

# The Georgian Churches of Tao-Klarjet'i: Construction Methods and Materials

(IX to XI Century) \*

by

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The southwestern provinces of Georgia, comprised of T'ort'umi, Art'vini, and Šavšet'i (all within present-day Turkey) are studded with ecclesiastical monuments: churches, scriptoria, refectoria, chapels, and seminaries. Some of these buildings, known only through the passing descriptions of travellers and chroniclers, are now completely destroyed; others, converted into quarries, are rapidly disappearing. However, there are still some relatively well-preserved churches built between the ninth and eleventh centuries which are important not only for the study of Georgian architecture but also for a better understanding of Middle Byzantine and even Romanesque architecture.

This paper is based on personal observations of the remaining structures themselves, on the epigraphic material, and on the highly instructive contemporary hagiographic literature written in this very region. It was my purpose to investigate the procedures which were observed in building monastic complexes as well as the materials and techniques used for their construction and other related matters.

## *Sites and Plans*

The construction of the monastic complexes and lofty churches in the mountainous areas of Tao-Klarjet'i required some preparatory work to find a suitable location<sup>1</sup> which insured both the safety of the monastery<sup>2</sup>

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\* I should like to express my gratitude to the American Council of Learned Societies whose grant made this study possible.

<sup>1</sup> The search by six monks for suitable land to build on in the pathless mountain wilderness is described in the *bios* of Serapion Zarzmelī, written in the first quarter of the tenth century by Basil Zarzmelī. The most recent edition of this hagiographic work is by I. Abuladze, *Dzveli K'art'uli Agiograf'iuli Literaturis Dzeglebi I* (Tbilisi 1963) 319-347 (thereafter quoted as Zarzmelī, *bios*).

<sup>2</sup> The significance of the strategic factor is evident in the topographic location of these monasteries which are removed from main roads by 4-5km, hidden by hilly terrain and lush vegetation and sometimes, as in the case of Ḥandzt'a and Ckarost'avi, almost inaccessible. Thus, they are protected not only from hostile eyes but from inclement winds as well.



and its economic independence. Other important factors were a healthy climate, fertile soil, an adequate water supply for domestic consumption and irrigation as well as mills, wood for heating and construction, and the proximity of quarries to provide construction material.

The virtues and shortcomings of a typical monastery in this region are described in the "Life and Activities of Our Blessed Father Grigol of Handzt'a". In this hagiographic work written in 950, the biographer Merčule not only relates at great length anecdotes concerning the building methods of the Šavšet'-Ardanuj region, but he dwells upon the environmental features of the monastery as well. He tells us, among other things, that "the uninhabited land of this region is well balanced by nature; for neither the intense heat will burn nor the exceeding cold will bother man there. Because it is distinct from its neighbouring land by being dry, untorrid, and exposed to the sun, the soles of a man's feet never will be muddied while walking. The water is good, and wood is plentiful. The sandy ground grows countless tall, dense forests and from them spring tasty waters, and thus, God has endowed this land with a joyful nature. And it is pathless and inaccessible to those leading a worldly life, because the dwellings of these monks are located on the rugged high mountains. On one side it is bordered by the same mountains and from the other by the permanent border of the water reservoir of Šavšet'i, emanating from its mountains. Thus these monasteries are surrounded on all sides by mountains, gorges, by waters flowing down from the frightening heights of the steep mountains. And in these monasteries there is no pasture to be mown, nor wheat fields to be ploughed, and therefore, food is brought on the back of donkeys with great difficulty. Yet there is some wine and there are also orchards which have been planted by the monks with the utmost toil and hardship. However, wild pears are in abundance, and with these all the hearts of these monks are fearless against the troubles caused by the animosity of the landlords. And in this completely peaceful manner they exist calmly and glorify Christ"<sup>3</sup>.

The monasteries of Tao-Klarjet'i are located on specially levelled platforms, these being generally on the sunny southern slopes of the mountains. Two exceptions are the monasteries of Ot'ht'a Eklesia and Šatberdi which are located on the northern declivities of the mountains for topographic reasons. The form and dimensions of the platforms are determined by topographic conditions, but they are much larger on the southern side of

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<sup>3</sup> I. Abuladze, *op. cit.*, 269 (thereafter quoted as Merčule, *bios*). The *bios* of Grigol Handzt'eli (Grigol of Handzt'a) as well as the previously-mentioned *bios* of Serapion Zarzmeli (Serapion of Zarzma) is available also in Latin translation (P. Peeters, *AnBoll* 36-37 [1917-1919, published in 1922] 159-309).



the churches. At the same time, as one would expect, the southern facades of these churches are more lavishly adorned with architectural sculpture and inscriptions. Preparatory work such as the construction of the platforms and the building of buttressing walls appears to have been a task almost equal in difficulty to the construction of the church itself. This is confirmed in the *Bios* of Grigol of Hantz'a where the biographer states that after consecrating the site, "Arsen, the prior of the monastery of Hantz'a, began the construction of the beautiful new church on the declivity of a very steep mountain which was levelled off with such long and hard labor by using firm gravel and lime, that after levelling the platform and building the buttressing wall it seemed as if the construction of the church had been completed"<sup>4</sup>.

The churches of this period were built in accordance with plans which were traced. This is evident from a document compiled by a Georgian man of letters, Ep'rem Mcire, who tells us that the enlightener of Georgia, Nino, drew the plan of a church dedicated to the Saviour and that it was later built by architects and masons<sup>5</sup>. The biographer of Serapion of Zarzma, Basil Zarzmeli, likewise says that Serapion traced the plan of a church and gave it to the architect Michael and his assistant, the mason Šuartkeli. They, and numerous laborers trained by them, built the church as it was outlined in the plan<sup>6</sup>. More evidence on this account is provided by a capital of the late tenth-century church at K'oroġo which depicts a donor holding the plan of the same church (fig. 1)<sup>7</sup>. However, there is no evidence concerning the material upon which the plan of the church was drawn<sup>8</sup>.

### *Materials and Methods of Construction*

As is customary in other provinces of Georgia, north Syria and Armenia,

<sup>4</sup> Merčule, *bios.*, 277. The declivity of the mountain is so steep that the support of the eastern part of the church required a 6.25 m.-high stone wall consisting of fourteen even courses. This wall, which I surveyed in 1965, still exists in its original form. See also N. Marr, *Georgij Merčuli, Žitie Grigoria Khanztiiskogo, Teksty I raziskania po armiano-gruzinskoi filologii*, VII [Petersburg 1911]).

<sup>5</sup> *Report on the conversion of the Georgians and in which book this is mentioned* (in Georgian) ed. T. Bregadze (Tbilisi 1959) 13-15.

<sup>6</sup> Zarzmeli, *bios.*, 344.

<sup>7</sup> R. Mep'isašvili, "Relief rubeza X-XI vekov so scenami stroitelstva v Khrame u selenia Koroġo", *Sovetskaia Arkheologia*, 4 (Moscow 1969) 228, fig. 9.

<sup>8</sup> In the Monastery of St. Symeon the Younger, the plan of the trefoil martyrion was traced on the ground (C. Mango, "Isaurian builders" *Festschrift F. Dölger*, 1967, 360). On plans and drawings in Byzantium, see G. Downey, "Byzantine architects their training and methods". *Byzantion* 18 (1946-48), 114ff.



the churches of Tao-Klarjet'i were built in a dry masonry technique<sup>9</sup>. The material was either limestone or, more frequently, locally quarried sandstone which evidently was transported by sleds, this being a safe means of transportation widely used even in summer in this mountainous region<sup>10</sup>. In the seventh and eighth centuries, relatively large blocks of roughly squared stones were used in even rows back to back without mortar between the courses and with minimal filling between the interior and exterior walls (e.g., Opiza, Parehi, and the dwellings for monks in Ckarost'avi). Later, in the ninth century, the stones become much smaller ( $0.30 \times 0.20$  m.) and evenly cut but the exterior surfaces were roughly chipped off. The stones were laid in even courses with a layer of thick ( $0.02$ - $0.04$  m.) mortar. This technique was employed in Hantz'a, in the original church of Saban at Išhani, and in Doliskana. From the middle of the tenth century on, the churches were built on an elaborate foundation (*krepidoma*) which was surmounted by a stylobate platform composed of evenly squared and smoothly finished blocks forming three or five steps (ca.  $0.20$  m. wide and  $0.20$  m. high). These surrounded the entire church. In all cases the stylobate was visible above the ground level. Upon the stylobate was a pavement consisting of smoothly finished rectangular stones (ca.  $0.15$  m. thick) tightly adjusted to each other. The church walls of ashlar consists of two shells of smoothly finished squared blocks of yellowish sandstone<sup>11</sup> uniformly laid in even courses<sup>12</sup>, the courses of the exterior shell corresponding to the courses of the interior shell. The average size of the stones is  $0.50 \times 0.40$  m.; the thin layer of mortar between the courses is not visible and the space between the exterior and interior shells of the wall, which amounts to about a third of the total thickness of the wall, is filled with gravel upon which mortar has been poured. The masons paid special attention to the upper portion of the wall which had to be firm enough to withstand the outward thrust of the barrel vaults and the

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, there are three exceptions: a small chapel located southeast of the Ot'ht'a Eklesia (Dörth Kilisse) basilica, the interior wall of the same basilica where stone alternates with brick as in Byzantine churches, and the main church in the monastery of Parehi where on the eastern exterior wall, instead of brick, each course of ashlar alternates with stone plates which average  $0.07$  m. in thickness.

