

Cultural Interactions in Medieval Georgia



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Transformation and Memory in Medieval Georgian Church Architecture: the Case of Manglisi Cathedral

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The cathedral of Manglisi, today a small village some 40 km west of Tblisi in Kvemo Kartli, can be considered as one of the most intriguing sacral buildings of Georgia. Allegedly one of the first important sites of Christian faith in the country, the settlement remained of central importance far into the medieval period.¹ The preserved cathedral, situated within a later enclosure with bell-tower, outside of the village, immediately reveals itself as a construction from the medieval period. This is corroborated by several inscriptions mentioning the year 1020 or 1027, an issue to be discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, the building's rather squat proportions and the unusual combination of a centralized triconch-shaped nave with octagonal exterior, added porches and tripartite choir indicate, in their deviation from the standards of medieval Georgian church architecture, that it is in fact result of a sequence of construction phases (Fig. 1).

In historiographical terms, the church in Manglisi, presents a special case. It was studied as early as the 1840s, with a number of further publications following in the 1850s and 1860s, mainly focusing on the rich corpus of inscriptions preserved at the time.²

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- 1 On the development of the episcopate see Kutateladze, Ketevan, *Manglisi ep'arkiis sazghvreb* [The Borders of the Manglisi Diocese], in: *Studies in History and Ethnology of the Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology* 11 (2009), pp. 116–135.
 - 2 Brosset, Marie-Félicité, *Explication de diverses inscriptions géorgiennes, arméniennes et grecques*, in: *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de Saint-Petersbourg* (6 ser) 4 (1840), pp. 315–446, here pp. 430–431; Slivitsky, Ivan A., *Храм в Манглисе и алгетские пещеры* [The Church in Manglisi and the Algetian Caves], in: *Кавказ [Caucasus]* (1848), ns. 37–39; Brosset, Marie-Félicité, *Atlas du voyage archéologique dans la Transcaucasie exécuté en 1847–1848, sous les auspices du Prince Vorontzof, lieutenant du Caucase*, Saint Petersburg 1850, pl. XL–XLI; Brosset, Marie-Félicité, *Rapports sur un voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie, exécuté en 1847–1848 sous les auspices du Prince Vorontzof, lieutenant du Caucase*, Saint Petersburg 1851, p. 132; Brosset, Marie-Félicité, *Essai de déchiffrement des inscriptions de l'église de Manglis*, in: *Bulletin de la classe des sciences historiques, philologiques et politiques de l'Académie impériale des sciences de Saint-Petersbourg* 8 (1851), col. 81–87 (identical text: Brosset, Marie-Félicité, *Essai de déchiffrement des inscriptions de l'église de Manglis*, in: *Mélanges asiatiques de l'Académie impériale des sciences de Saint-Petersbourg* 1 (1849–1852), pp. 252–260); Oumanetz, A., *Древний Храмъ Вѣ Манглисѣ* [The Old Church of Manglisi], in: *Кавказскій календарь [Caucasus Calendar]* (1852), pp. 463–472; Bartolomej, Ivan Alekseevič, *Lettres numismatiques et archéologiques, relatives à la Transcaucasie écrites par le général J. Bartholomaei*, Saint Petersburg 1859, pp. 114–116.



Fig. 1 [Pl. XXX.1] – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century

A subsequent renovation of the building, initiated by Russian officers, rescued the neglected, rapidly decaying building – sadly, in the process many of the important inscriptions, together with decorative details, were lost due to the excessive replacement of the stone surface.³ Few pictorial documents from before the restoration remain: some drawings of different local ‘topographers’ from before the restoration were published in a volume of letters of Ivan Bartholomej in 1859.⁴ Furthermore, there remains a very detailed 1840s drawing of the south side by Prince Grigori Gagarin, who visited the church on his travels to explore the art of Georgia, Russia and Byzantium (Fig. 2).⁵

It was perhaps the all-too thorough restoration in the second half of the 1850s, which led to a decreased interest in the building, even if it had already been

3 In the ‘Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung’ of 1845, a German traveller reports that he had seen the church of Manglisi full of bulls and cows, who had damaged the then still visible wall paintings (Anonymous, *Bilder vom Kaukasus III. Auszüge aus den Privatbriefen eines deutschen Reisenden*, in: *Beilage zur Münchener Allgemeinen Zeitung* (1845), no. 303, pp. 2417–2418).

4 Bartholomej 1859, pl. IV.

5 Garagrine, Prince Grégoire (Grigori Gagarin), *Recueil d’ornements et d’œuvres d’architecture byzantins, géorgiens et russes, deuxième série*, Saint Petersburg 1900, pl. XXVII.



Fig. 2 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Drawing by Grigori Gagarin, 1840s

discovered that the core of the building remain from the late antique period and was merely remodelled in the 11th century.⁶ Only two articles from the 1920s, of Giorgi Chubinashvili and Ak'ak'i Shanidze added significantly to the knowledge – proposing in particular a new reading of the inscriptions, drawings of which had been preserved.⁷ A monographic study of Malakia Dvali in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a thorough documentation of the material evidence and a comprehensive evaluation of previous scholarship – it was to remain the last detailed study of

6 Grimm, David Ivan, *Monuments d'architecture en Géorgie et en Arménie*, Saint Petersburg 1864, p. 1 and pls. I–III.

7 Chubinashvili, Giorgi, *Заметки о Манглинскомъ храме* [Notes on the Church of Manglisi], in: *Sakartvelos muzeumis moambe* [Bulletin du Musée de Géorgie] 1 (1922), pp. 33–62; Shanidze, Ak'ak'i, *K'vlav Manglisis ts'arts'erebis shesakheb* [Again on the Manglisi Inscriptions], in: *Mimomkhilveli* [Columnist] 1 (1926), pp. 223–235.

the building.⁸ The church evidently forms part of the 'canon' of medieval churches and is usually mentioned in more general publications on Georgian architecture, but rarely do these surpass mere summarizing paragraphs.⁹ While the late antique original structure received a thorough revaluation by Annegret Plontke-Lüning in 2007, more recent mentions of the medieval parts remain restricted to individual aspects such as the porches or the fragmentary painted decoration (which will not be discussed in this article).¹⁰

Thus, this article aims at gathering the available information on the structure and addressing open issues as well concerning the late antique as the medieval phase. A final question will be, who commissioned the unusual transformation of the church in the 11th century and which policy was connected to this process.

The Late Antique Church

In Brosset's early studies, we already find the claim that the first church of Manglisi had been erected as early as 326 or 327, in the Constantinian period. According to pre-medieval legends included in the 'Moktseva Kartlisa', a text on the conversion of Kartli written by the Deacon Grigol in the 7th century, and the compiled royal

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- 8 Dvali, Malakia, Manglisis t'adzari [The Church at Manglisi], in: Proceedings of the Department of Social Sciences, Georgian SSR 1 (1961), pp. 255–287; Dvali, Malakia, Manglisis khurot-modzghvruli dzegli [The Architectural Monument of Manglisi], Tbilisi 1974.
 - 9 Art and Architecture in Medieval Georgia, Eds. Alpago-Novello, Adriano; Beridze, Vakht'ang and Lafontaine-Dosogne, Jacqueline, Milan, Louvain-la-Neuve, Tbilisi 1980, p. 376; Beridze, Vakht'ang and Neubauer, Edith, Die Baukunst des Mittelalters in Georgien vom 4. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, Berlin 1980, pp. 122–124; Mepisashvili, Rusudan; Schrade, Rolf and Tsintsadze, Vakht'ang, Georgien. Kirchen und Wehrbauten, Leipzig 1986, pp. 116, 128.
 - 10 Plontke-Lüning, Annegret, Frühchristliche Architektur in Kaukasien. Die Entwicklung des christlichen Sakralbaus in Lazika, Iberien, Armenien, Albanien und den Grenzregionen vom 4. bis zum 7. Jh. (Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 13), Wien 2007, pp. 325–329 and cat. pp. 187–191. For further historiographical aspects see also the review of Antony Eastmond in: The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 61 (2010), p. 353. On porches: Eastmond, Antony, Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium. Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond, Aldershot 2004, pp. 35, 39; Gengiuri, Nato, Georgian Churches [sic] Porches: Early Christian Period to High Middle Ages, in: Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures. 1st International Vakhtang Beridze Symposium of Georgian Culture, Eds. Skinner, Peter and Tumanishvili, Dimit'ri, Tbilisi 2009, pp. 196–200. On the paintings: Velmans, Tania, L'image de la Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin, in: Cahiers archéologiques 31 (1983), pp. 129–173, here pp. 137–142; Alpago Novello, Adriano and Velmans, Tania, Miroir de l'invisible. Peintures murales et architecture de la Géorgie (VI^e–XV^e s.), Milan 1996, pp. 46–50; Mourelatos, Dionysios, The Formation and Evolution of Monumental Painting in Georgia (6th–12th c.). The Role of Byzantine Art, in: Medieval Painting in Georgia. Local Stylistic Expression and Participation to Byzantine Oecumenicity, Eds. Panagiotidi-Kesisoglou, Maria and Kalopissi-Verti, Sofia, Athens 2014, pp. 107–121, here p. 114.

annals 'Kartlis Tskhovreba', King Mirian (ca. 268–345 or 284–361) had asked Constantine to send him stonemasons and carpenters from Greece (i.e. Constantinople) in order to erect churches for the newly formed Christian community.¹¹ Those masons, still according to the legends, were indeed sent to Georgia and began erecting churches in Erusheti and Manglisi, equipping both of them with important Christological relics, the suppedaneum of the True Cross and the nails of Christ's hands. While Brosset's French and Ch'ich'inadze's English translations of the later chronicle state that the church of Erusheti received nails of the Holy Cross and Manglisi the suppedaneum, Pätšch's translation of the older source suggests that Manglisi would have been endowed with the nails.¹² Dvali, with reference to the younger text, indicates the legendary presence of all these relics in Manglisi.¹³ The longstanding tradition of the legend will play a crucial role further below.

