil and Mir, was a son of a sister of Eristav, (Duke) Nerse II and Gurgen Erist'avi; also, that Stephanos is mentioned in the "Life of St. Abo Tbileli". (Kekelidze, *K'art'uli literaturis Istoria* (Tbilisi 1941) 219; in the German translation of this work by Tarkhnishvili, *Georgische Literaturgeschichte* (Studi e Testi 185, Citta del Vaticano 1955) 414.

<sup>65</sup> Apparently for Toumanoff the same argument does not apply where Demetre Hypatos is concerned. Toumanoff, *op. cit.* 206.



Logically we would expect Adrnerse to have been represented on the right for, as the Duke of K'art'li, greater honor was due to him than to Demetre. How was it possible, therefore, considering the dispute, which according to Prof. Toumanoff, then existed between the Guaramids and Chosroids, that the more honored place (i. e. the right) was given to Demetre (a Guaramide) while Adrnerse (a Chosroid) was placed on the left? There are two answers to this: first, because Stephanos I (Demetre's brother), not Stephanos II, was commemorated in the center of the tryptich, and second, because the principal builders of the church of Jvari were Stephanos I and his brother Demetre, who are named in the historical sources. Therefore, as one of the principal builder, Demetre was doubtless entitled to occupy a place of honor greater than that of Adrnerse.

Such a hierarchical arrangement is not exceptional. There are other examples where historical figures were similarly placed. For instance, in Georgia, in the relief of Opisa preserved in the National Museum of Tbilisi<sup>66</sup>, on the right of the enthroned Christ the large figure of Ashot Kuropalat († 826) is represented holding the model of the church built by him, while the Prophet David (said to be the founder of the Bagratide dynasty)<sup>67</sup> is placed on Christ's left. In the south vestibule of St. Sophia in Constantinople, the mosaic group depicting two Roman Emperors, Justinian and Constantine the Great, with the enthroned Virgin, provides an additional interesting example. On the right of the mother of God we find not the Emperor Constantine, recognized by the Byzantine Church as a canonized saint and an equal of the Apostles (ισαπόστολος), but Justinian, builder of St. Sophia<sup>68</sup>.

From these examples it is clear that on the right, the side of greater honor, those personages are represented who had played a particular role in the building of these churches and were closely connected with them. The left is reserved for those, who, although higher hierarchically had no connection with the churches, and served only as clear reminders of the

<sup>66</sup> Sh. Amiranashvili, *Istoria Gruzinskogo Isskusstva* (Moscow 1951) 212/3; pl. 111.

<sup>67</sup> Constantin Porphyrogenitus tells us, that Iberians, pique themselves upon their descent from the Prophet David.

“Ἰστέον, ὅτι ἑαυτοὺς σεμνύνοντες οἱ Ἰβηρες, ἡγουν οἱ τοῦ κουροπαλάτου, λέγουσιν ἑαυτοὺς κατάγεσθαι ἀπὸ γυναικὸς Οὐρίου, τῆς παρὰ τοῦ Δαυὶδ, τοῦ προφήτου καὶ βασιλέως μυχθεύσεως. ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς τεχθέντων παίδων τῷ Δαυὶδ ἑαυτοὺς λέγουσι κατάγεσθαι καὶ συγγενεῖς εἶναι Δαυὶδ, τοῦ προφήτου καὶ βασιλέως καὶ ὡς ἐκ τούτου καὶ τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου διὰ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ ταύτην κατάγεσθαι.

Constantin Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 45, p. 113, col. 349; English translation by R. J. H. Jenkins, p. 205. The same opinion was widely spread already during the times of Ashot Kuropalat († 826). According to Grigol Merchule, Grigol Khanzeli says to Ashot: “princeps qui diceris filius David prophetae et (regis) uncti a Dominus, illius regni ac virtutum heredem te faciat Christus Deus”, Peeters, *op. cit.* 234.

<sup>68</sup> Th. Whittemore, *The mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul, preliminary report on the first year's work* (Oxford 1931/2/3) 28/9, pl. V.



past. The Emperor Constantine was represented in St. Sophia because he was the founder of Constantinople and the first Christian Emperor; the Prophet David because he was the ancestor of the Bagratides.