<sup>10</sup> The transportation of a stone by means of such a sled is depicted in the cornice of the church at Koroġo (fig. A) mentioned above. Also represented are various stages of construction such as stone-cutting, the mixing and delivery of lime, stone splitting, water carriers to moisten the stone before it is set in lime, the consecration of the church, etc. (Mep'isašvili, *op. cit.* 223-226).

<sup>11</sup> To finish the stone's surface in diagonal strokes a fine-toothed adze was used.

<sup>12</sup> In some instances (e.g., Oški and Haḥuli) this rule is not consistently observed due to a variation in the height of the blocks; however, these are always precisely fitted to each other.



roof. The stability of these walls was insured with metallic clamps binding the stones in the uppermost course (e.g., Tbet'i) by inserting long wooden beams (0.30<sup>2</sup> m.) just below the cornice (e.g., Oški)<sup>13</sup> or by interlocking the blocks of the uppermost course as in Haḥuli (fig 2). The stone was quarried locally, but as the biographer of Serapion, Basil, indicates, whenever a desired stone was not available, nearby riverrock had to be used and was obtained "with great difficulty" from the river bed<sup>14</sup>. Such occurrences, however, seem to have been relatively rare. In the same source we learn of a case where ashlar was gathered from the site of a church destroyed by an earthquake and was reused for the construction of the corners, arches, windows, and doors of another church<sup>15</sup>. Not only stones but also lime had to be carried over exceedingly difficult paths from faraway places by men who bought the lime by its weight<sup>16</sup>.

Various lightweight materials were used to diminish the weight of the walls. For the construction of domes (especially cupolas), arches, and vaulting, a very light and porous volcanic stone called *spondiki* was used<sup>17</sup>. This material was employed most frequently and abundantly in Iṣhani (fig. 3). In the walls on both sides of the lower portion of the double pitched roof on the western side (which is deprived of its original roof), a few empty jars were also found inserted into the wall. In Oški, traces of charcoal were detected in the area of the south-western pendentive (where the square bay is reduced to a circle). This is an indication that the mason was concerned with lessening the weight.

A polychromatic treatment of exterior church walls in Tao-Klarjet'i must have been common. This is demonstrated at the church of Doliskana where stones of various colors were used in addition to various pigments; light purple, brown, red, or even green blocks were inserted irregularly into the exterior walls to enhance the exterior appearance of the church. Niches and conches, window frames, the backgrounds of carved figural or ornamental patterns, and even entire surfaces of the walls and architectural sculpture were treated polychromatically, for example, at Oški. Even inscriptions in the interior and exterior of the churches were executed in colors: red, purple (Oški), intensive blue, white on a violet

<sup>13</sup> Part of this relatively well-preserved beam is visible on the northern exterior wall just below the cornice of the nave. It was analyzed by the chief wood anatomist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Forest Service) in Madison, Wisconsin, who identified it as *Pinus Sylvestris* or *Pinus Nigra*.

<sup>14</sup> Zarzmelī, *bios.*, 335.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Merčule, *bios.*, 277.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps derives from Greek *spondios* or *spondiakos*, (Liddell-Scott, Greek English Lexicon s.v. σπονδιακός).



background, and red (Iṣḥani). These coloristic accents emphasize key architectural parts and the structural logic of the entire building. Most frequently, red and blue pigments were applied alternating in a radial design for windows (fig. 4), pediments, or for the radial flutings in the conches of exterior triangular niches. In the church at Ḥaḥuli, huge radiating monolithic wine-red bricks alternating with yellowish sandstone were used in place of pigments of the same color. They radiate from above the exterior window frames on all sides of the church and even from the dome windows. Pigments were also applied to figural sculpture of the seraphim, biblical figures, and even historical personalities such as Grigol (fig. 9) who is identified by an inscription as the supervisor of construction of the church at Oṣki (963-973). Such reliefs were carved on the octagonal pier of the southern gallery in the church of Oṣki where light blue and scarlet red was employed. The *Deesis* figures which project from the wine-red background on the southern part of the same church include two donors holding models of the church (fig. 5). They were embellished with gold, light violet and wine-red pigments and possibly other colors now faded<sup>18</sup>. If we consider that the roofs of Ḥaḥuli and Iṣḥani were covered with glazed polychrome tiles which even now sparkle with impressive vivacity, we can easily understand the great importance that the architects of Tao-Klarjet'i churches attached to polychromy in religious architecture. This trend towards polychromy which was generated and brought to a climax in the churches of Tao-Klarjet'i evidently continued in Georgian architecture of the eleventh-fourteenth centuries; however, during this period colors were used sporadically and on a limited scale<sup>19</sup>.

### *Roof Tiles*

Most church roofs in Tao-Klarjet'i collapsed long ago or were plundered for tiles. However, in rare cases such as Ot'ht'a Eklesia, portions of the original roofing survive. In other cases, fragments of tiles used for roofing can be gathered in the debris surrounding the churches or found in the upper portions of walls where defective or broken tiles were used as filling for mortar. In some instances (Ḥaḥuli and Iṣḥani), the original tiles of the dome's conic roofing have remained intact. Unfortunately, measurement

<sup>18</sup> W. Djobadze, "The donor reliefs and the date of the church at Oṣki", *ByZ* 69 (1976) 40.

<sup>19</sup> R. Schmerling, *The Georgian architectural ornament* (Tbilisi 1954) 12; G. Lomt'at'idze, *Archaeological excavations in Tbilisi* 1948 (Tbilisi 1955) 158. Some newly-discovered polychromatic glazed tiles deriving from the tenth-eleventh centuries are reproduced in color in R. Mepisaschwili and W. Zinzadse, *Die Kunst des alten Georgien* (Leipzig 1976) 296.



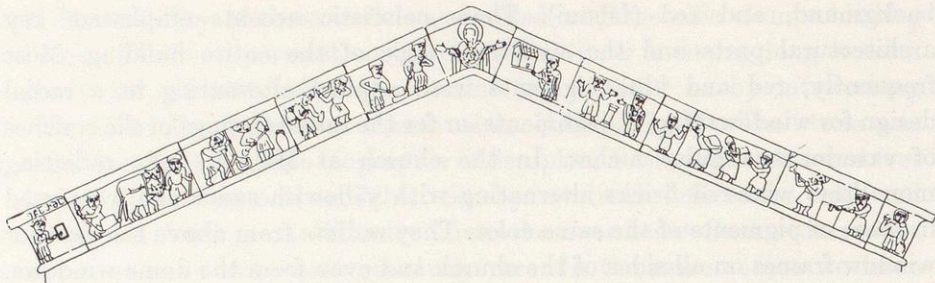


Fig. A Koroġo. The eastern cornice of the church representing the various stages of church construction (after R. Mep'isašvili)

was not obtainable nor was the study of these tiles *in situ* since (without special equipment) they are inaccessible; but a large number of fragments deriving from the roofs of the churches and domes was collected and observation of the conic roofing of domes was made from a short distance. The remaining material evidence and literary sources suggest that most churches in Tao-Klarjet'i were roofed with pan-and-roll tiles made of red baked clay. Before applying the tiles to the surface, profiled tiles were embedded into wet plaster on the contours of the roof just above the cornice, thus forming a series of semicircles (fig. Bc) or a saw-toothed molding. In this way the transition from cornice profile to the roof was formed<sup>20</sup>. Then the roof was covered evenly with plaster upon which the pantiles were firmly embedded in even symmetrical rows so that each course was overlapped by the one above (fig. Ba). As soon as the plaster dried, the roll tiles, which are semicircular in section, were locked to the contours of two adjacent pantiles. They fitted with each other by narrow necks which connected successive tiles (fig. Bb). Each pantile of the lower row of the cornice roof and all roll tiles on the second row were nailed into the wet plaster with a single long nail. Thus additional support to prevent the tiles from sliding off was created just above the circular wall of the drum. On the remaining surface, nails were driven into every fifth or sixth tile. In the middle of the upper portion of the tiles a small spherical knob with an opening in the center which tightly fits the cupped nails protected the roof from leakage (fig. Ba). At Ĥaĥuli and Oški, the lowest row of roll tiles terminate in pointed triangular antefixes concealing the ends of tiles. These antefixes are accentuated in the middle with concave crosses which have flaring arms (fig. 6, Ba)<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> A similar solution is evident in Ĥaĥuli and Oški, where tiles of corresponding form and material are used. This indicates that all three churches were roofed at the same time, perhaps in the third decade of the eleventh century.

