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The Peculiarities of the Objects of Medieval Architectonic Plastic Arts from the Fortress of Anacopia in the Universal Cultural Context of the Crimea and North Caucasus* **Alkhas Argun**

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Abstract—The performed research aims at revealing the functional use and initial location of a part of the objects of architectonic plastic arts, most of which decorated the early medieval Christian structures in the fortress complex of Anacopia, and also at revealing historic and cultural links with the neighboring regions of the Byzantine Oecumene: North Caucasus and the Crimea. In the first half of the 10th century the temple was reconstructed due to the new liturgical rules, accepted in Constantinople in the 9th century. It was still devoted to Our Lady, but during the reconstruction appear new facade finish, a part of which is preserved in two entrance portals. After the reconstruction also appeared a dome and a dome drum, and, according to the new features of liturgy which appeared in the Byzantine Empire at the end of the 9th century. The appearance of ornamental intertwined designs near the borders of the kingdom of Abkhazia shows that Abkhazian kings took part in the Christianisation of Alania. Technical similarity is a proof of the existence in the 10th century of a system of united cultural space included into the Byzantine Oecumene.

Keywords—early medieval temples; objects of architectonic plastic arts; the capital of the Kingdom of Abkhazia; the Byzantine oecumene

I. I NTRODUCTION

Studying of composite features and motives of lapidary art of Anacopiya gives the chance to define a role and value of the early medieval capital of the Abkhazian kingdom in formation of church architecture and its most important elements within the Byzantine Oecumene, to reveal sources and distinctive features of formation of own architectural school including all complex of the directions characterizing art of the Abkhazian kingdom. Epigraphic data in this regard are important factual base when developing questions of formation of architecture of Anacopia fortress, developing chronology in life of certain historic figures, problems of medieval history of the Abkhazian kingdom entering during blossoming (10th century) in space of a Christian Oecumene uniform culturally.

II. D ISCUSSION

The first mention of Anacopia is connected with the Chronicle of Kartli [1], and Archimandrite Leonid [2] and Countess P.S. Uvarova [3] were the first ones to mention the slabs of Anacopia. The translations of two Greek inscriptions from Anacopia were published in the enlarged edition made by I.N. [4]. The first professional translation of epigraphic monuments from Anacopia was published in the corpus "Christian Greek inscriptions of the Crimea and Caucasus" by V.V. Latyshev [5].

Archaeologist M. M. Trapsh [6], who was in charge of the excavations in the fortress of Anacopia in 1957 — 1958, published the reliefs from the temple which he found near the second defense line. Some slabs, installed by the monks in the Anacopian temple of the citadel, are very similar to the slabs of this temple in what concerns the ornaments.

The first omnibus work about the Abkhazian relief slabs was the work of L. G. Khrushkova "The sculpture of the medieval Abkhazia" [7], in which, on the basis of an art analysis, she gives the dating and defines the functional use of a part of the Anacopian slabs. More than 30 years later they published a collective edition "The art of the Kingdom of Abkhazia of 8th-11th centuries" [8], which presents a partial study of the temple architecture of Anacopia, a catalogue of stone reliefs of Anacopia and new translations of epigraphic inscriptions from Anacopia. The author of the section "The stone reliefs of Anacopia", art historian E. U. Endoltseva divides the reliefs into five groups, basing on the comparison of their themes with monuments from Georgia, places them within the chronological framework between the first half of the 10th century and the middle of the 11th century, which is not reasoned enough, in our opinion [9]. For example, the existence of an early Christian building in the fortress in the 30-th of the 7th century is proved in the Chronicle of Kartli [1]. Also, according to L. G. Khr

ushkova the presence in the collection of two fragments from Proconese marble can prove that this Christian structure is older and can be dated back to the 6th century [7].

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCHING RESULTS

The earliest church building is the basilica type temple in the citadel. The building technique of this structure is identical to those of the objects in the south part of the second defense line which were built at the end of the 6th century. In the semicircular apsis of the temple there are three wide windows with parallel window reveals, in longitudinal walls — also three wide windows, in the west part over the entrance portal there could be a window aperture. The time of construction of the citadel temple and its reconstruction, for a long time, was a point of suggestions, and most researchers agreed that it was built in the 7th century and reconstructed in the 11th century (A. S. Bashkirov [10], M. M. Trapsh [6], V. A. Lekvinadze [11], Khrushkova [12]). Some modern researchers state that it was reconstructed in the 11th century [13].

The temple in the citadel was the cathedral of Anacopian diocese in the 10th century, which was one of the reasons of its reconstruction. There was another reason — the introduction after year 842 of the last aniconic cycle

in the empire, new liturgical rules (taking the Gospels to the center of the temple, which led to the creation of the temples of cross-building type and building domes in the existing temples). These rules were materialized in a church structure of a new type at the end of the 11th century.