The 'Conversion of Kartli' is preserved in at least three Manuscripts, the Shat'berdi Codex of 973 (curiously omitting the episode on Manglisi) and the Ch'elishi Codex of the 14th/15th century, as well as a further still unstudied fragment written around the year 1000 recently found on mount Sinai.¹⁴ It has sufficiently been underlined that the legend was created as a retrospective narrative at some point before the 7th century and cannot be used to attribute any part of the

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- 11 On these sources and their translations and editions see Rapp, Stephen H., *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography. Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalis 601), Leuven 2003, pp. 17–35; Rapp, Stephen H., *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes. Caucasasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature*, Farnham 2014, pp. 379–382; Labas, Kamila, *Studien zur Geschichte der georgischen Länder vom 4. bis zum früheren 7. Jh.*, PhD thesis, Vienna 2014, pp. 63–66.
- 12 *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle*, Ed. Brosset, Marie-Félicité, 2 vols., Saint Petersburg 1849, vol. 1: *Histoire ancienne jusqu'en 1469 de J.-C.*, pp. 120–121: "Arrivé dans le canton d'Eroucheth, il y laissa des architectes pour construire une église, avec de l'argent et les clous du Seigneur, puis il vint à Manglis, où il commença une autre église et y laissa les planches du Seigneur." Ch'ich'inadze, Nina, *The True Cross Reliquaries of Medieval Georgia*, in: *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999), pp. 27–49, here p. 28: "[...] came to Manglisi and began to build the church and left there the plank of the Lord." Pätšch, Gertrud, *Die Bekehrung Georgiens. Mokcevey Kartlisay* (Verfasser unbekannt), in: *Bedi Kartlisa. Revue de Kartvélogie* 33 (1975), pp. 288–337, here p. 295: "[...] und sie gingen nach Erušeti. Und sie legten das Fundament zu einer Kirche. Und sie gingen nach Manglis und legten das Fundament zur Kirche und stifteten ihr die Nägel". See against this Pätšch's translation of the longer version: *Das Leben Kartlis. Eine Chronik aus Georgien 300–1200*, Ed. Pätšch, Gertrud, Leipzig 1985, p. 173: "[...] und kam nach Manglissi und fing an, eine Kirche zu bauen, und dort ließ er das Holz vom Kreuz des Herrn." Generally and most recently on problems of different historical editions, which might well be the origin of such incoherent statements, Lerner, Constantine B., *The wellspring of Georgian historiography. The early medieval historical chronicle 'The conversion of Kartli' and 'The life of St. Nino'*. Translated with introduction, commentary and indices, London 2004.
- 13 Dvali 1974, p. 76.
- 14 *Le nouveau manuscrit géorgien sinaïtique N Sin 50*, Eds. Aleksidze, Zaza and Mahé, Jean-Pierre (Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 586), Leuven 2001; Rapp 2003, pp. 35–36; Plontke-Lüning 2007, pp. 165–166 and cat. p. 188.

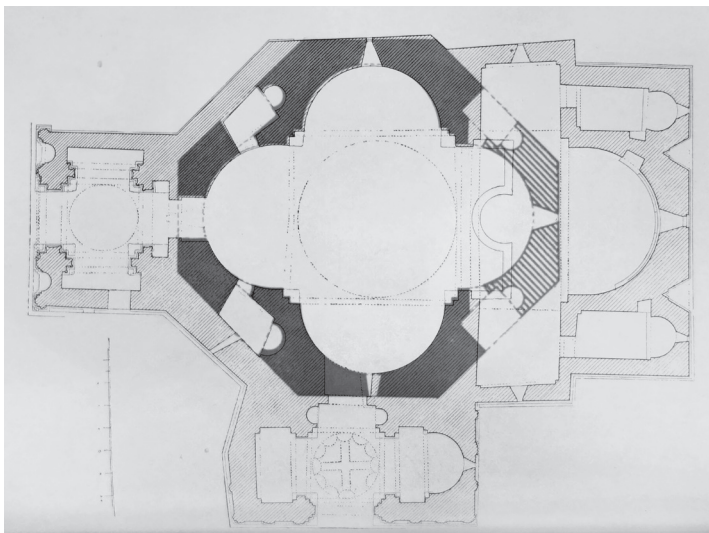


Fig. 3 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Ground Plan with the Presumed Two Phases after Dvali 1974

current church to the 4th century.¹⁵ Nevertheless, an early foundation, certainly one of the most ancient ones in Kvemo Kartli, is highly likely. Manglisi is listed among the twelve bishoprics founded by King Vakht'ang I Gorgasali (449–502/522) between 472 and 484.¹⁶ In 506, a bishop Elages of Manglisi is mentioned in the synodal list of Dvin,¹⁷ and it must be assumed that by that time an episcopal church existed. Around a century later, the Armenian catholicos Abraham forbids his people pilgrimages to the Holy Cross of Mtskheta and to Manglisi Cathedral, and in doing so indirectly underlines the importance of the monument in the ecclesiastic topography of the wider region during that period.¹⁸

The larger part of the octagonal nave of the current church with its three internal conches to the north, west and south has been convincingly identified as remains of this first late antique church, encased in the later structure (Fig. 3).¹⁹ A peculiar feature are two narrow chapels with apses, hollowed out inside the enormous wall strength of the diagonal western faces of the octagon and communicating with the interior through two small doorways in the western conch. The chapels are barrel-vaulted and their walls consist of regular, large-format ashlar, except from the respective exterior walls. From the latter fact it has been concluded that these spaces

15 Chubinashvili 1922 imagines a small church of the 4th century being replaced by a bigger church later on – a highly tentative theory. See also Plontke-Lüning 2007, pp. 327–328 and cat. p. 189–190.

16 Source text in: *Das Leben Kartlis* 1985, p. 267. Identified already in Brosset 1852, p. 252.

17 Plontke-Lüning 2007, cat. pp. 188–189.

18 Rapp 2003, p. 169 (incl. Toumanoff's English translation of the source); Plontke-Lüning 2007, cat. pp. 188–189. On the early Cross-Church in Mtskheta see Chubinashvili, Giorgi, *Die kleine Kirche des Heiligen Kreuzes von Mzcheta*, Tbilisi 1921, pp. 1–7, 33–48.

19 Plontke-Lüning 2007, cat. pp. 189–190.



Fig. 4 [Pl. XXX.2] – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Interior

were originally opened to the outside with large arches, functioning as narrow porches and only transformed into closed rooms during the medieval remodeling.²⁰ The current plastered interior prevents from discussing the masonry of the conches, so it must remain open to what extent the interior was changed or repaired during this intervention (Fig. 4). The simple moulded impostos of the corner piers (the southern ones with rope moulding) were accepted to be of late antique origin by Plontke-Lüning.²¹ However, those of the eastern apse – which is thought to be of the later building phase – are similar in moulding to those of the northern dome piers. The simple roll-and-hollow profile might have been adapted to resemble the older models or indicate that all impostos were replaced in a surprisingly simple manner during the later rebuilding. The dome above these impostos seems to be medieval in its entirety, as it rests on pendentives, unlike all prominent early domes in Georgia, which use squinches.

The shape of the east end of this early building, replaced in the 11th century, is unknown. The supposition of a fourth, eastern conch seems rather probable, even more so if we accept a typological proximity to the numerous tetraconch churches

²⁰ See the reconstruction in Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, p. 128.

²¹ Plontke-Lüning 2007, cat. p. 188.

of the Caucasus.²² However, only excavations could confirm if there were also eastern diagonal walls containing porch-chambers.