<sup>21</sup> The pointed antefixes of Ĥaĥuli and Oški and those of Iškani which have a semicircular form find very close formal similarity to Greek and Roman prototypes. On this account see



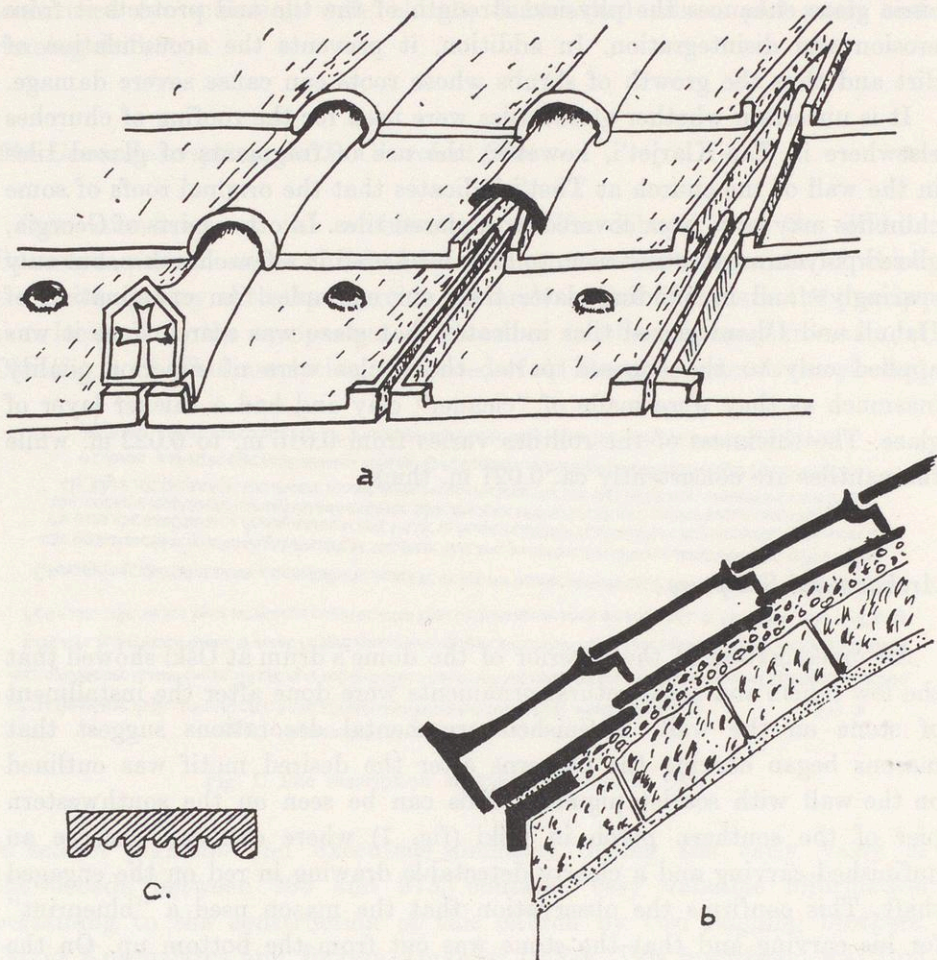


Fig. B

At Ḥaḥuli and Iṣḥani, the rooftiles of the domes were glazed. Here wine-red, brownish, and creamy dark green colors predominate, whereas the tiles of the double pitched roof which are not *in situ* now, but were gathered from the gravel around the church, are light translucent green, dark brown, iodine and reddish-colored glaze tiles. Thus the polychromy applied to the tympana of the windows, doors, niches, and architectural sculpture was boldly echoed in the multicolored sparkling glazed tiles of the roof, thus evoking an unparalleled coloristic effect. The glazed tiles not only have a highly aesthetic effect but practical advantages as well,

A. Orlando, *Les matériaux de construction et la technique architecturale des anciens Grecs I* (Paris 1966) 83-86, fig. 56r, h and fig. 57r, h.



since glaze enhances the physical strength of the tile and protects it from erosion and disintegration. In addition, it prevents the accumulation of dirt and thus the growth of shrubs whose roots can cause severe damage.

It is uncertain whether glazed tiles were used for the roofing of churches elsewhere in Tao-Klarjet'i, however, the use of fragments of glazed tiles in the wall of the church at Tbet'i indicates that the original roofs of some churches may have been covered with glazed tiles. In other parts of Georgia, glazed polychromatic tiles seem to have been used in a few churches, but only sparingly<sup>22</sup> and in buildings later than our examples. An examination of Haḥuli and Iṣhani glazed tiles indicates that glaze was scarce since it was applied only to the exposed parts; these tiles were of superior quality inasmuch as they were made of "cleaner" clay and had a thicker layer of glaze. The thickness of the rolltiles varies from 0.015 m. to 0.022 m. while the pantiles are consistently ca. 0.021 m. thick.

### *Architectural Sculpture*

An investigation of the exterior of the dome's drum at Oški showed that the low reliefs and architectural ornaments were done after the installment of stone on the wall. Unfinished ornamental decorations suggest that masons began carving the patterns after the desired motif was outlined on the wall with scarlet pigment. This can be seen on the southwestern pier of the southern porch in Oški (fig. 7) where one can observe an unfinished carving and a clearly detectable drawing in red on the engaged shaft. This confirms the observation that the mason used a "blueprint" for his carving and that the stone was cut from the bottom up. On the upper part of the dome's drum at Oški, a distinctly visible sequence of equal armed crosses outlined in red can be seen. Evidently the mason intended to carve the pattern but for some unknown reason had to abandon his original plan. The large reliefs, on the other hand, such as the donor and *Deesis* group, were probably carved before the monoliths were installed in the wall. An investigation of the sculptures confirmed that the main

<sup>22</sup> E. T'akaišvili, *Arkhitekturnye ekskursii raziskania i zametki*, III (Tbilisi 1909) 145; P. Zakaraia, *Bulletin of Georgian National Museum* 12 (Tbilisi 1958) 96. In May 1977, I had the opportunity to study some Georgian churches at firsthand, and I found that Bagrat's cathedral (completed in 1003) in Kutaisi and the cathedral in Alaverdi were likewise roofed with glazed tiles. The first had wine-red pan and roll tiles equipped with antefixes which are very similar to those of Iṣhani and Haḥuli. The dimensions of the roll tiles are: L.: 0.30 m.; H.: 0.09 m.; exterior W.: 0.11 m.; interior W.: 0.73 m. The second church was covered with large pantiles glazed in light blue (L.: 0.67 m.; W.: 0.30 m.; Th.: 0.017 m.).



tools used for sculpting were chisels, finetoothed adzes, pick-axes, and running drills<sup>23</sup>.

### *The Donor Inscriptions in the Church at Oški*

Our knowledge of the architecture of Tao-Klarjet'i in the Middle Byzantine period can be enriched by numerous inscriptions, most of which are contemporary with the churches themselves. One of them is the inscription located on the tympanum of the door in the southern crossarm at Oški (fig. 8, C). This inscription, composed of old Georgian uncials (*mrglovani*)

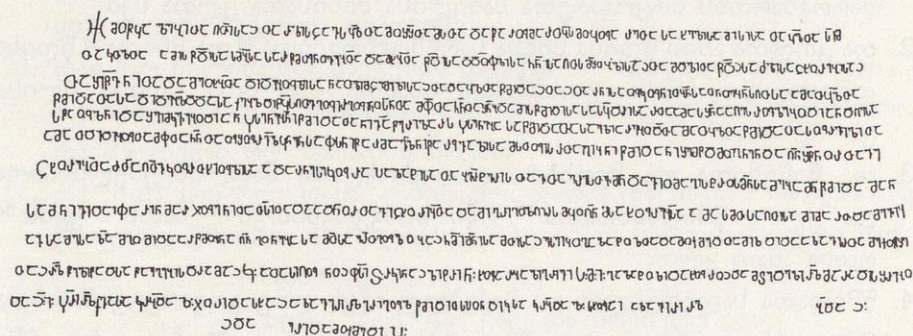


Fig. C The inscription on the tympanon in Oški

in scarlet pigment and executed sometime during the early years of the decade between 963 and 973, contains very valuable information pertaining to the construction of this church by two reigning brothers, David Kuropalates and Bagrat, Duke of Dukes. This inscription was first copied by Mechitharist N. Sargisian and published by M. F. Brosset more than a century ago<sup>24</sup>. In 1917 the same inscription was studied *in situ* and published by E. T'akaišvili<sup>25</sup>. However, T'akaišvili's facsimile of this inscription, its transcription into modern (*mhedruli*) Georgian, and the deciphering of the abbreviations contain obvious errors. For this reason

<sup>23</sup> In this place should be mentioned the nine spandrel figures holding masons' tools which derive from an Armenian tetraconch church in Zvartnots (632). However, according to recent finds these figures represent not masons but the donors and members of their families (C. Mnacakanian, *Zvartnots*, [Moskow, 1971] 53, figs. 50-53).

