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The Blind Arcade: a Major Device in the Medieval Architecture of Armenia and Georgia

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Patrick DONABÉDIAN

Aix Marseille Université, CNRS, LA3M, Aix-en-Provence, France

Article

**“The Blind Arcade: a Major Device in the
Medieval Architecture of Armenia and Georgia”**

in

ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN ON THE ROAD

*Georgian Medieval Architectural Sculpture
in Interaction with
Byzantine, Persian, Seljuk and Armenian Art*

Edited by

Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger
and Nina Iamanidze

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[p. 47, fig. 1]

THE BLIND ARCADE: A MAJOR DECORATIVE DEVICE IN THE MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE OF ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

Patrick Donabédian

A Device of Classical Origin, Reinterpreted in the Early Christian Period

The blind colonnade-arcade is one of the main and most effective decorative devices of medieval architecture in Armenia and Georgia. Adopted in the Armenian and South Caucasian region during the Golden Age of the 7th century, this remarkable way of enlivening façades and emphasizing their verticality has deeply marked both the Armenian and Georgian schools and is still actively present in their architectural languages. At the same time, thanks to common sources, it represents an element of kinship with the Christian West and Byzantium, as well as with the Muslim East, notably the Seljuk and post-Seljuk mausoleums of Asia Minor. Despite its considerable importance, this system, particularly from the point of view of comparative examination between the two South Caucasian schools, has been the subject of only a few specialized works.¹

A study of its origins and development reveals two coexisting and sometimes intertwining principles: a) a row of flat, arched niches and b) a row of half-columns and engaged arches above them, projecting from the façade. It is this second principle that is more generally associated with the concept of the blind colonnade-arcade. But given the very close links between them and their frequent interweaving, we will examine them together in this article.

The roots of both systems can be found in the pre-Christian period. The treatment of façades with rows of vertical elements (columns, pilasters), creating flat or slightly protruding niches, tied or surmounted by arches, separated or forming an arched band, either "hollowed" into the wall or in a "blind" colonnade-arcade (leaning against the wall), was a principle already being practiced during the "late antique" or late classical period (first centuries AD). It can be found in both the Roman West and in the Persian East. And if we try to go back further in time, we can wonder about the origin of the row of projecting half-columns surmounted by engaged arches. It is likely that it results from the decorative adaptation of and the application against the façades of real colonnades bearing open arcades and forming galleries along the buildings

¹ Bérizdé, Vakhtang, *Monuments de Tao-Klardjéti dans l'histoire de l'architecture géorgienne* (Russian and French), Tbilisi 1981, 82-90, 252-257; Ieni, Giulio, *Il problema delle arcate cieche nell'architettura monumentale del X-XI secolo: rapporti fra Oriente e Occidente*, in: Mariani, Calò / Stella, Maria (ed.), *Atti del terzo simposio internazionale sull'arte georgiana* (Bari / Lecce, 14-18 ottobre 1980), vol. 1, Galatina 1986, 51-65; Kazaryan, Armen, *Fasadnaja arkatura v srednevekovom zodchestve Armenii i drugix stran vostoka* in: *Voprosy vseobshchej istorii arxitektury*. Vypusk 3, Moscow 2010, 27-59; Kazaryan, Armen, *The Blind Arcade in Medieval Architecture of Armenia and Georgia. Springs of Ideas and Principal Stages of Development*, in: Erel, Ceren [et alii.] (eds.), *Anadolu Kültürlerinde Süreklilik ve Değişim*, Dr. A. Mine Kadiroğlu'na Armağan, Ankara 2011, 341-374; Donabédian, Patrick, *Parallélisme, convergences et divergences entre Arménie et Géorgie en architecture et sculpture architecturale 1*, in: *L'Europe et le Caucase. Les relations interrégionales et la question de l'identité*. Actes de colloque, octobre 2011, Tbilissi, Université d'Etat Ilia, Tbilissi 2012, 215-269, esp. 233-234, 236, 251, 255, 258, 260; Donabédian, Patrick, *Parallélisme, convergences et divergences entre Arménie et Géorgie en architecture et sculpture architecturale 2. L'ère de la reine Tamar et la période mongole*, in: Augé, Isabelle [et alii], (eds.), *L'Arménie et la Géorgie en dialogue avec l'Europe*, Paris 2016, 19-130, esp. 33, 40-41, 51, 54, 94.

of classical antiquity: "along" the buildings of a basilican, oblong composition or "around" them if they had a rotunda structure. We shall come back to this a little later.