The reconstruction of four corner spaces might also emerge from the idea of a constant development of typological complexity from simple *tetragonchoi* to the complex 'Jvari-Type' with niches in the diagonal axis and separate corner compartments, for which Manglisi was considered to be the transitional building. However, the only simple tetraconch in Georgia is the church of Dzveli Gavazi, dated to the 6th century by Chubinashvili in order to fit into the proposed linear typological development.²³ Already Plontke-Lüning argued to treat this date with care as there is neither archaeological nor historical evidence to prove an early date. A comparison with Armenian buildings – taking into account the close cultural relations between southern Georgia and Armenia – brings us only a small step further. Indeed, in the Armenian regions more early tetraconchs are preserved.²⁴ While several of them feature small annexe spaces, none of these are opened towards the outside. Furthermore, their more likely placement is in the east, serving as some sort of Pastophoria, which might at least cast some doubt over the 'symmetrical' reconstruction of the first church in Manglisi. Could it not have featured a straight eastern end with larger lateral chapels already in its original shape?²⁵ Finally, circular or polygonal churches with inscribed tetraconch and four chapels embedded in the wall strength have been preserved or documented in several Armenian Monasteries, such as Marmashen and Xc'konq – however, these were built around the year 1000 and could just be the late reflex of a lost late antique predecessor.²⁶ Curiously, the 16th century church of Saint George Vedrebela near Taraki (Kakheti) reflects in a way Manglisi's original state as imagined by Chubinashvili, a cruciform interior (here only with two fully developed conchs) encased in an octagonal

22 Silagadze, Nino, Newly Discovered Church in Historical Imiarta (South-Western Georgia), in: *Spekali. Journal of the Faculty of Humanities at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University* 10 (2016), <http://www.spekali.tsu.ge/index.php/en/article/viewArticle/10/101> [20.05.2018], with a comparative chart of ground plans. For the case of Armenia: Cuneo, Paolo, *Architettura armena dal quarto al diciannovesimo secolo*, Rome 1988, vol. II, pp. 718–722.

23 Chubinashvili, Giorgi, *Архитектура Кахетин. Исследование развития архитектуры в вост. провинции Грузии в IV–XVIII вв.* [Architecture of Kakheti. Study of the development of architecture in the Eastern Province of Georgia in the 4th–17th Centuries], Tbilisi 1959, pp. 216–231; Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, p. 116. Thoughts on general lines of development of Georgian Church architecture in Chubinashvili, Giorgi, *On the Initial Forms of Christian Churches*, in: *Ancient Christianity in the Caucasus*, Ed. Mgaloblishvili, Tamila, Richmond 1998, pp. 185–196.

24 See, for this, Hasratian, Murad, *Армянская архитектура раннего христианства* [Early Christian Architecture of Armenia], Moscow 2000, in particular pp. 61–63.

25 An amorphous heap of stones emerging from under the north-eastern octagon wall could serve as additional evidence to underline the necessity of further archaeological investigations of the site.

26 Cuneo 1988, vol. I, pp. 120–121, 638–641. Numerous other variations of tetraconchs were built in Armenia during this later period.

exterior with deep niches, albeit in the form of apsidioles and only opening towards the outside.²⁷

The tri- and tetraconch is a widespread phenomenon in Late Antique architecture, appearing in numerous variations in all areas of the former Roman Empire.²⁸ Interestingly, both architectural types were initially often connected to a function as *martyrium*, for example in the case of the late 5th century tetraconch in Beroe (Augusta Traiana), which even features chambers alongside the western conch.²⁹ However, the latter only connect to the exterior and a rectangular narthex, not to the interior of the tetraconch, thus once more not providing a direct parallel. The long-standing tradition of a connection of tetraconchs with martyria, and its presence in the Caucasus, is underlined by the Armenian church of the Nine Saints of T'ortan (presumably 7th century), the veneration site of the tomb of Gregory the Illuminator.³⁰ Of course, Manglisi was not connected with the veneration of a specific saint, but it is likely that the choice of a centralised building type instead of a basilica did indeed underline the aspect of a veneration site – even if the venerated objects, the Christological relics, were brought here from elsewhere and not bound to the specific site.

Plontke-Lüning has likened the first church of Manglisi to the Theotokos-Church on Mount Garizim, begun in 484 under Emperor Zeno – itself almost identical to the mid-5th century Kathisma-church on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, close to the present-day kibbutz Ramat Rahel, which marks a resting place of the Virgin mentioned in the Proto-Gospel of James.³¹ Indeed, both churches share the externally octagonal shape, which comprises diagonally placed chapels with apse in the case of the Kathisma as well. However, there the apsidal chapels

27 Chubinashvili 1959, pp. 461–464.

28 See for example for the Balkans: Ćurčić, Slobodan, *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent*, New Haven and London 2010, pp. 147–150, 153–155, 157–159, 238–243; for Northern Africa: Kinney, Dale, *The type of the Triconch Basilica*, in: *The Red Monastery Church*, Ed. Bolman, Elizabeth S., New Haven, London 2016, pp. 36–47.

29 Ćurčić 2010, pp. 147–149.

30 Thierry, Jean-Michel, *L'Arménie au Moyen Âge. Les hommes et les monuments*, La-Pierre-qui-Vire 2000, pp. 40–42 with general comments on Armenian martyria; Thierry, Jean-Michel, *Monuments arméniens de Haute-Arménie*, Paris 2005, pp. 122–125.

31 Plontke-Lüning 2007, p. 328, cat. p. 189. On the Theotokos-Church most recently: Shalev-Hurvitz, Vered, *Holy Sites Encircled. The Early Byzantine Concentric Churches of Jerusalem*, Oxford 2015, pp. 216–235. On the Kathisma: Avner, Rina, *The Initial Tradition of the Theotokos at the Kathisma. Earliest Celebrations and the Calendar*, in: *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium. Relics, Icons and Texts*, Eds. Brubaker, Leslie and Cunningham Mary, Farnham 2011, pp. 9–30; Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 117–141; full bibliography in Bacci, Michele, *The Mystic Cave. A History of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem*, Rome, Brno 2017, p. 33, fn. 24. For the connection between centralised buildings in the Holy Land and the function as martyria: Avner, Rina, *The Dome of the Rock in Light of the Development of Concentric Martyria in Jerusalem. Architecture and Architectural Iconography*, in: *Muqarnas. An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 27 (2010), pp. 31–49.



Fig. 5 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Elevation of the Northern Wall after Dvali 1974 [the small arrow indicates the building joint]

were not open towards the exterior and, together with small trapezoidal and rectangular rooms, formed a ring of individual separate spaces, only interrupted by the protruding eastern choir bay with apse. The interior shape of the church is an octagon with ambulatory, so in fact the idea of diagonal apsidal chapels is the only clearly relatable aspect. Nevertheless, the Kathisma confirms that in around 500, memorial/veneration sites were marked with centralised churches of rather complex structure.³²

³² On other centralized building types suggesting a link between the architecture of the Holy Land and Georgia see Plontke-Lüning, Annegret, *Early Christian Churches in Caucasian Albania*, in: *The Medieval South Caucasus. Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, Eds. Foletti, Ivan and Thunø, Erik (Convivium Supplementum 2016), Brno 2016, pp. 160–175.

The builders of Manglisi, who perhaps indeed came from the Byzantine territory, even if not in the 4th century, were probably aware of this visual context, making use of it to enhance the venerability of the newly founded site with its Christological relics. Nevertheless, it has to remain open how the eastern end was designed: as a simple fourth conch or as a protruding bema, flanked or not flanked by lateral structures.³³

The Medieval Church – Architecture and Ornament

The remodelling of the church took place during the ‘golden age’ of medieval Georgia, in the first half of the 11th century. In a first step, a tripartite eastern end was added onto the octagon/tetraconch, which was then entirely encased in a new outer shell of stones and equipped with a new dome and western porch. That this happened in two distinct phases is underlined by a vertical building joint in the north-eastern corner of the octagon, where the stone layers are not aligned and the base moulding of the choir runs into a lump of rough foundation stones (Fig. 5).³⁴ The western porch shows the same, uninterrupted base moulding as the octagon on its northern side, but in the south this profile is interrupted, indicating that the decision for the porch was taken after the remodelling of the octagon had already started and before the northern side had been accomplished. The southern porch was added in a further stage of the construction process: it does not bind into the adjoining octagon walls.³⁵

The Tripartite Eastern End

The eastern end consists of a rectangular space, adjoining the domed bay of the former tetraconch directly to the east. While it appears transept-like in the plan, it consists in fact of a high barrel vaulted central bay adjoining the dome arch and two lower lateral bays with transversal barrel vaults (Fig. 4). The eastern apse directly adjoins the higher barrel-vaulted bay, while small doorways lead from the lateral

33 Irene Giviashvili suggested this understanding of the shape as a reference to the relics housed therein, even suggesting a possible second church serving as parish church. This has to remain open, even if it seems unlikely that a large church flanking the tetraconch would have vanished without any traces. Giviashvili, Irene, *Georgian Polyapsidal Church Architecture*, in: *Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures. 1st International Vakhtang Beridze Symposium of Georgian Culture*, Eds. Skinner, Peter and Tumanishvili, Dimit'ri, Tbilisi 2009, pp. 173–182.