<sup>24</sup> "Inscriptions Géorgiennes et autres recueillies par père Nerses Sargisian et expliquées par M. Brosset", *Memoires de l'Académie des sciences de St. Petersbourg*, VII serie, t. VIII (St. Petersbourg 1864) No. 10.

<sup>25</sup> 1917 *clis arheologiuri ekspedicia samhret' sak'art'veloši* (Tbilisi 1960) 47-49. Thereafter T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*.



I am offering my own reading of the inscription and its English translation. It is based on a first hand study of the inscription and my photographs. Since T'akaišvili's facsimile of the inscription, its mhedruli transcription and the solution of abbreviations differ from each other, my comments will be based on Takaishvili's transcription. Following the tympanum inscription I will convey the letter უ as ო; except the cases when abbreviations are resolved. The parenthesis is employed to resolve abbreviations, the quare brackets indicate the omitted letters and Lacuna, the dots indicate approximate number of letters which have been lost.

1. აჲ მოწყალებითა ღთისადათა რლი სცავს ყლთა მოშშთა მსთა და წაროჲმართბს მოყოჲარეთა სახელისა მისისათა ყლთა სქმ
2. თა კოლთა ამის წდისა სმბსა სარწმოჲვნოვებთა<sup>26</sup> და მბბთა<sup>27</sup> წდისა დდოფლისა ჩნისა ღთსმშობელისადათა მდლითა წდესა ძლისა ცხოვრებისაჲ
3. თა შეწვნითა და მეოხბთა დიდებოჲლისა ნათლიმცემელისადათა და ყლთა წმიდათადათა<sup>28</sup> რნი საოჲკოჲნიტგან<sup>29</sup> სათნო ეყნს<sup>30</sup> ღთსა ამათ ყლთა
4. წმიდათა სადიდებლდ და საქებლდ იწყს ღთვ გოჲირგოჲინოსნთა მფთა ჩნთა შნბდ ამის წმიდისასა<sup>31</sup> სყდრისა<sup>32</sup> რთა ამას შნა აღესოჲოვლებოდიან ღღესა
5. სწოჲოვლნი და შეიმკვებოდიან კსენებნი წმიდათანი<sup>33</sup> ვა წერილ არს კსენებასა წმიდათასა ეზიარებოდთ<sup>34</sup> ამათ ყლთა წმიდათა სოჲრვილითა
6. ამათ დიდებოჲთა<sup>35</sup> მფთა ჩნთა ოჲშოჲოვრვლ ყნენ<sup>36</sup> საფსნი წარ-

<sup>26</sup> T'akaišvili, (*Ekspedicia*, 47) reads it: "სარწმოჲვნოვებითა".

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it: "მბბთა".

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it: "წმიდათადათა". Since in the original inscription the word "წმიდათადათა" is not abbreviated but spelled in full, and assuming that the scribe did not make an error, the thirteenth word of the second line should not be read as "წმიდესა", as T'akaišvili has done, but as "წმ(ი)დ(ა)ესა".

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "საოჲკოჲნიტგან".

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "ეყნეს".

<sup>31</sup> This word is written as "წმიდისასა"; an obvious mistake of the scribe that was not observed by T'akaišvili.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "საყდრისა".

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "წმიდთანი".

<sup>34</sup> II Peter I<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> T'akaišvili, (*Ekspedicia*, 47), reads it as: "დიდებულთა".

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "ყნენ".



მავლნი წარვეალისა<sup>37</sup> მსთოჳის რთა იგი ყნი წმიდანი შემწდ  
მოიგნენ და ღნ შწნ ორთავე

7. ცხორებთა ძთე კოჳრთხეოჳლისა ადარნესე კოჳრაჰალტისათა  
ბგრტ ერისთავთა ერისთემნ დავით მაგისტროსმნ <sup>38</sup> სამეზამნ  
წმიდამან
8. სამნივე დაიფარენ მარჯოჳენითა თსითა და აღნ ორთავე ცხო-  
რებთა <sup>39</sup> და მე გრიგოლ ღირს მყო ღნ მსახოჳრბსა ამას მთსა  
ლთისა მიმართ და მე ვიყ
9. ავ სამესა <sup>40</sup> ზა მგომი <sup>41</sup> და არწმოჳნა ღნ გონებასა მთსა ერთ-  
გოჳლობაჲ <sup>42</sup> ჩმი მნისა <sup>43</sup> მთისაჲ ესე იყო გალატოჳთა და მოქმედთა  
მიზდი და აზავერთა მექოჳიშე
10. თაჲ რლ წელიწადსა წაეგების დრამაჲ :კ: ათასი ღოჳინოჲ ფსი :ჭ:  
რკინაჲ ლიტრი :ნ: ხოჳარბალი გრივი :ს:მ:ი: გალატოჳზი და ხოჳროჲ  
და მჭედელი რლ მარადის შრებო
11. და :ჲ:ი: ჳრი რლ ქვასა კრბდა :ლ: ჯორი და სხაჲ <sup>44</sup> აზავერი რლ  
გრიგოჳლ წმიდით სჳონდიკსა კრბდა :ლ: სხოჳაჲ აზავერი რლ <sup>45</sup>  
[ . . . . . ] ბდა <sup>46</sup> :ჲ: [ . . . . . ]
12. და [ . . . ] 'ყი' ერი და მოქმედი :პ:

1. აქ მოწყალებითა ღ(მრ)თისადათა რ(ომე)ლი სცავს ყ(ოვე)ლთა მოშ(ი)შთა მ(ი)სთა და წაროჴმართ(ე)ბს მოყოჴარეთა სახელისა მისისათა ყ(ოვე)ლთა ს(ა)ქმ(ე)
2. თა კ(ე)თ(ი)ლთა ამის წ(მი)დისა ს(ა)მ(ე)ბ(ი)სა სარწმოჴნოვებ(ი)თა და მ(ეო)ხ(ე)ბ(ი)თა წ(მი)დისა დ(ე)დოჴლისა ჩ(უე)ნისა ღ(მრ)თ(ი)სმ-შობ(ე)ლისადათა მ(ა)დლითა წ(მი)დ(ა)ესა ძ(ე)ლისა ცხოვრებისაჲ
3. თა შეწ(ი)ეცნითა და მეოხ(ე)ბ(ი)თა დიდებოჴლისა ნათლი[ს]მ-

<sup>37</sup> In inscription is omitted the letter “ṛ”.

<sup>38</sup> Instead of datif (ერისთავსა, მაგისტროსსა) inscription employed narrative (ერისთავმან, მაგისტროსმან).

<sup>39</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "ცხოვრებათა".

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as : ‘လၢၣ်မၤ’.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as : “მდგომი”.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as : “ერგულობაჲ”.

<sup>43</sup> This word is omitted by T'akaišvili, (*Ibidem.*).

<sup>44</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ibidem.*, reads it as: "სხუად".

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as : “၁၆၁၃၇(၇၀)”.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*, reads it as : “(၃၈၀)၇၁”.







crowned Kings began the construction of this holy church so that in it could be celebrated

5. holy days and the Saints splendidly commemorated, as it is written : "partake in the commemoration of the Saints". By the desire of all those Saints
6. those glorious kings of ours did not spare transient riches for that which is permanent, in order to merit the aid of all those Saints, and may God help in both
7. lives the sons of divinely blessed Adarnese Kuropalates, Bagrat, Duke of Dukes, (and), David Magistros. The Holy Trinity
8. shall protect all three on his right side and glorify (them) in both lives. I, Grigol, was made worthy by God to serve the Lord through them. I was
9. the supervisor of the labors and may God convince them of my devotion to them, their servant. The yearly expenditures and wages for the masons and hired laborers and for the oxen wagons carrying
10. the sand was K (= 20) thousand drama<sup>47</sup>, the wine C (= 5.000) phisos<sup>48</sup>, the iron N (= 50) liters<sup>49</sup>, the grain SMI (= 250) grivi<sup>50</sup>, the number of steadily laboring masons, carpenters and blacksmiths
11. (was) JI (= 70), the (number of) oxen carrying the stone L (= 30) the mules and other pack animals which were transporting the spondiki<sup>51</sup> from the environs of (the monastery of) Holy Grigol L (= 30) the other carriers which were gathering . . . . . J (= 60)  
. . . . .
12. J (= 60) and . . . (the total number of) man and those laboring (in the construction of the church) P (= 80).