In the Roman architecture of the beginning of our era, one can mention, among various examples of this kind of adaptation, the northern portal, known as the Golden Portal, in Diocletian's palace at Split/Spalato (ca. 305) (**fig. 1a**).² This portal, a prestigious decoration of the palace's main entrance, was a complex and original composition: a row of eight columns set on brackets and leaning against the wall supported an arcade made up of seven arches.³ This arcade protruded, but was also part of the wall structure and carried the

[p. 48, fig. 2]

façade's cornice, and this colonnade-arcade delimited seven compartments on the façade, four flat and three "hollowed-out" niches. The central niche is flat and the two lateral are rounded (the latter perhaps intended to house statues). It created a kind of prefiguration of what would soon be the blind colonnades-arcades. Its position on the upper half of the façade was also used in some cases in the Middle Ages, notably in Armenia in Byurakan (Saint John), early 10th century.⁴

Quite different is the case with the Trier Basilica (3rd–4th centuries, rebuilt in the 19th century). With its simple and pure lines, this building (the term "basilica" is used here in its original, secular sense of palatine hall) gives a perfect example of a series of high and narrow niches that punctuate the entire façade (**fig. 1b**).⁵ On a large number of early Christian Roman sarcophagi, the motif of protruding blind colonnade-arcades, inherited from the classical pagan sarcophagi on which it was already present, is used to provide a series of frames for figures of saints, biblical scenes, or other images, including the cross or the Christon (**figs. 2a, 2b**). On several of them, instead of the common row of semicircular arches on top of the blind colonnade, an alternating succession of semicircular arches and two-pitched gables appears.⁶ The same motif would be reproduced later on a series of Christian architectural monuments, among them the internal wall of the Zvartnots cathedral (Armenia, middle 7th century), which attests the impact of the late antique Roman legacy.⁷ An elegant blind colonnade-arcade is carved on the Ascension diptych of the Munich Museum, dated to the 5th century.⁸ It adorns the "drum" of what is obviously a representation of the aedicula on Christ's tomb in Jerusalem (**fig. 2c**).

[p. 49, fig. 3, 4]

In the Persian East, examples of rows of arched niches, now much eroded but certainly originally rounded at the top, are partly preserved on the palaces of Sassanian kings in

² Marasović, Jerko / Marasović, Tomislav / Gabričević, Branimir, *Research and Reconstruction of Diocletian's Palace Peristyle in Split 1956-1961* (Croatian and English), Split 2014, 105, fig. 7; 107, fig. 8, confirm that the western part of the peristyle was initially an open colonnade-arcade, like the northern one, and it is only in the Middle Ages that it was (mainly) walled and transformed into a (partly) blind one.

³ In the reconstruction drawn by Ernest Hébrard in 1910, the width of the portal is reduced to six columns and five arches, as it is shown flanked by two large towers, added later, which encroached on its ends: see Hébrard, Ernest / Zeiller, Jacques, *Spalato, le palais de Dioclétien*, Paris 1912.

⁴ Thierry, Jean-Michel / Donabédian, Patrick, *Les arts arméniens*, Paris 1987, 503-504.

⁵ According to Gerardo Brown-Manrique, the 19th-century restoration of the basilica is faithful to its original state. The only exception is the disappearance of the two levels of horizontal balcony-galleries which ran through the niches at the first and second thirds of their height. See Brown-Manrique, Gerardo, *Konstantinplatz in Trier. Between Memory and Place*, in: *Places Journal* 3/1, University of California, Berkeley, 31-42, esp. 33, fig. 5, 6 (<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0zj7q7qv> 1986-07-01).

⁶ For many examples, see Koch, Guntram, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*, München 2000.

⁷ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 595.

⁸ Grabar, André, *L'âge d'or de Justinien*, Paris 1966, 287, fig. 332.

Ctesiphon⁹ and Firuzabad (3rd century) (**fig. 3**).¹⁰ In both of these monuments, the niches were separated by high half-columns projecting from the façade, which almost creates a combination of the two principles.

These devices continued to exist in the early Christian period, notably in Ravenna, but with a clear predominance of the rows of arched niches delimited by flat pilasters, as on the Trier Basilica. One famous example is the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (5th century) (**fig. 4**).¹¹ As we will see later, the principle of flat niches with a semicircular top would remain constant in the West during the early Christian and medieval periods.