34 The equivalent place on the southern side is obstructed by the later porch and cannot be evaluated.

35 Brosset mentions that according to Bartholomej an inscription on the older church wall was partly covered by the porch (Bartholomej 1859, p. 116).



Fig. 6 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century

bays into elongated apsidal chapels flanking the main apse.³⁶ All of this is encased in a rectangular block with stepped pseudo-basilical roof and featuring two triangular niches in the eastern wall, marking the apse on the exterior (Fig. 6). This scheme is perhaps one of the most typical features of Caucasian architecture, having its origins already in the buildings of the Jvari-group of the 7th century.³⁷ While the Jvari-Church itself (before 605?) still features a protruding eastern apse, already flanked by shallow, slender niches, the church of Saint Hr'ip'sime in Vagharshapat (616–628) underlines the early development of this type of eastern end – here with axially aligned eastern walls of side chapels and main apse, triangular eastern gable and pseudo-basilical roofline. The church of Ts'romi (626–634) is commonly regarded as the first ‘canonical’ instance of the later ubiquitous type in Georgia, here with rather squat proportions and a central arch framing the apse window and linking the two niches to form a triple blind arcade.³⁸ The niches are covered with a conical small barrel vault and contain double colonettes ending in a minuscule apsidiole on the level of the central window. The column statues presumably placed in these apsidioles, and with them the complex niche decoration, were later mainly abandoned and the niches reduced to a simple combination of triangular plan and

36 Those are described as *Prothesis* and *Diaconicon* by Dvali, stressing the liturgical implications of the rebuilding project: Dvali 1974, p. 79.

37 Plontke-Lüning 2007, pp. 313–325, cat. pp. 203–212 (on Jvari) and cat. pp. 345–352 (on Vagharshapat); Kazaryan, Armen, Церковная архитектура стран Закавказья VII века. Формирование и развитие традиции [Church Architecture of the Countries of Transcaucasia During the 7th Century. Formation and Development of Tradition], Moscow 2012, vol. II, pp. 56–70.

38 Beridze, Vakht'ang, Dzveli kartuli khurotmodzghvrebā [Old Georgian Architecture], Tbilisi 1974, pp. 112–113; Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, pp. 120, 144–145.

Fig. 7 – Ts'romi Church, 626–634. Drawing by Vakht'ang Beridze



conical vault, occasionally decorated with shell motives (e.g. in K'umurdo, 964³⁹) or encased in a system of blind arcades (e.g. Oshk'i, before 973,⁴⁰ or the Bagrat'i Cathedral in Kutaisi, 1003⁴¹).

The solution in Manglisi is in some ways closer to the 7th century example of Ts'romi (Fig. 7), as it follows the rather squat proportions – already implied by adhering to the vault levels of the tetraconch for the new apse – and in particular the alignment in height of the niches and the central window. The latter permits to unite the niches and the window in a continuous blind arcade, which does, in this case, not include slender colonettes as so many other buildings of the period, but rather appears as a combination of three hood-moulds with horizontal responds, decorative motif also prevailing on all other parts of the church (with exception of the porches and dome). It is at least possible that here the (now largely destroyed) cathedral of Samshvilde (759–777), only 20 km to the south of Manglisi, has served as a model. It used the same type of niches as Ts'romi, however, the central apse is entirely destroyed, which prevents any more precise comparison.⁴² The non-hierarchical treatment of the arches on the eastern wall appears also in Armenian architecture of the 11th century, for example on the main church of the Marmashen Monastery in north-western Armenia, consecrated in 1029.⁴³

39 Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, pp. 222, 249–250.

40 Jobadze, Vakht'ang, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klarjet'i and Šavšet'i*, Stuttgart 1992, pp. 92–141.

41 Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, pp. 262–263, 268–273.

42 Chubinashvili, Nik'o, *Самшвиладский сион: его место в развитии грузинской архитектуры VIII–IX вв.* [Samshvilde Zioni. Its Place in the Development of the Georgian Architecture of the 8th–9th Centuries], Tbilisi 1969; Beridze 1974, pp. 115–117.

43 Cuneo 1988, vol. I, pp. 120–124.



Fig. 8 – K'atskhi, Church of the Monastery, late 10th or early 11th Century

The Octagon

The treatment of the octagon itself in the rebuilding merits a further regard. While its walls were kept largely plain (except for the placement of ornamented hood-moulds and a string-course), it is accentuated by the creation of triangular gables above each polygon face. The result is a prismatically folded roof structure reminding of the folded dome shape of numerous Armenian churches of the 11th–13th century (e.g. the presumably oldest examples in Xc'konq, 1025, and Marmashen, 1029, or the late example in Gand'asar, 1238).⁴⁴ While even the church in Xc'konq, a dodecagonal building with inscribed tetraconch, does not use the folded roof and lateral gables for the lower zone, there are further examples in Georgia applying the principle to other parts of the structure. The oldest of these seems to be the castle church of Boch'orma (Kakheti), commonly dated to the 10th century.⁴⁵ The dome is missing today, but seems to have had a normal pyramidal roof; yet, the roof of the dodecagonal lower zone shows lateral gables and the roof can easily be reconstructed as a prismatically folded one – making it the first of its kind in

44 Cuneo 1988, vol. I, pp. 120–124, 638–641, 443–445.

45 Beridze 1974, pp. 121–124, here also a comparison with similar Georgian buildings; a further bibliography in Giviashvili 2009, p. 179.



Fig. 9 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Dome Drum



Fig. 10 – Nik'orts'minda Church, early 11th Century. Dome Drum

Georgia, if the corroborated late 10th century date is true. Even more relevant for the study of Manglisi is the early 11th-century church in K'atskhi (Fig. 8).⁴⁶ The dodecagon, containing a hexaconchal interior structure surmounted by a dome, has a folded roof covering the lower part, masking the five secondary conches, and another folded roof on top of the dome. The ambulatory, added before the mid-11th century, shows the third occurrence of a folded roof on this building – as connections to Manglisi are manifold also in other respects, we will come back to this building below.

⁴⁶ The church, the dating of which will need to be subject of future research, was restored (or rather rebuilt) even more heavily than Manglisi in the 19th century, so that hardly anything of the original sculptural decoration remains. Brosset, *Voyage* 1851, vol. III, 12th report, pp. 93–98 with an account of the church before its restoration; Mepisashvili, Rusudan and Tsintsadze, *Vakht'ang, The Arts of Ancient Georgia*, Leipzig 1979, pp. 109–110 (dating the building to the turn of the 10th to the 11th century); Beridze and Neubauer 1980, p. 124 (1010–1014); Mepisashvili, Schrade and Tsintsadze 1986, p. 221 (turn of the 10th to the 11th century); further bibliography in Giviashvili 2009, p. 179. See also the article of Brigitta Schrade in this volume, in particular fn. 55 there.

The dome of Manglisi is a typical example for its period (Fig. 9): twelve sided, with a high drum and decorated with a blind arcade. The double roll-moulded arches rest on triple engaged colonettes, with standard capital and base forms. Both are identical (just inverted) and composed of a polygonal ornamented block and moulded shaft ends with thick torus and banderoled loop ornaments. The faces of the polygonal drum are alternately plain and occupied by lancet windows with decorated frames (those on the north side were either never finished or restored with plain blocks in the 19th century).⁴⁷ Together with Nik'orts'minda (first or second decade of the 11th century), the dome in Manglisi is considered to be one of the very few originally preserved from the 11th century.⁴⁸ In Nik'orts'minda, as in K'atskhi,⁴⁹ the drum is pierced by twelve windows and the ornamental decoration is much richer than in Manglisi: even the roll mouldings carry ornaments, an additional roll ornament is placed between the window and the blind arcade (Fig. 10). As a result, the visual effect differs, despite a similar range of ornaments used. One remarkable detail of the Manglisi dome is the introduction of a triple colonette in the blind arcade, where other contemporary churches resort to a double colonette. While not changing the overall appearance a lot, this detail demonstrates an understanding of the systematic connection of the colonettes with the arches above: in Manglisi, the outer arches of the blind arcade are merged on top of the capitals, logically requiring a third, central support below the capitals, while for example those in Nik'orts'minda die into each other a good bit above the capital. The triple colonette system is in use much later for such prominent buildings as the Church of the Virgin in Gelati (after 1106).⁵⁰

The Porches

This article cannot be the place for an in-depth study of the many 11th to 14th century porches of Georgian churches, which is still lacking, but some remarks seem advisable, considering the prominence of the Manglisi porches.⁵¹ The western one, built together with the renewal of the main church, consists of a square bay with very short barrel-vaulted bays in the north, south and east (Fig. 11). In the west, a deep archway opens towards the churchyard, while the rectangular door in the

47 Dvali 1974, p. 79, considers this to be a purposeful decision to only apply the sophisticated ornament to the 'visible' southern, eastern and western sides, as the same difference can be observed for the hood moulds.