Thus in our singularly informative inscription we find not only the names of donors (Bagrat, Duke of Dukes /†966/, and David Kuropalates /†1001/), and the names of the supervisor of construction (Grigol), but also a detailed account of the yearly expenses of the monastery (20.000 drama) and

<sup>47</sup> Drama (= draxma) was a silver coin which equalled the Arabic *dirhem* (I. Djavahišvili, *K'art'uli numizmatika da metrologia* (Tbilisi 1925) 16, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Phisos is the wine (or liquid) measure. Phisos derives from Persian *Phizus* (T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 48f.).

<sup>49</sup> During the Middle Ages, the liter equalled 64 mishali (ounces), whereas one mishali equalled 4.266 gram. Consequently, 50 litra equals 213 kg.

<sup>50</sup> Grivi is the measure of grain and equals 13 kg. and 400 gm. Consequently 250 grivi = 3.325 kg. The term grivi is frequently used in Georgian Biblical texts (Numbers XV-4 "... tenth deal of flour"; Ez. VI-13 "sixth part of an ephah of a homer of wheat"; Mt. XIII-33), one grivi = 30 modios (μóδιος).

<sup>51</sup> For *spondiki*, see note 17.



payments *in natura* (5.000 phisos of wine, 250 grivi grain)<sup>52</sup> and the various materials employed for the construction of the church (sand, sandstone, porous lightweight stone /spondiki/ and 50 liters of iron). The number of steadily laboring constructors, masons, and blacksmiths was 70; the total number of men laboring in the construction of the church, 80; the total number of oxen transporting stone, 30; and mules and other pack animals gathering porous stone, 30.

### *Architects, Masons, Supervisors of Construction, and Donors*

Contrary to Byzantine practice, in Tao-Klarjet'i the donors, architects, masons, supervisors of works, and even the common laborers did not remain anonymous; their names were frequently recorded and their skill praised in literary sources, in inscriptions carved or painted on the walls of churches. In some instances even their images were carved in relief. For instance, on one of the southern capitals of the dome's blind arcade at Oški is carved the half-figure of a man carrying a stone strapped on his back with two ropes (fig. 10). This damaged sculpture may represent a laborer or mason, perhaps someone associated with a significant episode of the church's construction, since it occupies a prominent place and can easily be viewed from the Bishop's quarters<sup>53</sup>. From the inscription of the tympanum of the southern crossarm at Oški, we know that the supervisor of construction was named Grigol<sup>54</sup>. There is even a stone relief of Grigol accompanied by an identifying inscription on the western face of an octagonal pier of the southern porch (fig. 9)<sup>55</sup>. A similar but more crudely

<sup>52</sup> On the wages of construction workers and blacksmiths in monetary form or *in natura* in Byzantium, see G. Ostrogorsky "Löhne und Preise in Byzanz" *ByZ* 32 (1932) 295f. For sources of masons and stone cutters wages in the sixth-seventh centuries, see H. J. Magoulias, "Trades and crafts in the sixth-seventh centuries as viewed in the lives of the Saints", *Byzantinoslavica* 37 (1976) 13-17.

<sup>53</sup> In Georgia proper, the only example comparable to Oški is in Bagrat's Cathedral at K'ut'aisi. Here, on the eastern portion of the southern wall, just below the cornice, is the sculpture of a man supporting or carrying a stone with his elevated hands (W. Cincadze, *Bagratis Tadzari* [Tbilisi 1964] fig. 11). For the interpretation of such representations see D. Gerhardt, "Das Petrus-Bekenntnis in der Slavenmission". *Byzantion* 24 (1954) 533-544, especially p. 540ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Infra*, p. 127.

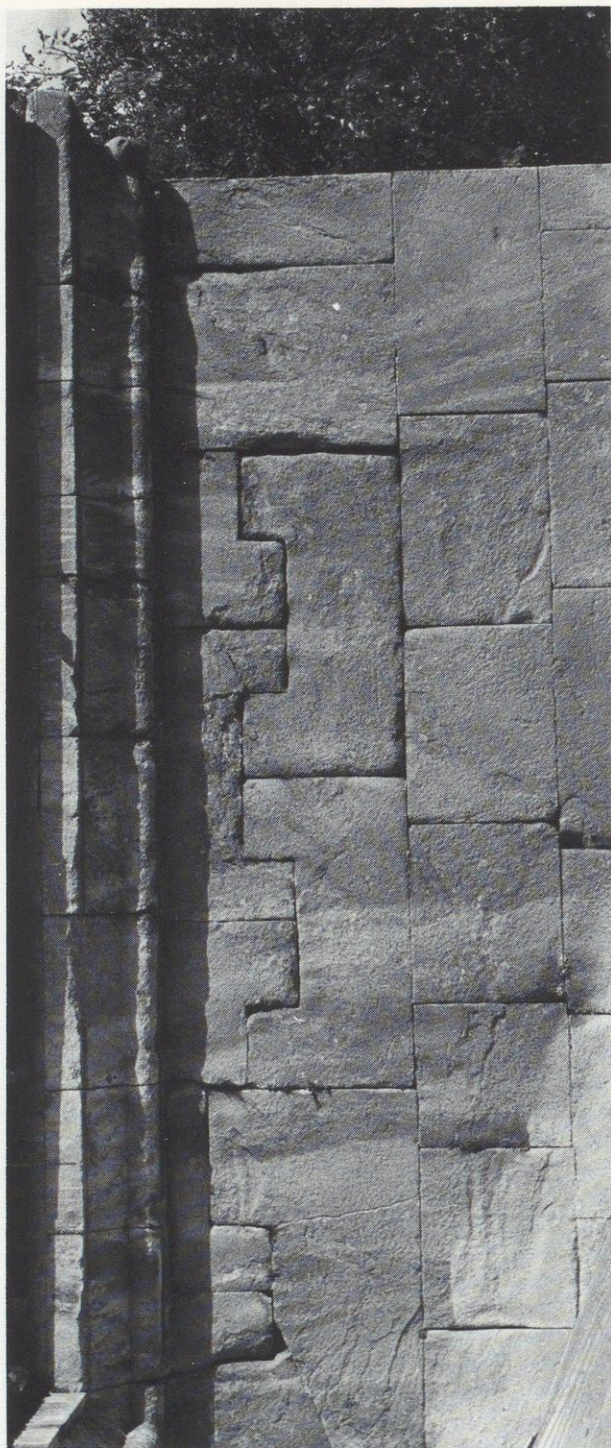
<sup>55</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 47-51; D. Winfield, "Some Medieval Figural Sculpture from North-east of Turkey" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 31 (1968) 48, fig. 20b. It is incorrect to identify Grigol as a master-mason or architect because the Oški inscription unequivocally states that Grigol was the "supervisor" of construction. This title — as distinct from "architect" or "master-mason" — existed in Georgia before the tenth century. For





Fig. 1 Koroĝo pilaster capital representing the donor with the plan of the church (Photo : R. Mep'isašvili)





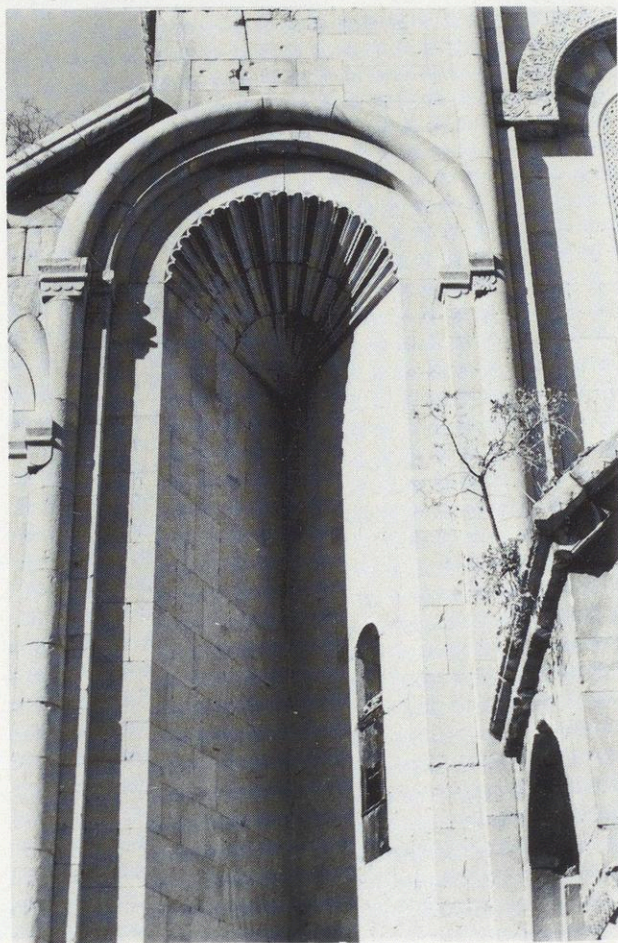
*Fig. 2 Hahuli church (Xth century). The western wall of the southern crossarm.*