In the same way, at Jvari, Adrnerse — the restorer of the Chosroid branch — is placed on the left-hand side, while Demetre, together with his brother Stephanos, the chief and actual builder of the church — is given the more honored right side.

It is fitting, to point out here that the inscription explained above mentions the three persons described in the same hierarchical succession; first Stephanos, second Demetre, and third Adrnerse.

## II

Still further information pertinent to the identity of the figures on the eastern façade can be obtained from a study of those on the southern façade of Jvari, and it is to the figures in the plaque over the middle window of the centre portal of the south side of the church that we now turn our attention. One of these figures is said to have been geneologically related to those on the eastern façade<sup>69</sup>.

The plaque shows St. Stephen, dressed in a belted chimation, holding a book in his covered left hand, while with the other he blesses a kneeling person who extends his hands in a gesture of adoration toward the Saint. Each figure is full length and represented "en face" (fig. 6). The whole composition is enclosed by a wide deep frame and seems to belong to the same period and artist as the reliefs on the eastern façade.

Especially important for our purpose is the left kneeling figure. Dressed very richly, he does not wear a coat as do the Dukes on the eastern façade, but is clad in a long light, and probably silken robe (καββάνιον). The lower part of his costume, as well as the cuffs and both shoulders, are covered with jewels, pearls, and rows of embroidery, while around his neck he wears a cape heavily embroidered with pearls and precious stones — probably the so-called *maniakion*. The figure's upper sleeves are covered with vertical, richly embroidered bands, perhaps epaulettes or an insignia of rank, which extend up to the *maniakion* and seem to repeat its design. As far as can be judged his boots, too, are ornate and embroidered. Also important is the figure's curious belt, which we will discuss later at greater length for its insignia might be considered an important clue in deciphering the inscription and identifying the person described.

The purpose of six bands or strips of some material which extend in a V from across the bottom border of the *maniakion*, to where they join at the center of the lower part of the breast remains a mystery, for at the bottom of the V where the strips are brought together the sculpture is broken off. The strips may be merely the draped folds of the figure's robe,

<sup>69</sup> G. Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 146; id. *K'art'uli Khelovnebis istoria* (Tbilisi 1936) 111 (in Georgian).

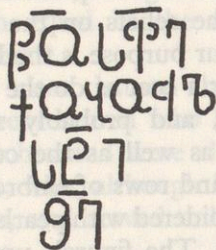


but it is reasonable also to imagine that they formed a necklace from which a medallion or an insignia, now lost, had been suspended, especially as this part of the body is the most protruding. Since maniakion have been represented in many varied forms, we can assume that in this instance it supported such a necklace as an integral part.

We know that dignitaries of Iberia received from Byzantine Emperors not only Byzantine titles, such as Sevastos, Hypatos, or even Kuropalates, but also imperial insignia and robes. Neighboring Lazika was similarly treated, and we are told by John Malalas that "(Tzathe II, Czar of the Lazica) was appointed and crowned by the King and wore the King's crown and an all-silk, white *okrie* under which, instead of a purple garment, a gold-braid vestment was worn, with a little medallion ornamented with the portrait of himself; and he wore a white tunique *paragaudion*, even more covered with gold, with a similar portrait of the Czar Justin<sup>70</sup>".

A similar account is given by Agathias<sup>71</sup>, and when it is considered with that of Malalas, it indicates that gold medallions with imperial portraits or images of local dignitaries (kings) were popular in the middle of the sixth century<sup>72</sup>. It is, therefore, quite probable that such a medallion could represent the Duke of Iberia Stephanos I or a portrait of a contemporary emperor.

In the upper left corner of the plaque on the south façade of Jvari is a legible abbreviated Mrgvlovani inscription consisting of four lines, which reads:



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<sup>70</sup> *Chronicle of John Malalas*, Books VIII-XVIII, translated by Matthew Spinka and Glanville Downey (Chicago 1940) 122, here we read about Tzathe I, King of the Lazes, crowned by Justinian, about this see also J. Javakhishvili, *History of Georgian People* (Georgian. Tbilisi 1951) 143f., 158f.