48 Beridze and Neubauer 1980, p. 123. The dome in Ishkhani is largely from the 10th century, so is that of Oshk'i.

49 While the decoration in K'atskhi is lost today, the drawing of Marie-Félicité Brosset's driver M. Mouslof, published in the Atlas to his 'Voyage archéologique dans la Géorgie' (Saint Petersburg 1850, pl. XLII), still shows a similarly rich decoration to that of Nik'orts'minda.

50 Beridze and Neubauer 1980, pp. 126–128.

51 Some preliminary thoughts in Eastmond 2004, pp. 24–39 with a brief reference to Georgian porches including those of Manglisi; as well as in a rather formal recent article of Gengiuri 2009.



Fig. 11 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, Western Porch, 1020s

south could also be a later addition, as this wall is heavily rebuilt.⁵² The barrel-vaulted bays, even if small, result in a multiplication of decorative features at the stepped corner piers of the central bay, creating the impression of a cruciform domed space (the vault itself is rather simple and seems to have been replaced, as it is shown as ruined in all early drawings). This spatial arrangement is not uncommon for porches of that period – as example might suffice the two nearly contemporary porches of Nik'orts'minda, which only lack the two niches flanking the doorway on the outside in Manglisi. As on the dome, the dominant element of the piers inside as well as of the blind arches on the outside are colonettes with identical capitals/bases showing banderoled loop ornament.

The same reappear on the blind arcade of the façades of the southern porch, remarkably differentiating between triple colonettes at the intersection of two arches and double colonettes at the arcades ends (Fig. 1). The large archway leading inside is asymmetrically flanked by two blind arches to the left and three to the right. The monumental cross flanked by turrets, which is placed in the gable above the entrance, is a complete reinvention of the 19th century restoration: this part

⁵² Giorgi Gagarin's drawing shows a blind arch to the left of the doorway, which has largely vanished today.



Fig. 12 [Pl. XXXI] – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, Southern Porch, 1020s

appears to be largely destroyed in Gagarin's drawing (Fig. 2).⁵³ Nevertheless, the gable might have well been originally decorated by a cross as well, similar to the western porch (there, the cross might also be replaced but seems far more reliable).

The asymmetry of the façade directly reflects the interior structure. The central square bay, which links the large arched opening with the southern church portal and is vaulted with a 'figured', flat umbrella dome, is flanked by two identical rectangular barrel-vaulted bays (Fig. 12). To the east, an apse adjoins the rectangular bay, adding a second main axis to the porch, which seems to have not only functioned as a transitional entrance space but also as an in some ways autonomous chapel in dome-hall shape.⁵⁴ The combined porch/chapel type as it appears in Manglisi appears to be a development originating from the tradition of 'Dreikirchenbasiliken' of the 6th century, for example Kvemo Bolnisi, a seemingly basilical structure with an entirely separated aisle with apse in the north and a

⁵³ The level of detail of this drawing is confirmed, among others, by the fact that he – unlike others before him – depicts the asymmetric arrangement of the blind arches.

⁵⁴ A discussion of Georgian dome-hall churches in Gengiuri, Nato, *Georgian Ecclesiastical Architecture*. Kuppelhalle [sic], Tbilisi 2005, who, despite having discussed Georgian porches herself in Gengiuri 2009, seems not to make the typological connection.

Fig. 13 – K'atskhi, Church of the Monastery, Porch, 11th Century



southern counterpart with a tripartite archway functioning as a porch.⁵⁵ A more complex plan can be found in Samshvilde (8th century), where an aisle-like southern compartment was opened to the outside with a tripartite archway and connected to a centralized chapel with apse immediately to the east. The church of Oshk'i, before 973, possesses a small open porch to the south of the central triconch structure and another one along the southern side of the nave, mirroring a closed elongated space to the north, both with eastern apses embedded in the wall strength. This nave arrangement appears to go back rather directly to the 'Dreikirchenbasiliken', while the southern porch itself might have served as a model for all later developments according to Vakht'ang Jobadze.⁵⁶ Yet, structurally the later examples differ: already in K'umurdo, before 1000, we find a fully developed porch-chapel of a

55 On the group of churches in general Badstübner, Ernst, Überlegungen zum Ursprung des dreischiffigen Presbyteriums an Klosterkirchen des benediktinischen Reformmönchtums. Ein Vergleich mit den Dreikirchen-Basiliken in Georgien, in: *Georgica* 7 (1984), pp. 77–81 [reprint in: *Baugestalt und Bildfunktion. Texte zur Architektur und Kunstgeschichte*, Eds. Kunz, Tobias and Schumann, Dirk, Berlin 2006, pp. 58–68]. On Kvemo Bolnisi: Plontke-Lüning 2007, cat. pp. 178–180.

56 Jobadze 1992, p. 104.

single bay, whereas the southern porch in Nik'orts'minda originally did not possess an apse, the current chapel to its east being a later addition.

The tradition of eastern apses in southern porches in Georgian church architecture has not been studied sufficiently to attribute general functions to this frequently but not always occurring feature. Nevertheless, the strong presence of commemorative inscriptions as well in Manglisi as in K'umurdo might indicate a use of these spaces in memorial contexts.⁵⁷

The most remarkable feature of the porch is the twelve-partite umbrella dome. The diagonal vault compartments are decorated with interlace ornament, while the main axis show a cross in flat relief, taking up a decorative model known as early as the 7th century (e.g. from Jvari). The general concept of this dome type was to become characteristic for many of the later porches, such as the one in K'atskhi (Fig. 13). The idea is very close to the older porch vaults in Oshk'i, but in the younger examples the central crosses surpass the status of a purely ornamental motif and the subordinate compartments are occasionally filled with ornaments as well.⁵⁸

The Ornamental Decoration

Finally, we should have a glance at the repertoire of ornaments used for the rebuilding of the church in the 11th century, punctually connecting them to reference buildings.⁵⁹ As mentioned above, ornaments were used more sparsely than on other churches of the period such as Nik'orts'minda. They were applied in particular on the hood moulds and around the windows as well as on the postaments and 'abacus'-blocks of the two porches. One of the most widespread motifs of the period is the abstract scroll ornament, alternately bent to the left and right and decorated with what is described as 'nodes' by Jurgis Baltrušaitis.⁶⁰ Almost every church from the 11th century onwards seems to feature at least one instance of this ornament, some examples being Bagrat'i Cathedral in Kutaisi (1003), Ishkhani (King Gurgen's Chapel, 1006) as well as, once more, Nik'orts'minda and K'atskhi. In Manglisi it adorns the hood moulds of the eastern parts (Fig. 6) and the south-western dome window (Fig. 9). The eastern dome window is decorated with a more static, geometrical scroll, while the western window shows a symmetric variation of a scroll motif with central leaves and lateral half-leaves.⁶¹ To the latter group we can attribute the scrolls decorating most of the internal arches in the

57 On the K'umurdo inscriptions: Eastmond, Antony, *Textual Icons. Viewing Inscriptions in Medieval Georgia*, in: *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World*, Ed. Eastmond, Antony, Cambridge 2015, pp. 76–98.

58 Jobadze 1992, pp. 101–103.

59 All ornaments are described and reproduced in detailed drawings and photographs in Dvali 1974. The author is not aware of a systematic collection of Georgian ornament types in general, which means that the terms used for the individual motifs are descriptive and do not represent established scholarly standards.

60 Baltrušaitis, Jurgis, *Études sur l'art médiéval en Géorgie et en Arménie*, Paris 1929, pp. 30–31.

61 Baltrušaitis 1929, p. 32.



Fig. 14 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, Southern Porch, 1020s.
Ornament Detail



Fig. 15 – K'atskhi, Church of the Monastery, Porch, 11th Century.
Ornament Detail

southern porch. The lower blocks of the southern porch blind arcade received a further derivative of the first scroll type: two s-shaped parts of the scroll are shown, in most cases mirrored, in one case as a double 's' (Fig. 14). The identical ornament (sometimes with inverted direction of the scroll segments) appears on the square capital and some base blocks of the blind arcade of the K'atskhi porch (Fig. 15).