TAFEL III



*Fig. 3 Cathedral church at Işhani (IXth century).  
The blind arcade on the northern wall of the nave.*



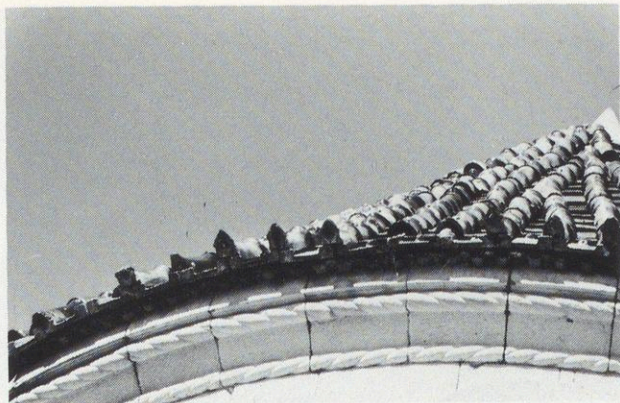
*Fig. 4 Church at Oški. The western niche of the  
southern crossarm.*





*Fig. 5 Oški. Donor David Magistros. Southeastern part of the wall.*





*Fig. 6 Haḥuli. The remaning antefixes of the dome's conic roof.*



*Fig. 7 Oški. South-western pier of the southern porch.*



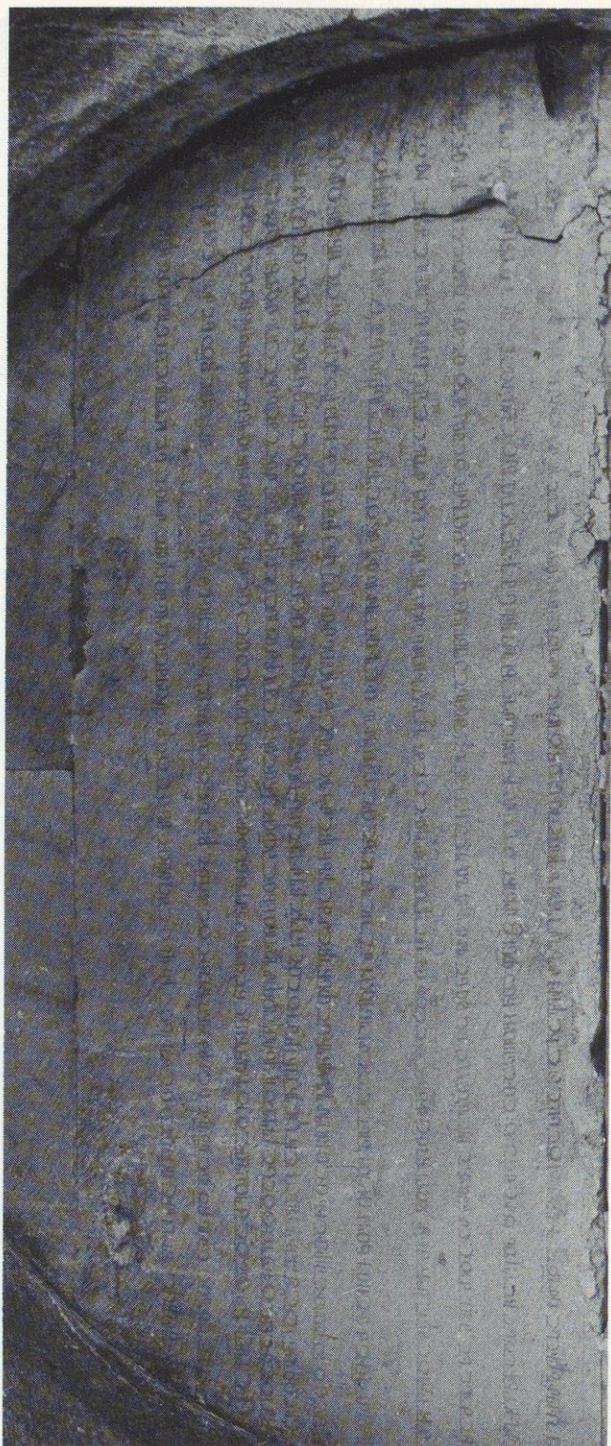


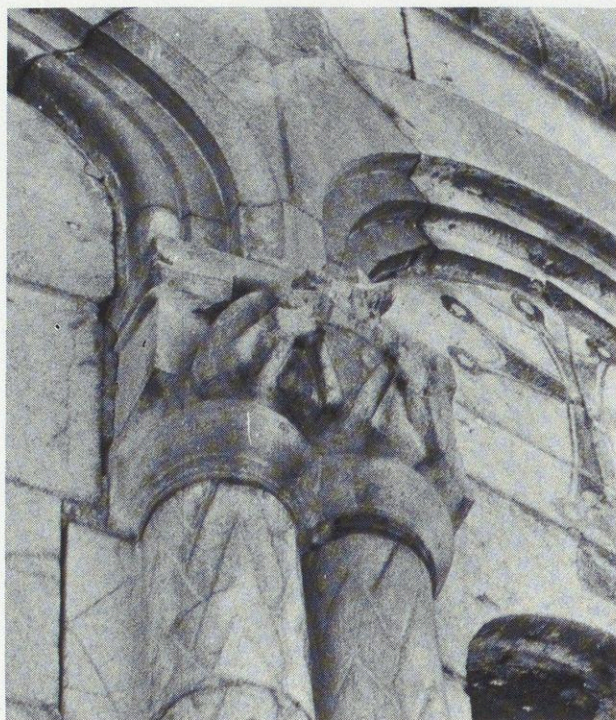
Fig. 8 Oški. Inscription on the tympanon of the southern crossarm in the porch.





*Fig. 9 Octagonal pier in the southern annex representing the supervisor of construction of the church in Oški, Grigol Oškeli (Photo D. Winfield).*





*Fig. 10 Oški. Capital on the dome's drum.*



*Fig. 11 Parhali. Lintel of the northern window on the western facade.*





*Fig. 12 Doliskana. Facade of the southern crossarm representing the sculptor Gabriel.*





Fig. 13 Opiza (Now in Nat. Museum of Georgian S.S.R. in Tbilisi). Ašot I Kuropalates, the donor of the church (Photo Nat. Mus. in Tbilisi).





Fig. 14 Doliskana. The drum of the dome. King Sumbat († 958) extending the model of his church.





*Fig. 15 Tbet'i (Now in Nat. Mus. of Georgia in Tbilisi).  
King Ašot II Kuropalates as ktitor of the church (Photo  
Nat. Museum in Tbilisi).*



executed relief is preserved on the window lintel of the western facade of the Parhali basilica (built shortly before 973). This *orans* figure (fig. 11) is identified by the accompanying inscription as Theodore. He wears a girdled plain secular costume, and since the donor of this church is well known and the architect's is not recorded, the modest figure of Theodore could well be the master mason.

The architectural sculpture of the neighbouring church at Doliskana (shortly before 958) was carved "by the hand of Gabriel, deacon". His bust in a circular radiating frame in the form of *clipeus* is located above the identifying inscription in the southern crossarm of the church (fig. 12). Thus it appears that Gabriel was not only the deacon but the sculptor and perhaps even the architect as well<sup>56</sup>, like the famous monk, Serapion of Zarzma, who, according to his biographer, Basil, "was superbly trained in architectural matters"<sup>57</sup>.

We can identify the masons of Ȧandzt'a and Iřhani as well. The *bios* of Grigol of Ȧandzt'a mentions Amona, builder of the main (second) monastic church. Amona, active in the early tenth century, evidently was a renowned master-mason. He was praised by the biographer of Grigol of Ȧandzt'a, Merćule, as a "builder with wisdom"<sup>58</sup>. According to the inscription on the clocktower of the same church, the clocktower was built by Markoz (Marcos) and Abesalma Kldeli<sup>59</sup>. We know from the lengthy inscription of the southern wall of the cathedral church at Iřhani that in 1032 this church was completely renovated by Ioane Morćaisdze<sup>60</sup>.

It is also known that the first church at Zarzma was built by the architect Garbaneli<sup>61</sup>, and the second church by řuartkeli<sup>62</sup>.

It is not intended to list the many names of less significant persons

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instance, in the *bios* of Serapion Zarzmeli (ninth century), we read that during the construction of the first church "the architect (or master-mason) and the supervisor of construction/labor" were present. (Zarzmeli, *bios*, 335).

<sup>56</sup> N. Marr, *op. cit.*, 184, fig. 61; P. Ingorokva, *Giorgi Merćule*, 359.