During the reconstruction of the temple a synthronon appears in its altar part. From the outside the apsis becomes five-canted. Also, we suppose that during the reconstruction a hall temple was turned into a domed church. In this case could appear a dome drum and a dome resting on missing columns with the help of strengthened arcs. Nowadays in the center of the hall there is a concrete chapel built by monks at the beginning of the 20th century, which doesn't allow to find the remains of the columns below the floor level. The appearance of the dome can explain the shift of the south entrance to the west. As a result it was situated between two pilasters, which could stand opposite the under-the-dome columns. New liturgical rules obviously influence the interior of the temples, first of all the design of choir screens, which undergone certain development — they became higher, ended in a wide architrave, on which were situated the icons. Modern studies of building mortars from the west wall of the temple in the citadel, which appeared during its reconstruction, made it possible to date it back to 930s on a reasonable basis. The building of the basilica type church with rafter ceiling and a narthex was dated back to the last quarter of the 6th century i.e. to the period of building activity of Byzantine emperors in Anacopia, which explains the appearance of marble parts of the décor of the altar from

Proconese [14]. All the researchers who made their statements concerning the Anacopian objects of architectonic plastic arts, probably, didn't pay attention to Leonid's report, in which he says that the plate with the name of St. Theodore was found behind the altar part of the citadel temple, and attribute this plate of the choir screen to the temple in the citadel by the time of its reconstruction (construction). We think that the dedicatory inscription about Theodore must be attributed to the hall church situated near the second defense line, which was built during the period of the reconstruction of the temple in the citadel — in the 10th century, but by another group of builders, which explains the difference in the external architectonic plastic art of two religious buildings built in the same period. This hall church, excavated by M. M. Trapsh was used by the military garrison, who defended the fortress buildings. The plan of the church, given by the archaeologist [15], shows that the apsis has a semicircular shape. Despite the problems connected with a badly ruined condition of the monument, nowadays we can see a facet in a preserved row in the north-east part of the base of the apsis. The existence of the canted apsis doesn't contradict the rules of the Abkhazian building school and can indirectly prove that the object was built by the masters of the 10th century. The dating of the monument back to the 10th-11th centuries suggested by archaeologist M. M. Trapsh and based on the discovered coins, at this stage gets a reasonable adjustment. Carved ornamented plates which have a composition consisting of entangled geometric figures (circles and rhombs in different combinations) are attributed by us to this temple i.e. to the time prior to the appearance of the Byzantine administration in Anacopia in the 11th century. A similar décor can be seen in another Abkhazian object of the same period — a domed church in Bambor, the reconstruction of which A. Y. Vinogradov also dates back to the building activity of the king of Abkhazia George II [16], which looks quite reasonable. The third Anacopian religious building — a hall church situated on the east edge of Anacopian Mountain, preserved few relics of its initial architecture. This object hasn't been studied by archaeologists. The objects of architectonic plastic arts were, most likely, moved by the monks to the citadel temple. The location of the temple on the east edge of the mountain on an open prolonged ground in the public realm and its semicircular apsis and narrative reliefs can prove that it was built early. Preliminary, we date the temple back to the 8th century. The biggest number of the works of architectonic plastic arts, studied in this article, is decorative carved ornaments and grouped according to the technique and patterns and attributed to different monuments of Anacopia. We divided the objects of architectonic plastic arts into 9 groups. Among the reliefs we mark the limestone slabs use for liturgical purposes. First, a group of the slabs are altar slabs of different shapes and sizes. The existence of three altar plates lets us suppose that they belonged to three discovered Anacopian temples. The biggest altar of a rectangular shape, which lacks certain parts, according to its size must have been situated in the temple of Our Lady in the citadel (temple No. 1). All three slabs have technologic similarities. They were settled on one stone leg-post situated more or less in the middle of a slab. In the lower part of the slab from the other side there are cut insets used to connect the leg in a stiff way, also there was a prominent plug for a closer joint of the stone details. In the biggest slab there is a drilled inset for a cramp. This design of altars was popular in a wide geographical area [17]. Slabs made using a similar technique were discovered in the temples of Chersonese, which can be a proof of one architectonic culture and proximity in the time of their production [18]. One of the three Anacopian plates which has a Greek inscription on a straight edge has a different shape: a semicircle ends in straight lines from three sides. The presence of the dedicatory inscription on the plain edge of the slab is a proof of the ceremony of its sanctifying in honor of St. Theodore Tiron, which could in 1049, when the Byzantine administration was situated in the fortress [8]. But modern researches changed the dating of the inscription for 944 [19], which agrees with our conception.