This porch reveals its close relations to Manglisi once more in further ornamental details: the colonettes, even if ornamented also on the shafts, are very close to those of Manglisi's southern porch; the ribbed mouldings with pearl string of the blind arcade appear also in the western porch at Manglisi. The 'scissor motif' of the cornice – in fact also very widespread in the period – was used on most cornices in the 19th century restoration of Manglisi, presumably including some original stones, and on the capitals and bases of the dome blind arcade.⁶²

⁶² It is not always clear, to which extent stones were replaced in the restoration – while there are detailed plans in Dvali 1974, and he even refers to the distinguishability of the stone surfaces, it is not coded, which stones remain from the 11th century. Fragments of architectural sculpture with interlace patterns in the court of the church, but also in the surroundings,

The largest group of ornaments comprises multiple variations of interlaces, often combined with pointed leaf motifs.⁶³ Geometric interlace ornaments appear on the two decorated lower windows, both framed by a rope moulding: the one in the east based on larger circular elements, similar to that of the porch dome, the one in the south with a dense mesh motif. Simpler interlaces appear on cornice and imposts of the southern porch, while the western porch boasts the most creative variation of combined interlace and leaf forms. On the cornice, those are densely merged and intertwined, while the imposts show a more systematic approach with leaves alternately pointing up- and downwards (or, as a variation, left and right), separated by the interlace bands, from which they emerge. The base block of the main arch follows a similar logic, but here the interlaces form arched panels in which the leaves are arranged around a small globe, evoking the idea of plants emerging from a chalice (Fig. 11). Without being able to trace a specific model, one might attribute this motif vaguely – and cautiously – to Sasanian roots.⁶⁴ The impost and base blocks of the external blind arcade have received a number of different designs, here unlike in the south all designed as centralised ornaments. Some of them evolve around the basic shape of a central cross, from which the interlaces emerge, while the interlaces in other cases form a node in the centre, around which four diagonal leaves are placed. In a single instance, we encounter a dense pattern forming a star.

The majority of these centralised motifs finds, quite unsurprisingly, close relatives in the ornaments on the porches of Nik'orts'minda, with one example showing a dense cross-based interlace being virtually identical. While many of the more serially organised ornaments appear also on the royal Bagrat'i Cathedral, naturally a building that must have had a remarkable impact on the country's architecture, there is only little evidence for centralized motifs, which in turn underlines the close artistic connections between Nik'orts'minda and Manglisi.

The potential of a wider study of ornament forms can only be indicated here: already Baltrušaitis has hinted at a resemblance of this group of Georgian ornamental decorations to some of those of the main church of Akht'ala Monastery, situated in the north of the present-day Republic of Armenia.⁶⁵ This underlines the artistic ties between these areas, which are of some interest also for the discussion of the historical circumstances, under which the remodelling of the church in the 11th century took place.

might indicate a replacement even of considerably well-preserved stones – they could, however, also testify to a removal and repurposing of stones before the restoration. On some of the scattered fragments: Todria, Tengiz, Manglisi Khevi [The Gorge of Manglisi], in: Dzeglis Megobari [Friends of Monuments], *Journal of the Georgian Society for Protection of Cultural Monuments* (1970), pp. 48–53.

63 For aspects of the construction of interlace ornaments in the Caucasus see the first chapter in Baltrušaitis 1929, pp. 1–19.

64 See for example the flower ornaments on some capitals of Bolnisi Sioni, 5th century, which are said to refer to Sasanian models in a very vague way as well. Cf. the article of Annegret Plontke-Lüning in this volume.

65 Baltrušaitis 1929, in particular pp. 33–41, pl. XCII. His suggestion to liken interlace patterns to complex church plans has to be rejected.

Inscriptions and Circumstances of the 11th Century Rebuilding

The numerous inscriptions of Manglisi church have attracted attention as early as the mid-19th century, when Marie-Félicité Brosset had received several copies of them. Unfortunately, the most interesting ones were partly or entirely destroyed during the renovation of the church in the 1850s. The first translation of eight inscriptions is given by Brosset in 1851, some of them updated by himself in the comments to the illustrations in the volume of letters sent to him by Ivan Bartolomej, where he lists already eleven inscriptions.⁶⁶ Eleven inscriptions are also discussed in Shanidze's article of 1926, which is used as reference ever since, but these are not in all cases those listed by Brosset.⁶⁷

Overall, there are two main types of inscriptions: a small group of dedicatory building inscriptions, mentioning a person responsible for a phase of construction or a date, and a larger number with votive character, using certain standard formulas and mentioning names of often unknown persons. A full list is given in the appendix to this article, we will only discuss those, which are crucial to the interpretation of the 11th century remodelling.

The most important example of the first group was placed in all likelihood in the semi-circular monolithic *vousoir* forming the southern octagon window (Fig. 16). It is only preserved in a drawing, as the window has been entirely remade; in Brosset's 1859 translation it reads: "In the name of god, through the intercession of the Living Cross, I was considered worthy, me, the poor [...] to build this holy church, to pray for my soul. It was the year 240 [1020]". Right below, on the arch of the southern church portal, a second similar inscription mentioned the same date – it is also only preserved in a drawing. Even if these drawings were considered to be faulty in detail already by Brosset, who supposed that the people copying the words were not aware of their meaning, the date appears to be reliable, as it was clearly readable in all copies of the two inscriptions – unlike eventual names. Thus, Shanidze does not doubt the date, however, he introduces another semi-circular, fragmentary inscription from a portal arch, according to him containing the mention of the 'reign of Giorgi, ruler of the East'. This would refer to King George I, who died in 1027 and thus not contradict the dating evidence.⁶⁸ Further dedicatory inscriptions, both lost, were found in the 1850s in the surroundings of the church, mentioning a builder Gabriel and a consecration date of 1027. The latter might be tentatively linked to the addition of the southern porch, which must have happened shortly after the completion of the remodelling of the main church.

66 Brosset 1851; Bartolomej 1859, pp. 115–116.

67 Shanidze 1926. I am very thankful to Kristine Sabashvili for supplying me with a translation of Shanidze's article. The 1895 edition of the inscriptions by Ekvtime Taqaishvili, apparently correcting some smaller misreadings, was not accessible to the author; for the evaluation of both see Dvali 1974, p. 75.

68 See e.g. Beridze, Neubauer 1980, pp. 122–124; Antony Eastmond surprisingly attributes the renovation to an ominous King Bagrat II, Eastmond 2004, p. 39.

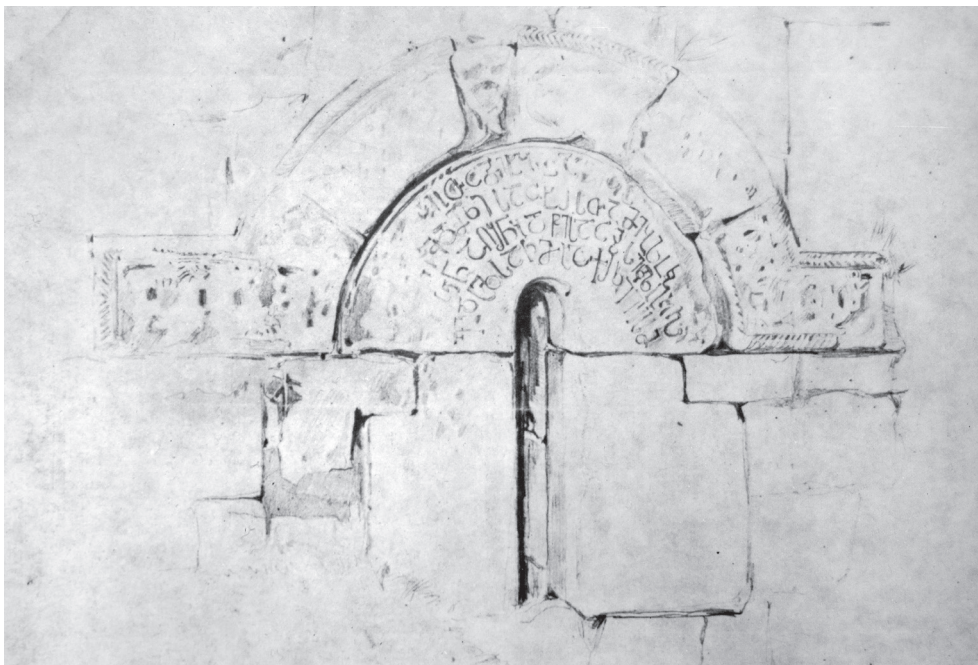


Fig. 16 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross. ca. 500/11th Century. 19th Century Copy of the Now-lost Building Inscription of 1020 above the Southern Octagon Window

The most controversially discussed inscription of the church is placed in the apse of the southern porch, below the window, today half covered by a 19th century altarpiece (Fig. 12). It is a rather long and crudely carved votive inscription, mentioning the offering of an *agape* and messes to be read by the priests of the church, followed by the formula “Whoever changes this, will pay for his sins”. Brosset read the last decipherable word as “Baghou[...]*r*[...]”, which he completed to Baghouach Liparit. He thus links the inscription to one of the most powerful feudal families in early 11th century Georgia, presumably directly related to the famous Armenian Orbelians.⁶⁹ The Liparitids found themselves in conflict with the royal Bagratides on several occasions in the period in question, which is described by Toumanoff as a “family feud”, going on for several hundred years and imported to Georgia from Armenia only in the late 10th to 11th century. This reached a culmination point in 1045/46, when “Liparit IV, Duke of Trialeti, Argveti, Lower and Upper Iberia, High Constable of Georgia, forced [...] King Bagrat IV of Georgia, through the mediation of Emperor Constantine IX, to cede to himself something like the

69 Brosset 1849, pp. 296–298, 325–328; Brosset 1851, coll. 82–83; Toumanoff, Cyrill, *The Mamikonids and the Liparitids*, in: *Armeniaca. Mélanges d'études Arméniennes*, Venice 1969, pp. 125–137. On the Orbelians in general also Toumanoff, Cyril, *Les dynasties de la Caucasic Chrétienne. De l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle. Tables généalogiques et chronologiques*, Rome 1990.

southern moiety of the kingdom.”⁷⁰ Brosset takes the lack of a reference to the king in any of the inscriptions read by him as a further proof for his theory, which is in turn rejected by Shanidze, who not only thinks to have identified the name of King George I, but also reads the end of the votive inscription as “Bagatur”.