<sup>57</sup> Zarzmeli, *bios.*, 337. As to the close association between Georgian and Syrian churches, it is instructive to mention that a similar situation existed also in Syria where the Presbyter Diodoros (builder of the great church at Dar Kita) and Kyris were also architects, while the architect (*Oikodómos*) Petros was a deacon as well. (H.C. Butler, *Early churches in Syria*, [Princeton, 1929] 257). The architect of St. Martha's martyrion, Angoulas, was a monk of the monastery of St. Symeon Stylites the Younger as well (C. Mango, "Isaurian builders", "*Polychronion*" *Festschrift F. Dölger* (1967) 360f.).

<sup>58</sup> Merćule, *bios.*, 277.

<sup>58</sup> Merćule, *bios.*, 277.

<sup>59</sup> Marr, *op. cit.*, 144, 145. Figs. 51-52.

<sup>60</sup> T'akaiřvili, *Ekspedicia*, 13-14.

<sup>61</sup> Zarzmeli, *bios.*, 335.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.



associated with the construction of these churches; it will suffice to mention only two of the most interesting inscriptions. First is one in red pigment on the upper part of the eastern facade in the basilical church at Parḥali, where the laborers, stone cutters, masons, and even a blacksmith are mentioned<sup>63</sup>. The second example is in Ḥaḥuli, where the names of eight masons are inscribed on the bases of the dome's engaged shafts<sup>64</sup>.

Significant information concerning donors is contained in Georgian hagiographical literature. Here we learn that in the Klarjet'-Šavšet' region in the eight-tenth centuries, the spiritual life of the monasteries was vigorously nourished by "men of God". However, as reflected in the construction of monasteries and churches, the realization of their ideals was accomplished by means of the material support and personal encouragement of secular rulers. In the *bios* of Serapion of Zarzma it is told that "the servant of God, Giorgi Čorčaneli, gave to the multitude of brethren all the necessities (for the construction of the church of Zarzma) and as many mules and donkeys as they needed"<sup>65</sup>. As regards the construction of the monastery of Šatberdi, we read in the *bios* of Grigol of Ḥandzt'a that "... thereafter Bagrat Kuropalates (826-876) joyfully ordered the construction of the monastery (of Šatberdi) and gave (to Grigol of Ḥandzt'a) all the necessities for its construction"<sup>66</sup>. The new church at the monastery of Ḥandzt'a was begun with the material support of the local ruler Ašot, Duke of Dukes († 918) who, as the *bios* of Grigol of Ḥandzt'a reveals, "enthusiastically began with the construction of the new church at Ḥandzt'a and overwhelmed it with countless donations"<sup>67</sup>. Among these were various material necessities and arable land in abundance, since this monastery built on the steep slopes of a high mountain was ill-suited for agricultural purposes. The same source informs us of the circumstances leading to the construction of the original church at Ḥandzt'a: "the glorified nobleman Gabriel sent off Father Grigol with numerous presents and gave him the master masons and all the material needed to build the monastery church"<sup>68</sup>. Evidently

<sup>63</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 91-93. I have detected additional names on the upper part of the eastern facade, mainly around the circular ornamented window frame.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. In the same region, we frequently encounter the names of the scribes and book illustrators, bookbinders, silver and goldsmiths, and sometimes even the amount of payments which they received for their labor. For instance, the gospel of Ckarost'avi (which is located near Oški) contains the information that its embossed gilded book cover was made by Bek'a Opizari, for which work he received 23 "drama" (dirhem). Bek'a Opizari embossed his name on the book-cover itself. (Š. Amiranašvili, *Bek'a Opizari* [Tbilisi 1956] 7).

<sup>65</sup> Zarzmel, *bios.*, 335.

<sup>66</sup> Merčule, *bios.*, 273.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-277.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.



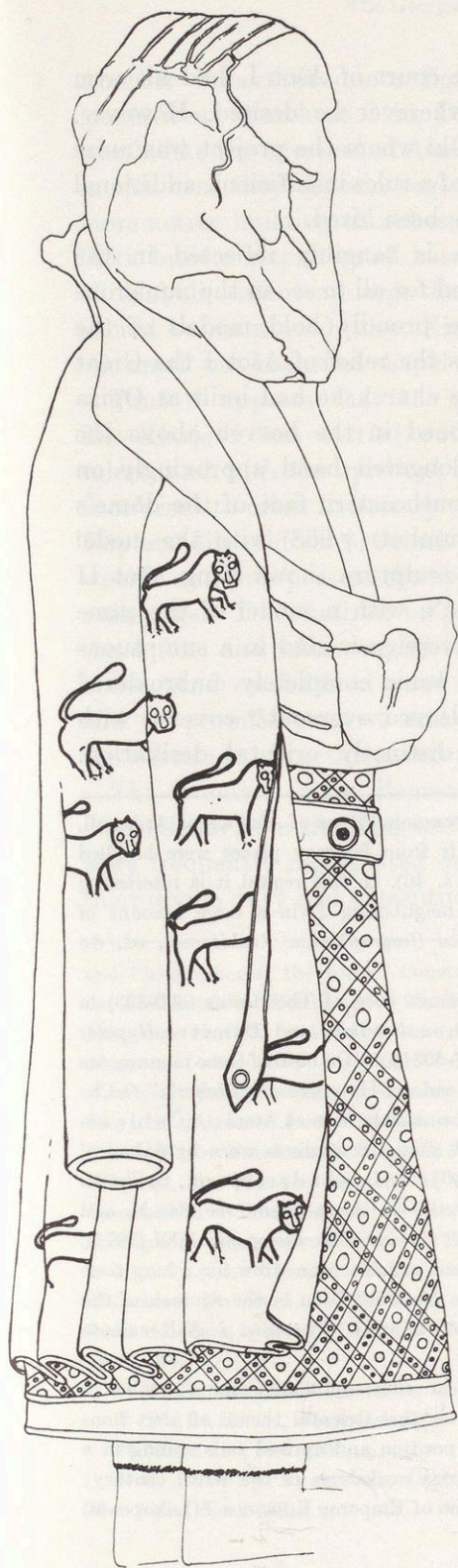


Fig. D King Ašot (891-918) from Tbet'i (reconstruction).

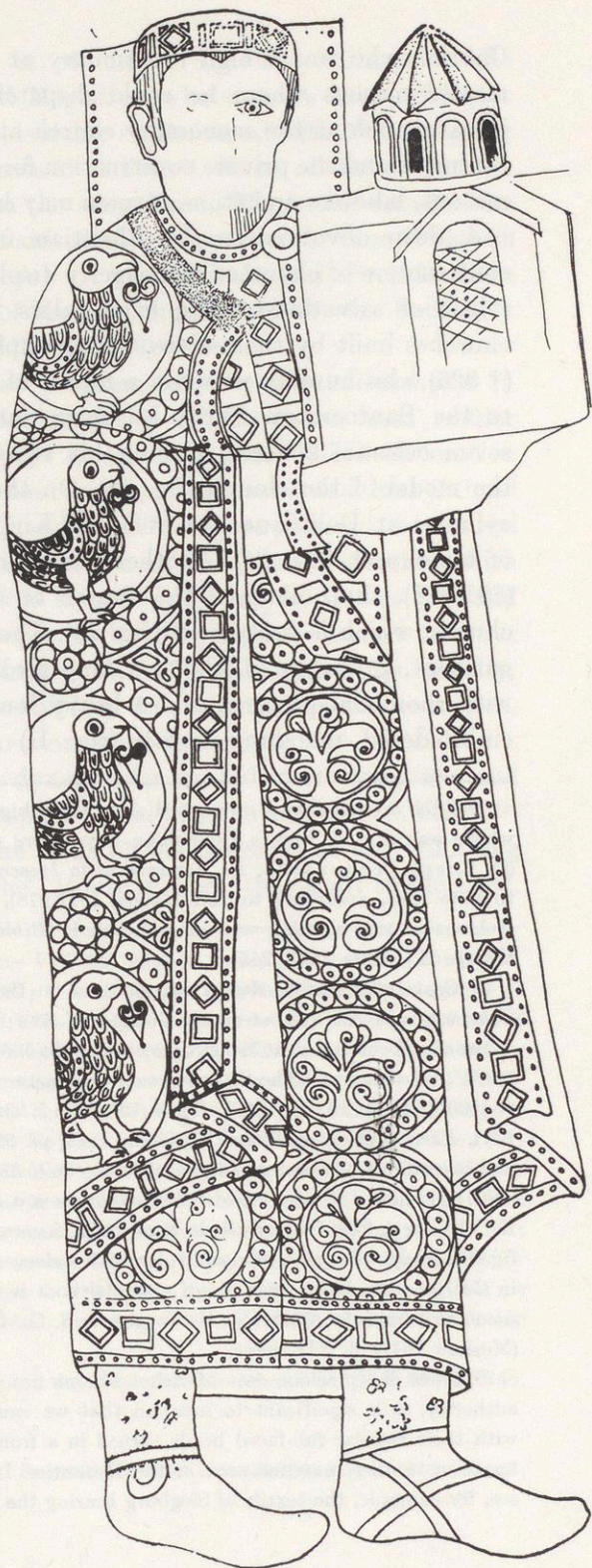


Fig. E David magistros (reconstruction)



Gabriel, who was a high functionary at the court of Ašot I, had his own master masons whom he could dispatch wherever he desired. However, in cases such as the monastery church at Oški where the project was more extensive and the private construction force of a ruler insufficient, additional masons, laborers and stone carvers may have been hired.