<sup>71</sup> *Hist.*, III, 15, ed. Bonn, p. 172; *Chron. Pasch.* ed. Bonn, p. 613; *Theoph. Chronographia* (de Boor), pp. 168, 169.

<sup>72</sup> About the popularity of such medallions in the second half of the sixth century see Marvin C. Ross, *A Byzantine Gold Medallion at Dumbarton Oaks* = *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11 (1957) 250ff.

<sup>73</sup> Among the Greek names used in Georgia we can distinguish two different types: in one case the greek nominative remains as root in the Georgian form, (Step'anosi) as is to be seen also on the eastern facade in Jvari, whereas in the other case, the Greek nominative has not been used, (Stephane) as can be noticed in our case. S. Kaukhishvili, *Zur Wiedergabe der griechischen Namen in Georgischen* = *Arili*, 1925, 89ff.



Prof. Chubinashvili translated this inscription as follows: "St. Stephen save K'obul Stephanos<sup>74</sup>". Of special importance to us is the third line, where Prof. Chubinashvili reads the proper name Stephanosi and concludes that it refers to the same person represented on the eastern façade as a young boy with Adrnerse, i. e. the son of Adrnerse, Stephanos II. Prof. Chubinashvili maintains that Stephanos had two names, the pagan, "K'obul" and the christian "Stephanos<sup>75</sup>".

However, this problem could hardly be solved so easily and some facts seem to contradict Prof. Chubinashvili's identification of the two Stephanoses as one and the same person. First of all, it is obvious that these two figures, which seem identical to Prof. Chubinashvili, were of different ages. Between them there is a period of some fifteen to twenty years. If we remember Prof. Chubinashvili's declaration that the Jvari church was built in a very short time (*ca.* ten to fifteen years)<sup>76</sup> and that all the reliefs were done at the same time, then the difference in the figure's ages becomes inexplicable; besides there seems to have been no justification for two representations of Stephanos.

Furthermore, we do not know that Stephanos had two names, and if we remember the characterization of Stephanos II by Juansher or Sumbat Davitisdze; his piety, his devotion to the Christian faith, and his nearly ascetic religious dedication<sup>77</sup>, it is hardly conceivable that he could be represented on a Christian monument with two names, especially as priority is given to the pagan name K'obul, which is written first and in full, while the Christian name Stephanos is written second and is abbreviated.

All this obliges us to look for a different reading of the third line of the inscription; a reading which is suggested by the figure of the personage itself.

Above all, it is unlikely that the person depicted on the southern façade is an Eristav (Duke), for he is not wearing the coat characteristic of Eristav's, but a long and richly adorned "parade dress" (*καβαζάδιον*), worn mostly by highranking officials of the Byzantine Empire<sup>78</sup>.

The *καβαζάδιον* was customarily made of wool or silk and was designed to be worn close to the body, to allow for freedom of movement. Apparently this dress had been known throughout the Orient from the earliest times. In a work about court and church (*De officialibus palatii C. politani et de officiis magnae ecclesiae liber*), which was probably written during the period of Johannes VI Kantakuzenos (1347—1353) and was erroneously attributed to the Kuropalat G. Kodinos, it is said that the kabbadion is a pagan — that is, Assyrian (i. e. Persian) — garment<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Chubinashvili, *Monuments* 146ff.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 155.

<sup>77</sup> *QA.*, p. 147; *QM*, p. 197; *K*, p. 228.

<sup>78</sup> cf. N. Kondakow, *Otsherki i sametki* (Praha 1929) 229-30; J. Ebersolt, *Constantinople* (Paris<sup>2</sup> 1951) 62; A. Vogt, *Commentarium* I, 114.

<sup>79</sup> *De off.* VI, 54.



But later, like the skaramagion it became a popular garment at the Byzantine court<sup>80</sup>. Various kinds of kabbadion can be distinguished by their different colors and their pearl embroidery<sup>81</sup>.

It is important that in the plaque K'obul wears around his shoulders a cape, richly adorned and embroidered with precious stones and pearls. Obviously it is the maniakion (μανιάκιον)<sup>82</sup> worn by generals and distinguished military personnel in the Byzantine Empire as well as in Persia<sup>83</sup> and bestowed upon them for outstanding military achievements<sup>84</sup>.