While admittedly the evidence of the inscription is feeble, considering that there is a sole letter remaining of the alleged ‘Liparit’, Brosset also discovered another connection between the Liparits and Manglisi, a manuscript from the library of Gelati Monastery.⁷¹ This manuscript includes the Georgian date 267 [1047], and mentions the scribe Gabriel Chakai, the archbishop Antoni Thouladze and a number of family members of the donator, Liparit *Eristaw of Eristaws* – the same Liparit that according to Brosset was mentioned in the votive inscription in Manglisi two decades earlier.⁷² This connection is further supported by the fact that a reference to the place of execution of the manuscript is made: the convent of the Living Cross in Manglisi.

Thus, we know that shortly after 1045, Liparit paid for a manuscript with genealogical text passages to be fabricated in the convent of Manglisi, which must have been under the family’s control by that time. Yet, the church was certainly never a family mausoleum, as this had already been established at the church of K’atskhi, which was according to an inscription (mentioning also King Bagrat III) founded by Rat, father of Liparit *Eristaw of Eristaws* and grandfather of Liparit, who was buried here after his death in exile in around 1062.⁷³ This adds another dimension to the discussion of typology and ornamental forms above: K’atskhi and Manglisi are not only closely related in many artistic aspects, they also belong to the same family at least towards the mid-11th century.

There are indeed a number of reasons to believe that, even without relying on a tentative reading of the votive inscription, the church of Manglisi was of central importance for the Georgian Liparitids already in the early 11th century. The presence of a convent of the Living Cross in that period underlines that the importance of the relics – and thus the exceptional, legendary history, how these came to Georgia – was clearly not forgotten. This is further supported by the mention of the Feast of the Cross being celebrated in Manglisi on 20th of May in the 10th century ‘Synaxarium of Zosime’.⁷⁴ The rebuilding some decades later makes several references to the cross – in the porch vault, the gable decorations, the painting of

70 Toumanoff 1969, p. 129.

71 This is also an interesting location for the issue, as legend claims that King David IV had given all property of the then almost extinct Liparit family to the monastery on the occasion of its foundation. Brosset, *Voyages* 1851, vol. III, 11th report, p. 24.

72 Brosset 1849, p. 297, n. 1; Brosset, *Voyages* 1851, vol. III, 11th report, pp. 27–32.

73 Brosset 1849, pp. 326–327. We might wonder, why the funerary site was not moved to Manglisi, but it is possible that by 1062 the family’s control over Manglisi had long been lost: the third volume of the manuscript commanded by Liparit and found in Gelati was written in Atsqouer in 1053.

74 Garitte, Gérard, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34* (X^e siècle), Brussels 1958, p. 229. I am indebted to Brigitta Schrade for this observation. For a further discussion of the veneration of the cross see her article in this volume.

the dome (Pl. XXXII) – which are admittedly rather common for churches of that period, even if not possessing cross relics. Yet, in the porch chapel of K'atskhi we find one of the most extravagant Georgian renditions of the Elevation of the Cross, designed as a circular wall relief with four angels supporting the cross, surrounded by the typical set of ornaments discussed above (Fig. 13). Could this be an immediate reference to the relics of Manglisi? We would not dare to claim so, was it not for the distinctive polygonal shape of the church itself and the connection through the Liparitids. Of course, here the construction date poses a problem: if K'atskhi was built in the very early 11th century, its centralised nucleus is several years older than the Manglisi rebuilding. Thus, we might wonder if the polygonal, centralised type, rare in Georgian architecture of the time, was chosen to evoke the original church of Manglisi – a building that, as discussed above, was considered to be one of the first Christian churches in the country and on a similar level of veneration as the Jvari Church at least up to the 7th century.⁷⁵

Soon thereafter, one might imagine, it was decided that it is necessary to remodel the old church of Manglisi. Certainly, one of the involved reasons was the adaptation to contemporary liturgical needs, such as the tripartite eastern end. However, the decision must have had a political dimension as well. In remodelling this old and venerated church, the patron was able to (re)appropriate it, to visually attach it to his family, to enhance his own glory. While the royal family would not have necessarily felt the need to make such an endeavour its prime concern, for the Liparitids the appropriation of this site could have been beneficial in several ways, surpassing the immediate effect of enhanced respect and recognition for having embellished a venerated site. The tradition attributed to the site and the building was additionally useful to insinuate a similarly long-standing tradition of the family's genealogy, ultimately legitimising the Liparid's claims for political power.

The concern to underline instead of overwriting the tradition of the building in the rebuilding process is more than evident. It is the only case of a prominent late antique church in Georgia that, during a medieval rebuilding, was structurally left unchanged: what mattered was indeed to keep the very distinctive shape of the octagon, which had presumably been the reference for K'atskhi before. Even more, during the remodelling it received a new outer face of stones somewhat differing from contemporary buildings in its apparent modesty of decoration. Considering the importance of the site this could hardly have been the result of a lack of funds, but must be regarded as a purposeful decision. The flat, even stone surfaces with their well-cut, rather large ashlar must have reminded the beholder of the period of the most ancient and venerable structures of the country, evoking their main aesthetic qualities. It would be tempting to interpret further archaisms such as the small hood-moulds in a similar way, but medieval beholders would hardly have noticed such details. For similar reasons, it should not have mattered that nothing of the former building remained visible, the exterior having been covered in stones,

75 Indicated by, for example, the above discussed prohibition for Armenians to visit the Holy Cross churches of Mtskheta and Manglisi, Rapp 2003, p. 169. On centralised building types for example Mepisashvili and Tsintsadze 1979, including numerous ground plans.

the interior in paintings. What counted was to convey the idea of the building's old age through its shape and most likely through an oral narrative on site, necessary to 'activate' the memorial qualities of the building.⁷⁶

When Dvali claims that the "[...] architect, who reconstructed the cathedral in the eleventh century, achieved his task splendidly [in that he] he transformed a church of comparatively modest proportions into a noble cathedral, answering the requirements of his time both functionally and artistically", this reveals a misperception.⁷⁷ While the transformation of the old church was indeed mastered rather successfully, it is incorrect to operate with the antipodes of a modest old and a noble new church. It is hard to believe that remodelling a church so extensively, instead of building a new one, would have been a decision based on economic considerations.⁷⁸ Rather, the complex and surely costly process of integrating and encapsulating the old triconch shows a very purposeful reappropriation of a highly estimated structure. If all this happened in 1020 indeed, it was during a build-up of power of the Liparitids, culminating in the events of 1045. Even the inscription read by Shanidze, mentioning King George I, does not contradict this interpretation – in K'atskhi as well the king is mentioned in a dedicatory inscription; furthermore, the inscription in Manglisi only read "during the reign of...", thus even speaking against a direct involvement of the king.

To conclude, the reading of the church as a purposeful demonstration of old age within the medieval transformation, in order to enhance the political respect of the Liparitids, is a tempting one. Ultimately, none of the inscriptions and their problematic suggested translations are essential to this interpretation of the building – yet, until further written documents might be uncovered, the interpretation will remain a hypothetical one.

76 On the role of tradition in the rebuilding of medieval churches, in particular on *memorial pieces* and their *activation* see for example Albrecht, Stefan, *Die Inszenierung der Vergangenheit im Mittelalter. Die Klöster von Glastonbury und Saint-Denis*, Munich, Berlin 2003, here pp. 14–15.