Second, fragments of two marble details make the second group. A fragment of a plate with the pattern consisting from plant shoots of a symmetrical shape, most likely, are the framing of the central design, which isn't preserved due to the loss of the biggest part of the slab. According to the technique in which both upsides are made and roundish end surfaces could be used as a decoration of the choir screen of a medieval temple. The other marble fragments looks like a part of frame for an icon on the wooden base. Both marble fragments, according to L. G. Khrushkova [7], are dated back to the 6th century, were imported of Proconese, where emperor's workshop were situated. According to the new dating of the temple of Our Lady (6th century) it is possible that these marble details were used to decorate the interior of this temple.

Third, a group of massive slabs with a carved bound ornament in a circle decorated the window of a canted apsis from the outside. The reconstruction of the existing fragments of slabs made it possible to determine the width of the window with an arched upper part (0.5 m). The bound ornament of the framing of the window and the carving technique are similar to the fragment of the slab from the lower temple near the second defense line, published by archaeologist M. M. Trapsh [20]. At the same time its pattern differs from the decorations that are preserved in situ on the facades of the temple of Our Lady. The apsis facet discovered by the author in the hall church near the second defense line proves that a carved framing from the canted apsis was a decoration of the temple of Theodore, built near the second defense line in the first half of the 10th century.

Fourth, in the Anacopian collection we found a big fragment of an architrave slab, which crowned the choir screen. The ornament of the architrave slab as well as its size is identical to those of the architrave slab from the domed church AilagAbyku in Bambor. This object must have been situated in the altar part of the temple of Theodore, situated near the second defense line. The rectangular ground on the inner side of the architrave shows the type of joint of the block and the column — the columns supported the straight construction made of profiled blocks connected to each other with the help of special mortises. The new type of a choir screen ending in an architrave resting upon high columns was also connected with new liturgical rules when icons were included into the Divine Liturgy and the design of the decoration of temples. For Abkhazia this process, reflected in minor architectonic forms, can be viewed after the 9th century which doesn't contradict the assumed dating of the temple of Theodore and the time of the reconstruction of the temple of Our Lady. The bound ornament on the face front of the architrave block is similar to the pattern of carving of the details of the choir screen from temple No.1 built at the same time in the village of Ilyich. On the compared objects we can see pattern of intercrossing lines made in similar carving techniques and consisting of three parallel binders and forming a system of intertwined circles, in the centers of which there are round eyelets of a smaller diameter. From the letters, which the patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas Mystikos sent to king of Abkhazia Constantine III and his son George II at the beginning of the 10th century, we know that they took part in the baptismation of the Alans, which has archaeological proofs [21].

Fifth, a group of slabs with carved moldings with complex profiles form the framing of a window aperture with distance between inner and outer window sashes. These slabs were used to decorate the window aperture in the temple of Our Lady after its reconstruction in the first half of the 10th century. The shape of the frame and the carving technique correspond to the design of two doorways preserved up to our days. We can assume that this decoration was made for the only apsis window left after the reconstruction of the temple of Our Lady in the citadel of Anacopia. Several more plates with similar patterns are also attributed to the temple of Our Lady in the citadel. It is proved that they were parts of the design of its doorways and cover the existing losses. Similar frame with complex profiles were typical

for the windows of the cross-domed church Msyghkva, which is a part of Abkhazian school of architecture and was built in the 10th century [22].

Sixth, two limestone slabs form the collection of Anacopia are tomb crosses and, most likely, decorated the crypts of clerics of Anacopian diocese, buried in the exonarthex of the temple of Our Lady. On the lesser slab there is a carved equal-ended cross over a chapel which symbolizes commemorative worship. The only element preserved from the other cross is the lower part with a commemorative inscription, according to which the tombstone dates back to 929 [23].

Seventh, carved slabs-finials of slot-like windows can be divided in two groups according to their working technique. The slabs with the images of animals look more archaic. One of them shows an animal (a lion, a boar) on either side of which there are two vortex rosaces which are considered to be ancient solar signs. In the center of the second slab there is a fish, on its two side schematic cypresses, which is a famous early Christian symbol. On the third slab there is an image of a Greek cross with expanding ends, inside the triangle crossbars of the cross there are smaller carved triangles with deep dots in the centre of each branch, the side cross arms are connected with half-figures of a bull and a lion. On the sides there is a traditional carved inscription IC XC NIKA, meaning "Jesus Christ conquers". "Anacopian reliefs and the shapes of cross have analogues in other places of Abkhazia. For example, this slab discovered on the Sukkumi Mountain reliefs from Mramba. The methods and the pattern of the cutter are close to a group of Abkhazian monuments of the 9th –10th centuries. In early Christian monuments of neighboring Georgia we can see the pattern with a lion in decorations of church windows of the 8th-9th centuries, it was common later, in 10th-11th centuries" — says L. G. Khrushkova [7].