Candidates, for example, received as a military decoration a golden maniakion, with three buttons (τρίκομβον)<sup>85</sup> fastened on the breast, and

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* IV, 19–20.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* III, 14.

<sup>82</sup> Until today there seems to exist a confusion between the *torques* and *maniakion*; even Reiske understood by *maniakion* a torques (*Commentarium* II, 190 [81, 10], p. 292/3 [275, 11]), but on page 543/4 [469, 15], (what had been noticed by Kondakow, *Otsherki* 185, note 3) he found the true significance of the maniakion, and also Kondakow (*op. cit.* 185) confirms that the maniakion is a cape, draped around the shoulders, sewn with golden cords and embroidered with silk, it was buttoned and worn over the sticharion or Kabbadion. In the same sense, *μανιακίτα χωρίς* *De cer.* I, 145 is to be understood. Maniakion is also a synonym for these torques which have been also described here; see Ainalow, *op. cit.* 359.

The oldest prototypes of maniakion are to be found in Egypt and Persia, where the insignia were fastened to the drees around the shoulders. Kondakow believes that the Maniakion was made popular in Byzantium by numerous foreign functionaries, who were active at the Byzantine court and according to their ranks and services wore different maniaki of various styles and fashion; cf. Kondakow, *Emaux* 74/5; J. Ebersolt, *op. cit.* 72. Situated in the southern part of the cupola of the Jvari Church is a carving of a kneeling figure, whose garments offer a very close relationship to K'obul's figure. However, I am not taking it into consideration because of contradictions expressed by Tschubinashvili (*Monuments*, I, 148; II, fig. 22a) and Tshkhikvadze (*Arkhitektura Jvari* [Moscow 1940] 17, fig. 29).

<sup>83</sup> Kondakow, *Russkie Drevnosti*, 5 (Petersburg 1897) 130ff.

<sup>84</sup> R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der Byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (Berlin 1920) 109, note 1; 238; 320. P. Steiner, *Die Donna Militaria* = *Bonner Jahrbücher* 1905, I, 14, p. 22ff. Lenormant, *Histoire des peuples de l'Orient* (Paris<sup>9</sup> 1883) 75. The maniakion was also given as a decoration for victory to emperors, for example, when Theophilus (829–42) triumphantly returned to the capital from the war against the Arabs, the prefect of the city welcomed him at the Golden Gate and presented him a golden maniakion, adorned with precious stones and pearls; Ensslin, *op. cit.* 282, note 1. See also the list of orders enumerated by Philotheos (*Bury*, *op. cit.* 22).

<sup>85</sup> N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 185; *id.*, *Izobraschenie Russkoi Kniazheskoi semi* (Petersburg 1906) 102; Even though they were no candidates this type of maniakion for example is worn by St. Sergius and St. Bakhus in the Sinai Icon in Kiev (sixth century) (Ch. Diehl, *La peinture Byzantine* [Paris 1933] 92; 98, pl. XCII); the first was *primakarius* — the second — the following lesser grade of *Deptorius*; By the way, Codinus (*De off.* III, 14–18) calls this type of maniakion *στρεπτόν* and means by it torques. However, it has been established by Du Cange (*Gloss. Gr.* see *μανιάκης*, *Ed. alt.* 1891, Vol. I, col. 869) that the Greeks could distinguish between maniaki and torques though these two terms later became synonymous (Reiske, *Commentarium*, ed. Bonn. II, 640). About various types of maniakion see also Ainalow,



the importance of the maniakion can be realized from the fact that it was awarded by the Emperor and that its removal signified degradation<sup>86</sup>.

In Byzantium, especially during the fifth and sixth centuries, the maniakion occasionally replaced the diadem at the coronation of new imperators<sup>87</sup>, a practice, which originated in the Roman Empire, where the newly elected imperators were crowned with a torque<sup>88</sup>. Constantin Porphyrogenitus tells us that candidates, spatharocandidates and protospatharii, received maniakion adorned with jewels and gold, from the Emperor himself<sup>89</sup>, and mentions, too, that garments with maniakion were presented also to dignitaries from foreign countries<sup>90</sup>, and in the time of Constantin Porphyrogenitus, during peace negotiations and exchanges of prisoners, maniakion embroidered with pearls and various types of richly decorated apparel were bestowed upon distinguished foreigners<sup>91</sup>.