77 Dvali 1974, p. 80.

78 On this question for example: Müller, Matthias, *Steine als Reliquien. Zum Verhältnis von Form und Materie in der mittelalterlichen Kirchenarchitektur*, in: *Werk und Rezeption. Architektur und ihre Ausstattung. Festschrift Ernst Badstübner zum 80. Geburtstag*, Eds. Kunz, Tobias and Schumann, Dirk, Berlin 2011, pp. 21–49, here pp. 29–30.

Inscriptions of the Holy-Cross Church in Manglisi

BUILDING INSCRIPTIONS

1. Southern Octagon Window – lost
 Brosset 1851 [2]: “... to commemorate my soul, mine, of the bishop Cuirice [Khatchce], who was considered worthy to build this Holy Church ...”
 Brosset 1859 [4]: “In the name of god, through the intercession of the Living Cross, I was considered worthy, me, the poor [...] to build this holy church, to pray for my soul. It was the year 240 [1020]”
 Shanidze 1926: mentioned, but not republished
2. Inner Southern Doorway – lost
 Brosset 1851 [4]: “C[...] has built this great church in the easterly year 240 [1020]”
 Brosset 1859 [6]: “[...] this great church was built, it was the year 240 [1020]”
3. Unknown (Above a Window or Doorway? – same as [2]?) – lost
 Shanidze 1926 [3]: “[...] during the reign of Giorgi, ruler by the God over the East, Novelisimus”
4. Stone Fragment – lost
 Brosset 1859 [10]: “Glory to you, Lord, [...] was consecrated in the month of February, the first day of the moon, in the year 247 [1027]”
5. Fragment in the Precinct Wall – lost
 Brosset 1851 [3]: “[...] Gabriel has built”
 Brosset 1859 [5]: “[...] Gabriel has built”
 Shanidze 1926 [10]: did not find the inscription
6. Western Porch – not traceable
 Shanidze 1926 [8]: illegible except for “[...] bishop of Manglisi [...]”
7. Precinct Tower
 Brosset 1859 [11]: “Christ Lord, have pity with Arseni, bishop of Manglisi, and the artisan Theimouraz. In 355 [1647]”
 Shanidze 1926 [11]: “Christ God have mercy with the master craftsman and archbishop of Manglisi Arsen, February 355 [1647]”
8. Southern Porch, Pilastre Base in the Eastern Half
 Brosset 1859 [9]: “[...] I established an agape [...] Whoever changes this, will pay for his sins.”
 Shanidze 1926 [6]: “The day of Saint John I donated an agape for every night with evening prayers [liturgy]. Who changes it, will pay for his sins.”
9. Southern Porch, Eastern Outside Wall
 Brosset 1851 [5]: “Lord, remember the soul of Chalwa and of Constanti Ghodomis-Dze”
 Brosset 1859 [7]: “Lord, remember the soul of Chalwa and of Constanti Ghodomis-Dze”
 Shanidze 1926 [1]: “Our Lord, commemorate the soul of Ghodom’s sons [...and?] of Constanti”
10. South-Western Octagon Window
 Brosset 1851 [1]: “Christ have mercy for Aboulidze”
 Brosset 1859 [2]: “Oh Christ, have mercy for Saba Aboulidze”
 Shanidze 1926 [2]: “Christ forgive Abolira”
11. South-Western Octagon Corner – very abraded
 Brosset 1851 [1]: “Christ have mercy for Saba Bibilouri”
 Brosset 1859 [1]: “Oh Christ, have mercy for Saba Bibilour”
12. Southern Porch, North-Western Pilastre of the Central Bay
 Brosset 1851 [1]: “Lord, have mercy for the soul of Soula Saquarelidze, amen”
 Brosset 1859 [3]: “Lord, give peace to the soul of Soula Saquarelidze. Amen!”
 Shanidze 1926 [4]: mentioned
13. Southern Porch, North-Eastern Pilastre of the Central Bay
 Shanidze 1926 [5]: mentioned as fragmentary

MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS

8. Southern Porch, Next to Apse Window
 Brosset 1851 [6]: “Holiest Lord [...] archangel, we offered for an agape, in favour of our son; the priest and the bishop will read mess for him for two days. Whoever changes this, will pay for his sins. Christ, have mercy of Baghou[ach and of Tzkhov]r[eba]” (Alternative ending: Baghou[ach Lipa]r[it])

Editorial Notes

The following *bibliographical list* assembles all references used in the volume. In each article, full bibliographical information is given for the first mention of a reference, while repeated mentions use a short title in the form ‘author year’.

The *transliteration* of titles and names in Georgian follows the normal English standard. Translations are given for all titles in ‘uncommon’ languages.

The *images* are all included in black and white within the text. Selected, important images are repeated in colour in the appendix.

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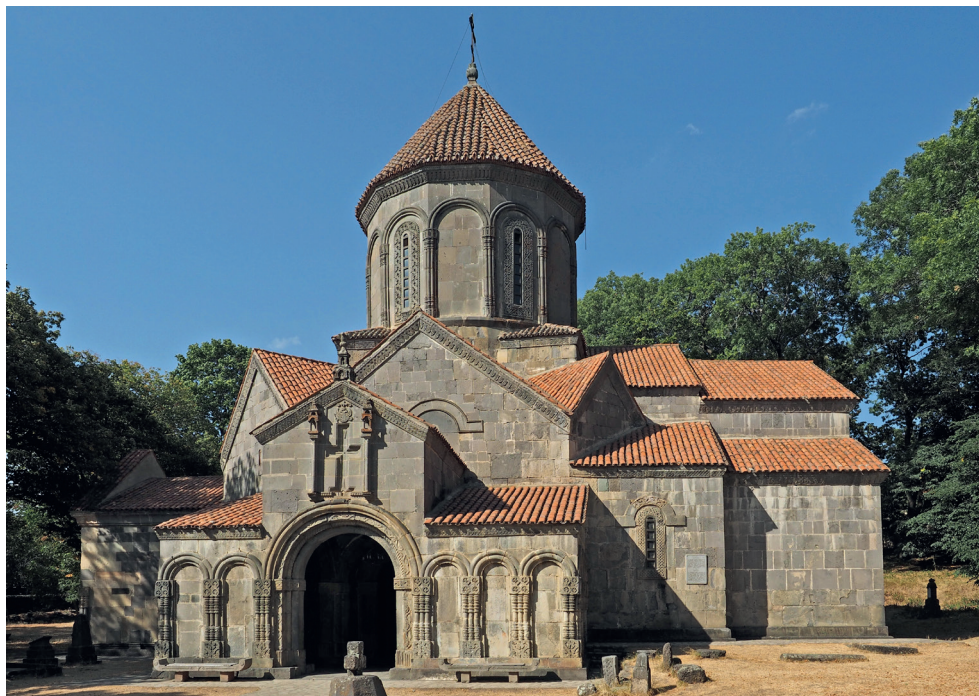
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1 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century



2 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, ca. 500/11th Century. Interior



1 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, Southern Porch, 1020s



1 – Manglisi, Church of the Holy Cross, 1020s. Elevation of the Cross in the Dome

Table of Contents

<i>Michele Bacci</i> – Georgia and the Outside World: An Introduction	7
I. RELATING OBJECTS AND PEOPLE: QUESTIONS OF CULTURAL INTERACTION	
<i>Mariam Didebulidze</i> – Cultural Interactions in the Caucasus and Beyond: Investigation Issues	27
II. DEMONSTRATION OF EARTHLY POWER AND CONCERN FOR THE AFTERLIFE: ISSUES OF PATRONAGE	
<i>Zaza Skhirt'ladze</i> – History in Images: Donor Figures in Medieval Georgian Art	47
<i>Nina Ch'ich'inadze</i> – Icon Patronage in Early Eleventh Century Georgia. An Icon of Christ with the Inscription of Bagrat' III	75
III. VISUAL MANIFESTATIONS OF LITURGY AND CULTIC PHENOMENA	
<i>Manuela Studer-Karlen</i> – Old Testament Prefigurations of the Mother of God in Medieval Georgian Iconography	89
<i>Brigitta Schrade</i> – Byzantine Ideology in Georgian Iconography: Iconographic Programmes of Georgian Pre-altar Crosses	115
<i>Ekaterine Gedevanishvili</i> – Cult and Image of St. George in Medieval Georgian Art	143
<i>Barbara Schellewald</i> – Transformationen – Die Transfigurationsikone aus Zarzma und die an und mit ihr praktizierten Wahrnehmungsstrategien	169
IV. SACRED SITES IN A CONTESTED REGION: ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN KVEMO KARTLI	
<i>Annegret Plontke-Lüning</i> – Culture and Art in the Gogarene in the 5 th and 6 th Centuries. Iberians and Armenians in Dialogue	189
<i>Thomas Kaffenberger</i> – Transformation and Memory in Medieval Georgian Church Architecture. The Case of Manglisi Cathedral	207
Editorial Notes	235
Bibliographical List	235
Image Credits	256
Colour Plates	I-XXXII