A deep devotion to the Christian faith is tangibly reflected in the construction of churches and eagerly displayed for all to see in the numerous reliefs of salvation-seeking local rulers who proudly hold models of the churches built by themselves. An example is the relief of Ašot I the Great († 826) who humbly presents a model of the church he had built at Opiza to the Pantocrator. Christ is shown enthroned in the heaven above the seven celestial spheres, placing his right elongated hand approvingly on the model of the church (fig. 13). On the southeastern face of the dome's cylinder at Doliskana is a relief of King Sumbat († 958) with the model of his church (fig. 14). Another instructive sculpture shows King Ašot II (891-918), the builder of the church at Tbet'i, with a model of the same church, which is broken off (fig. 15). The sovereign is clad in a sumptuous garment, probably of silk<sup>69</sup>: a long girdled tunic completely embroidered with rhomboid patterns and a heavy long-sleeved overcoat<sup>70</sup> covered with embroidered marching lions<sup>71</sup> (fig. D) of distinctly oriental derivation.

<sup>69</sup> Such a possibility is supported also by the high economic status of Ašot's seat Ardanuji, which was at this time a flourishing city where goods from faraway places were handled (C. Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio* Ch. 46). In this regard it is interesting to note that, according to Ibn Hauqal (977-978), in neighboring Dvin a large amount of fashionable silk clothing was manufactured. (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. de Goeje II [Leiden 1873] 245).

<sup>70</sup> Coats of a similar design can be seen on the famous base of Theodosius (390-393) in Constantinople as well as on the images of Stephanos Patrikios and Dimitri Hypatos at the cruciform church at Mchet'a (Georgia, built 586/587-605/606). On both of these monuments see W. Djobadze, "The Sculptures on the Eastern Facade of Holy Cross of Mchet'a" OrChr 45 [1961] 71, fig. 10; 44 [1960] after p. 120, figs. 2. They can also be seen at Ateni (G. Čubinašvili, *Pamiatniki Tipa Djvari* II [Tbilisi 1948] pl. 53). A similar costume is worn by Saharuni and his wife on the eastern facade of Mren (built 638-640) (W. Djobadze, *op. cit.*, OrChr 45 [1961] 71, note 136 where additional examples are quoted). On this account, see also M. and N. Thierry, "La Cathedrale de Mren et sa decoration" *Cahiers d'Archeologique* XXI (1971), fig. 13. Such coats with elongated decorative sleeves seem to have been worn for a long time in Georgia. The latest example of a similar coat is worn by King Leon in the squinch of the dome at Kumurdo (964) (N. Severov and G. Čubinašvili, *Kumurdo i Nikorcminda* (Moscow 1947) pl. XII below).

<sup>71</sup> Since the precious coat of Ashot II was not just another commodity but a symbol of authority, it is significant to mention that we encounter this Oriental theme of alert lions with their angular full-faced heads turned in a frontal position and aprised tails ending in a knob on textiles manufactured in the Byzantine Imperial workshops of the tenth century; see, for example, the textile of Siegburg bearing the name of Emperor Romanos I (Lakapenos)



Another important donor figure is of one of the two builders of the magnificent church at Oški, David Magistros, who wears a heavy chlamys which, like the overcoat of Ašot II, is richly embroidered with circles (fig. 5); in this case they contain eagles instead of lions<sup>72</sup>. Some of the rulers were more active building churches, like the same David Magistros, who besides Oški, built a second small barrel vaulted church nearby the domed church at Haḥuli, and two large basilicas: Ot'ht'a Eklesia and Parḥali. Here should be mentioned, also, King of Kings, Gurgen († 1008) who built only one small but beautiful chapel in Iṣḥani (1006)<sup>73</sup>.

Thus it appears that the great program of monastic colonization in Tao-Klarjet'i was carried out with material aid from the local secular rulers, and with the spiritual support of devout monks. This collaboration is referred to often in literary sources; as when the local feudal lord Gabriel Dap'ančuli's addresses Grigol of Handzt'a: "Now, we possess the material wealth and you possess the spiritual wealth and we shall blend these with each other. You shall let us partake in your holy prayers in this life, and thereafter, and after our death honor us by burying our bones with your bones. And establish in your monastery our commemoration for eternity, and we promise you, we and our children from generation to generation, the solicitude of brethren and your monastery in eternity"<sup>74</sup>.

The founders of the Bagration dynasty, as most devout Christians and descendents from the King and Prophet David and the ancestors of Christ<sup>75</sup>, were frequently represented on the walls of the churches as ably fulfilling their divine duty and presenting the "House of God" they built to the Lord.

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and Christophoros, the son of Constantine VII (921-923) (O. von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Berlin 1936) 26, fig. 182; the textile in Düsseldorf bearing the names of Emperors Basil II and Constantine VIII (976-1025) (A.F. Kendrick, *Victoria and Albert Museum. Catalogue of Early Medieval Woven Fabrics* (London 1925) 44; and the fabric in Maestricht Saint-Servais representing a portion of a lion (tenth-eleventh century) W.F. Volbach in *Byzantin Art an European Art* (Athens 1964) 473, No. 579) and ninth-tenth century silk in Museo Nazionale in Ravenna (W.F. Volbach, *Early Decorative Textile* (London 1967) 136, 140, fig. 66). See also one of the earliest dated Byzantine textiles (886-912) which is described in a French chronicle *Gesta pontificum Autiossodorensium*; A. Frolov, "Quelques Inscriptions sur des œuvres d'Art du Moyen Age", *Cahiers Archeologiques* VI (1952), pp. 163-167; and A. Grabar "Les Succes des arts Orientaux à la cour Byzantine sous les Macedoniens", *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 2 (1951) 33; *Idem*, "Le rayonnement de l'art Sassanide dans le monde Chrétien", *La Persia Medioevo, Accademia Nazionale dei lincei*, (Rome 1971) 694.

<sup>72</sup> W. Djobadze, "The Donor Reliefs and the Date of the Church at Oški". *ByZ* 69 (1976) 46.

<sup>73</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 29.

<sup>74</sup> Merčule, *bios.*, 260,4-9.

<sup>75</sup> C. Porphyrogenitus, *De. Adm. Imp.* ed. G. Moravesik (Budapest 1949) *Ch.* 45; Merčule, *bios.*, 262,20-31.



These rulers and their family members were worshiped in the churches during their lifetimes and after their deaths, they were eagerly commemorated in liturgies and even in commemorative inscriptions such as that in the narthex at Oški<sup>76</sup>. An affinity with the church went beyond mere worship and commemoration of the Kings in the house of God; in accordance with the words of Gabriel Dap'ančuli, the church became the eternal resting place of the rulers of Tao-Klarjet'i and their family members. These included Ašot the Great, Kuropalates († 826), and his son, Guaram Mamp'ali († 882), who actively supported the rebuilding and development of monasteries. The first was buried in the church of Peter and Paul in Ardanuji<sup>77</sup>, the second, in the church of John the Baptist in the monastery of Opiza<sup>78</sup>. Similarly, Ašot, Duke of Dukes (896-918), who began the construction of the new church in the monastery of Ĥandzt'a with his own material resources, was buried in the same church<sup>79</sup>; this was also true of the builders of the church at Oški, Bagrat, Duke of Dukes († 966) and perhaps his famous brother, David Kuropalates († 1001).

Most of these churches are now filled with debris and the literary sources do not define the specific burial sites within the church, but in two cases the burial places can be ascertained: in Opiza where King Guaram was buried in the arcosolium of the western narthex<sup>80</sup>, and in Oški where Bagrat, Duke of Dukes, and presumably other members of the Bagration ruling family, were buried in a lofty crypt beneath the church<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 55-56.

<sup>77</sup> *K'art'lis Čovreba*, ed. S. Kauḥčišvili I (Tbilisi 1955) 377, 26-27.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>79</sup> Merčule, *bios.*, 277, 12-14.

<sup>80</sup> Uvarova, *Materialy po Arkheologii Kavkaza III* (Moscow 1893), 65.

<sup>81</sup> T'akaišvili, *Ekspedicia*, 33.