It is Kondakov's opinion that in Persia and countries of the Caucasus the kabbadion was usually worn with the maniakion and belt<sup>92</sup>. But it should be noted that the kabbadion and maniakion were made differently in different countries; they varied in style, color, and even in their significance which changed with the changing times<sup>93</sup>. But it is certain that both the kabbadion

*Sinaiskie Ikoni Voskovoi Živopisi* = Vis. Vrem. 9 (1902) 359ff. Various types of maniaki are described by Constantin Porphyrogenitus (*De. cer.*, II, pp. 708/9) who placed first this kind of maniakion worn by St. Sergius and Bakhus.

<sup>86</sup> This becomes clear from the Life of St. Sergius and Bakhus; when they refused to worship the idol of Zeus, by order of the Emperor they were deprived of all insignias and first of all, their maniakions were withdrawn; cf. *AnBoll* 14 (1895) 380; D. Ainalow, *op. cit.* 358ff. Reiske, *Commentarium* II, 292/3.

<sup>87</sup> Crowned with a maniakion were Leo I, (457-74), Anastasios I (491-518), and Justinian I (518-27); J. Ebersolt, *op. cit.* 19; Especially: W. Ensslin, *op. cit.* 268ff; *De cer.* I, 410f.

<sup>88</sup> In the Roman Empire the coronation with torques was a popular custom. When Julianus Caesar was proclaimed Augustus by his troops in Paris, a *Draconarium* crowned him with a torque (cf. W. Ensslin, *op. cit.* 268ff.; A. Alföldi, *Insignien und Tracht der Römischen Kaiser* = Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom. Abtlg., Mitt. 50 [1935] 52ff.). Especially in *Cer. I*, p. 411, where Reiske understood by maniakion a torque (*Commentarium* II, 411/2, [239 A 1]); Already in the year 372 the coronation of Firmus the Rebel in Africa with a torque is known. The same is to be said of the coronation of Avitus in Gaul in 455 (Alföldi, *op. cit.* 52f.); Ensslin, *op. cit.* 274ff. S. Reinach, *Torques* = Daremberg et Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités Grecques et Romaines* (Paris 1887) Vol. V, 2, 375ff.

<sup>89</sup> *Cer. I*, pp. 81, 148, 286, 290, 302; N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 185; J. Ebersolt, *Constantinople* 72, note 2; Vogt, *Commentarium* I, 114.

<sup>90</sup> Reiske, *op. cit.* 624ff. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 279.

<sup>91</sup> Kondakow, *op. cit.* 241, *Isobraschenie Rus. Kn. Semi.* 102.

<sup>92</sup> N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 241.

<sup>93</sup> In Byzantium there are large numbers of differently executed maniakion, which vary by design, adornment and by their number of buttons (κόμβον). We have one buttoned maniaki on the missorium of Theodosius I (end of IV century), Delbrück, *Spaetantike Kaiserportraits*, p. 200, pl. 96-97; H. Pierce, R. Taylor, *L'Art byzantine* 1 (Paris 1932) 46f., pl. 36; in *Mosaics of San Vitale* (Middle sixth century); H. Pierce, R. Tyler, *op. cit.*, II, 96, pl. 76; F. W. Deichmann,



and the maniakion were originally intended for the exclusive use of high-ranking military personnel.

However, during the sixth and seventh centuries a prototype for the maniakion of K'obul should be sought not in Byzantium but in Persia, where from early times until the end of the Sasanian Empire it underwent several interesting transformations<sup>93a</sup>.

One of the earliest Persian examples is offered in the stone relief of Antiochos I, of Hommagine, originating from Nimrud Dag (69—34 B.C.)<sup>94</sup>. We find similar pieces also around the neck of King Nerseh (293—303)<sup>95</sup>, on a bronze statue representing a Sasanian king<sup>96</sup>, and on the cast of a Sasanian gem in the Museum in Berlin<sup>97</sup>.