It is difficult to determine with veracity the initial location of this group of monuments, because the religious buildings in the fortress preserved only partially, it is impossible to determine the sizes of window apertures, which were decorated with these slabs. At the same time, the analysis of the images of the slabs with animals shows that they appeared before the half of the 9th centuries, during a period when, due to aniconic tendencies in the empire, in architectonic plastic art of church buildings Christian symbols represented by image of animals became popular.

In the temple of Our Lady in the citadel there are partially preserved sizes of the window apertures. This fact leaves out the possibility that these slabs belonged to the initial temple in the citadel. The hall church of St. Theodore built in the first half of the 10th century was decorated carving without "animal" tropes. The most veracious option is to attribute these plates to the hall church situated on the east edge of the Anacopian Mountain, which was supposedly built in the 8th-9th centuries. These three slabs could decorate the three windows of the semicircular apsis of this temple. Later the slabs could be moved to the fortress citadel.

Eighth, two slabs with the images with Latin crosses form a separate group because of their functional similarity — they were the finials of narrow windows. The crosses of both slabs are framed with a rectangular cincture of a U shape. The window apertures preserved in the temple are wider. The Anacopian temple before its reconstruction had wide window apertures with parallel window reveals. After the reconstruction according to the new tendencies the number of window was reduced, and they became narrower.

The slabs with the composition of crosses in depth of carving and the embossing of flat surfaces with herringbone notch are similar to other slabs which decorate the entrance portals of the temple of Our Lady. On that basis we can assume that they could decorate window openings of the temple over the

entrance portals or the windows of the dome drum of the reconstructed church. Ninth, an important element of the choir screen of the early Christian temple is a fragment of a column with a finial in the shape of a square-like column cap with scrolls on each side. The preserved fragment of the column shaft is close to an oval shape, which on its stretched side has a carved bound ornament, made in the same manner as other stubs from the temple of Theodore. This column was a composite one and supported the slabs of the architrave. It is important to point out the variety of typical sizes and variants of bound ornaments on the stubs from our collection. A significant variety of kinds of one type of décor proves that the ornaments can be parts of choir screens of different Anacopian temples. A big degree of similarity between the patterns of the objects of architectonic plastic art from the domed hall Ailaga-Abyku [24] and the studied collection makes it possible to assume that both temples were decorated by the same group of masters. Most likely, the choir screens of the temple of metropolitan Anacopia were decorated with reliefs at the beginning of the period of high building activity of George II and were the examples of the temple of Bambor and other Abkhazian objects.

IV. CONCLUSION

Following the results of our work devoted to the study of a part of objects of architectonic plastic art of Anacopia, related to the buildings in the fortress, this paper came to the following conclusions:

- This paper suggested an original graphic reconstruction of the choir screen of the 10th century restored from the discovered elements, which are now kept in the museum of the Kingdom of Abkhazia.
- This paper presented an original hypothesis, according to which the first Anacopian temple was built in the last quarter of the 6th century in honor of Our Lady, whose sacred icon was in the temple during the Arabian siege in during the 30s of the 8th century. In the first half of the 10th century the temple was reconstructed due to the new liturgical rules, accepted in Constantinople in the 9th century. It was still devoted to Our Lady, but during the reconstruction appear new facade finish, a part of which is preserved in two entrance portals. After the reconstruction also appeared a dome and a dome drum, and, according to the new features of liturgy which appeared in the Byzantine Empire at the end of the 9th century — a new choir screen of decorative limestone slabs. We attributed to the citadel temple of Our Lady: the most massive altar slab lacking numerous elements, decorative facade slabs with carved profile shaped moldings, the slabs with Latin crosses under the rectangular cover.
- In the first half of the 10th century the king of Abkhazia George II builds a garrison hall church near the second defense line. Supposedly, this very temple was enthroned in honor of St. Theodore Tiron. The altar slab with a dedicatory inscription and a semicircular part, fitting into the apsis of this temple is connected to this temple. Decorative slabs with carved bound ornaments (a group) decorated the window of the canted apsis of the temple of Theodore, the slabs of altar stubs, decorated with similar patterns, most likely, were situated in the same place. A part of the slabs is combined into the design of the choir screen of an advanced shape, in which, according to its form, the architrave rests upon high columns, decorated with carving from the front.
- The hall church with a semicircular apsis, discovered on the east edge of the Anacopian Mountain, is dated back to the 9th century, to the aniconic period of the Byzantine Empire, its window apertures could be decorated with the slabs with the images of animals. One of the choir screen slabs of a rectangular shape (the lesser one) is also attributed by us to this temple.
- The discovered objects of architectonic plastic arts from Anacopia and its outskirts (Msyghva temple, Achanua temple, Ailag-Abyku temple from the village of Bambor) prove that there was Abkhazian school

of stonecutters, who, in the 10th century, in order to decorate facades and church interiors used carved ornaments looking like intertwined lines of three wisps and in the form of non-uniform horizontal moldings in cases when architectural compositions required visual increase of sizes in height.

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