Contemporary examples of maniakion depicted in Jvari can be seen on the figure of the Sasanian King Khosro II Parvez (590—628) in Tag i Bustan<sup>98</sup>, on a capital in Tag i Bustan<sup>99</sup>, and on a silver dish in the Nat. Museum in Paris, where a hunting King Khosro is depicted<sup>100</sup>.

The next article of dress worn by the figure in the southern plaque which we must examine is the belt, and our attention is especially drawn to three short straps, presumably of leather, that hang vertically from it. Clearly these straps, which seem to be of even length, terminate in thonglike tabs, and this characteristic provides an important clue for the identification of the personage wearing the belt.

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*Fruehchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna* (Baden-Baden 1958), fig. 368; St. Demetrius of Salonika, Mosaic of St. Sergius (629—643 A. D.); Ch. Diehl, *La peinture byzantine* 67, pl. XIV; Especially W. F. Volbach, *Fruehchristliche Kunst, Die Kunst der Spaetantike in West- und Ostrom* (Muenchen 1958) 86, 87, fig. 216, with extensive bibliography; base of the obelisk of Theodosius I (SW side) around 390; A. Grabar, *Empereur dans l'art Byzantin* (Paris 1936) 54, pl. XII; G. Bruns, *Der Obelisk und seine Basis auf dem Hippodrom zu Konstantinopel* (Istanbul 1935) 63ff., pl. 62; W. F. Volbach, *op. cit.* 56, fig. 55; Codex purpureus in Rossano, (sixth century), The Judgement of Pilate; A. Grabar, *Byzantine Painting, 'SKIRA'*, p. 162. While the Homilies of Gregor Nazianzen (around 880) in the Natl. Bibl. of Paris (Mar. Gr. 510, Omont, *op. cit.*, pl. XLI), as well as in the Icon of St. Sergius and Bakhus (VI cnt.), show two-buttoned maniaki. Diehl, *op. cit.*, pl. XCII, shows this kind of maniakion, which has been called three-buttoned by Porphyrogenitus (μανίακια τρίκομβα); *De cer.*, I, p. 708; D. Ainalow, *op. cit.* 359; Konstantin Porphyrogenitus gives a list of various court ranks, entitled to different types of maniaki, *De. cer.*, I, pp. 707/8.

<sup>93a</sup> N. Kondakow, *Les Costumes Orientaux à la cour byzantine* = Byzantion 1 (1924) 9ff.

<sup>94</sup> F. Sarre, *Kunst des alten Persien* (Berlin 1923) 26ff. pl. 56, here the maniakion consists of four rows of embroidered pearls and can be mentioned as a distant prototype for Jvari.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 49, 50, fig. 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 51, fig. 15.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 54, fig. 18.

<sup>98</sup> E. Herzfeld, *Am Tore von Asien* (Berlin 1920) pl. LI.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 17, pl. LV, LVI.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* 72, pl. LIII.



A brief reminder of the significance of the belt to the dress of certain personages in those countries with which Iberia had relations will not be amiss. We know that in central Asia as well as in the Roman Empire special importance was attributed to the belt, and that along with maniakion and other garments, the belt too became an insignia<sup>101</sup>. In Rome it even outranked other insignia in significance. Andreas Alföldi states that the Roman emperors and high officials were distinguished by their belt<sup>102</sup>, and as early as 373, in his oratio XI Themistius reveals that the belt denoted that certain privileges had been bestowed by the emperor upon its wearer<sup>103</sup>. The importance of the belt is also clearly pointed out in the Lives of Saints Sergius and Bacchus.

However, in Professor Alföldi's opinion the belt was not of Roman but of Achaemenian origin, and was adopted by Alexander the Great<sup>104</sup>. It became popular in Persia also, where it could be worn only if it had been presented by the king<sup>105</sup>. At the court of Bagdad it was customary to identify dignitaries by their belts<sup>106</sup>, and even as early as the fourth century, the gold studded belt became a symbol of administrative office<sup>107</sup>.

In our case, however, we are not concerned with the common *cingulum* (ζωστρία), usually made either of leather with seams along the edges and closed by a golden buckle<sup>108</sup>, or covered with silk or velvet, and adorned with precious stones<sup>109</sup>. We are interested rather in the military belt (βαλτιδία), which was used mainly by high ranking officers (*magister militum*) and which served as a means of carrying arms<sup>110</sup>.

If, therefore, the military belt was awarded by the emperor as an insignia and was worn over either the sticharion<sup>111</sup>, or the kabadion<sup>112</sup>, we have further proof that the person represented on the southern façade of Jvari must have been an officer of superior rank. Furthermore, we know that the belts sometimes presented by Byzantine emperors to barbarians were of a different kind than those presented to military officers<sup>113</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> cf. R. Delbrück, *Die Kaiserdiptychen* (Berlin-Leipz. 1929) 39.

<sup>102</sup> cf. Alföldi, *Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser* = Deutsches Arch. Inst., Rom. Abtlg., Mitt. 50 (1935) 64, 65.

<sup>103</sup> A. Delbrück, *Spätantike Kaiserporträts* (Berlin-Leipzig 1933) pl. XIX.

<sup>104</sup> A. Alföldi, *op. cit.* 65.

<sup>105</sup> *Bell. pers.* I, 17; N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 278, note 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 278.

<sup>107</sup> *Bell. pers.*, I, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> A. Delbrück, *op. cit.* 36; βαλτιδία is used sometimes as a synonym for ζωστρία or ζωστήρ. (E. Saglio, *Cingulum* = Daremberg et Saglio, *op. cit.*, I, 2, 1176ff., especially 1178); A. Müller, *Cingulum militare* = Mitt. der K. K. Zentral-kommission 21 (1866) CXIII (was not available unfortunately).

<sup>109</sup> N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 227. See also n. 136a.

<sup>110</sup> A. Delbrück, *op. cit.* 39; A. Alföldi, *Insignien.* 64/5; E. Saglio, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 1, 664ff.

<sup>111</sup> A. Delbrück, *op. cit.* 39.

<sup>112</sup> N. Kondakow, *Otsherki* 185.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 241; 277/8.



For prototypes of such belts we turn to Persia, where we find comparable examples worn by the figure of King Sapur I (260 A.C.) from Naksh i Rستم<sup>114</sup> (fig. 8), and in the hunting scenes on the right and left walls of the Grotto Tag i Bustan (ca. 260 A.C.) where belts with various straps of different lengths can be seen<sup>115</sup>. An interesting example from the time of King Ardashir I (224–241) is offered by a golden tab preserved in the Museum in Wiesbaden<sup>116</sup>, and later Oriental examples of leather belts with tabs tipped and studded with metal are represented in large numbers in the wall paintings of the Ghaznevide palace of the Lashkari Bazar (eleventh century)<sup>117</sup>. These examples are important because, as far as can be judged, all the dignitaries represented here are wearing this type of belt, and this indicates a decline in the eleventh century of its importance as a military belt and an extension of its accessibility for more general use. Schlumberger maintains that this kind of belt was a general characteristic of Central Asian dress<sup>118</sup>.

Still earlier examples are found in the exquisite costume of a hunter in a wall painting in Teheran (early ninth century)<sup>119</sup> and in a richly decorated Armenian church in Achtamar (first half of the tenth century)<sup>120</sup>. Among examples found in Byzantine embroideries, one fabric from Mozac now in Lyon should be mentioned<sup>121</sup>, as well as other interesting examples of a later period in the Homilies of Gregor of Nazianz, Ms. Par. Gr 510 (A.D. 880/6)<sup>122</sup>.

Of special interest are two golden Syrian panels at Dumbarton Oaks decorated with abstract geometric<sup>123</sup> and plant ornaments, in which two confronting birds are enclosed<sup>124</sup>. These are sixth century panels, and without doubt they are tabs of belt straps because of their great similarity to the examples we have already mentioned, and because on the upper part of each there is a special opening permitting the end of the strap to

<sup>114</sup> F. Sarre, *Kunst des alten Persien*, fig. 74.

<sup>115</sup> E. Herzfeld, *Am Tore von Asien*, p. 71, pl. XIV, XLVIII, XLIV, XLVI; O. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin 1921) 11, ff. pp. 59, 60, 61.

<sup>116</sup> F. Sarre, *Kunst des alten Persien* (Berlin 1922) 53, fig. 16.

<sup>117</sup> M. D. Schlumberger, *Le Palais Gaznevide Bazar = Syria* 29 (1952) 261/7, pl. XXXI, 2, 3, XXXII, 1. I am grateful to Prof. R. Ettinghausen, who drew my attention to this example.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 267.

<sup>119</sup> P. Hauser, *The Museums excavations at Nishapur = Bull. Metr. Mus.* 37 (1942) note 4, pp. 116, 118, fig. 45.

<sup>120</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Der Nersessian, who drew my attention to this example and who supplied me with photos of Achtamar.

<sup>121</sup> O. Falke, *op. cit.* 23, pl. VIa.

<sup>122</sup> H. Omont, *Fac-similés des miniatures des plus anciens manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale du VI<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris 1902) 25, 29, 31; pl. XLI, LIII, LIX; V. Lazarev, *History of Byzantine painting* (Moscow 1947) 78, and gives on page 299, note 8 an extensive bibliography.

<sup>123</sup> *The Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Handbook* (Washington 1955) 80, note 192.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* 80, note 191.



be fastened to the belt. In addition there are two small holes through which the nails (or screws) were probably inserted in order to secure the tab to the strap.

Considering all the arguments presented above, it would seem that Chubinashvili's reading of the third abbreviated line in the plaque of the southern façade of Jvari as Stephanos, cannot be accepted.

I believe that no further corroboration or confirmation than these arguments are needed to justify the identification of the kneeling figure in the plaque as the high ranking military personage K'obul.

This opens up a possible reading for the third line, which surely can identify none other than a person of high military Byzantine rank perhaps a "*spatharocandidati*" or "*strategi*" (στρατηγός)<sup>124a</sup> which would be perfectly compatible with the garments and insignia of K'obul on the one hand, and on the other with the high ranking dignitaries of Iberia represented on the eastern façade.

In regard to St. Stephen, who is represented on the southern façade, it should be pointed out that his was a very high rank in the eastern church. In Oriental liturgy he took precedence over even the Apostles<sup>125</sup>, and he was similarly revered in Armenian liturgy where he is mentioned after the Mother of God and John the Baptist<sup>126</sup>, which explains his presence in representations of the Deesis<sup>127</sup>. That St. Stephen was extremely popular in Georgia<sup>128</sup>, is confirmed by the special reverence paid him in several Georgian churches. As early as the fifth century King Archil built a church in Mtskheta, the metropolis of Iberia, and dedicated it to St. Stephen<sup>129</sup>, and literary sources reveal that every Tuesday the Saint's name was invoked in the bishop's church in Mtskheta<sup>130</sup>, all of which seems not unnatural, for after all, St. Stephen was not only the protomartyr, but also the proto-diacon. Furthermore, we know that the chapel of the palace and the coronation church of the emperor of the Bosphorus were dedicated to St. Stephen, which confirms the fact that he was the Court Saint<sup>131</sup>.

It is not surprising therefore, that the figure of St. Stephen should have been given the place of highest importance on the southern façade of Jvari. One might even credit the theory that he was represented at Jvari as the Patron Saint of the Dukes of Iberia. (To be continued).

<sup>124a</sup> Regarding the rank of Strategos see Bury, *op. cit.* 39ff.; n. 51.

<sup>125</sup> E. Kantorowicz, *Ivories and Litanies* = Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 5 (1942) 81; Bright 169.

<sup>126</sup> A. Rücker, *Denkmäler altarmenischer Meßliturgie* 4, *Die Anaphora des Patriarchen Kyrillos von Alexandria* = OrChr 23 (1927) 152.

<sup>127</sup> A. Goldschmidt, K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* (Berlin 1934) II, N. 77, p. 48ff.

<sup>128</sup> K. Kekelidze, *Jerusalimskij Kanonar VII Veka* (Tiflis 1912) 177ff.

<sup>129</sup> K., p. 140; *QM*, p. 118.

<sup>130</sup> K., p. 229; *QM*, p. 197.

<sup>131</sup> E. Kantorowicz, *op. cit.* 81.