In the early Christian East, the blind arcade often had more monumental interpretations still linked to classical Roman orders. This is the case, for example, at Resafa in Syria,¹² Hakh in Tur-Abdin,¹³ Flaviopolis in Cilicia (**fig. 5**), and Tekor in Armenia (now destroyed). Tekor, at the end of the 5th century, with its combination of pilasters (western and southern façades) or half-columns (northern façade) and intermittently arched horizontal band, provides the first prefiguration in Armenia of what would later become the blind colonnade-arcade of the 7th century; Tekor's forms are still clearly distinct from the latter (**fig. 6**).¹⁴ At Flaviopolis/Kadırlı, in Cilicia, at the same time (5th–6th centuries), the prefiguration is closer to the new forms to come, since, on the outer face of the apse, a projecting triple arch rests on two pairs of half-columns.¹⁵ However, the Flaviopolis arcade remains an isolated experiment. Sometimes, the version with flat niches is applied, as on the drum of the Güzelöz church of Saint Eustace, in Cappadocia, probably early Christian.¹⁶

The Blind Arcade's Spread in Armenia during the Golden Age of the 7th Century

The blind colonnade-arcade brilliantly entered the decorative repertoire of Armenian architecture during the Golden Age of the 7th century. From the outset, two main models coexisted: 1) a series of flat rounded-top arches and pilasters delimiting recessed niches and 2) the colonnade-arcade projecting on the façade. However, very soon the second imposed itself and clearly predominated.

One of the manifestations of the first type was inside the now-collapsed drum of the church of Aygeshat, from the years 630–640;¹⁷ the principle was taken up a little later in the same century on the Talin's drum (rebuilt in the 20th century on the documented base) (**fig. 7**).¹⁸ A flat arcade was placed at the same level as the wall above it and "rests" on flat, not very prominent pilasters; beneath it, between the pilasters, flat "niches" were "carved": it is the principle of the basilica in Trier and of the Galla Placidia mausoleum in Ravenna (5th century). Such a form is rare in Armenia.

The many other examples of blind colonnade-arcades found in 7th century Armenian architecture all belong to the second type. Two fragments of a blind arcade discovered at Dvin date probably from

⁹ See Kröger, Jens, Ctesiphon, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol 4/4, 446-448.

¹⁰ Dieulafoy, Marcel, *L'art antique de la Perse. Achéménides, Parthes, Sassanides*. 4e partie, Paris 1884-1889, 44, fig. 29.

¹¹ Coche de la Ferté, Étienne, *L'art de Byzance*, Paris 1981, 60, 534-535.

¹² Spanner, Harry / Guyer, Samuel, *Rusâfa. Die Wallfahrtsstadt des Heiligen Sergios*, Berlin 1926, pl. 11.

¹³ Bell, Gertrude, *The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur 'Abdin*. With an introduction and notes by Marlia Mundell Mango, London 1982, 114-115, pl. 133-135.

¹⁴ Donabédian, Patrick, *L'âge d'or de l'architecture arménienne. VIIe siècle*, Marseille 2008, 54-57.

¹⁵ Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 57, 238, 241.

¹⁶ Kazaryan, Armen, *Kafedral'nyj sobor Surb Echmiadzin i vostochnoxristianskoe zodchestvo IV-VII vekov*, Moscow 2007, 141, fig. 131.

¹⁷ Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 165-166.

¹⁸ Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 238-239.

[p. 50, fig. 5]

immediately after 640.¹⁹ It is assumed that they were part of an arcade which adorned the façade of Dvin Cathedral. Founded in the 5th century and destroyed by the Sassanian Persians in the 6th century, the cathedral was rebuilt in the early 7th century and was probably restored again after the first Arab attack in 640.

Shortly afterward, the same kind of arcade was widely applied to the cathedral of Zvartnots, built in the 650s. Now in ruins, Zvartnots had an abundance of sculpted decoration and presented three forms of colonnades-arcades, all prominent. The main one was on the outer face of the first level of the rotunda: on pairs of slender half-columns, an arcade made of vigorous bands bordered by a vine scroll was surmounted by a broad horizontal strip with, in the spandrels, portraits of men holding various tools. These men were probably mainly the vinedressers and laborers working in the Lord's vineyard, but, according to another interpretation, they could represent the masons and other workers who built the cathedral (**fig. 8**).²⁰

The second arcade of Zvartnots, at the second exterior level, consisted of arches on single half-columns, which is also a rare feature. Finally, on the inner face of the annular wall of the church, single barrel half-columns carried, as mentioned above, an alternating succession of arches and gables, a motif of obvious classical Roman origin, already present on sarcophagi. In all this diversity, Armenian architects retained, for the most part, the formula of slightly prominent arches on pairs of half-columns. At the junction of the arches and their supports, the impostes have the form of a double spherocubic capital (with two pendent lobes), which is also found, reversed, on the bases of the columns.

After its use in Zvartnots, this type of blind colonnade-arcade enjoyed great popularity in the Armenian architecture of the second half of the 7th century. But at this moment, it was confined, as at Zvartnots, to the polygonal (faceted) parts of the constructions — the apses (conches) and the drums (the inner wall of the

[p. 51, fig. 6, 7]

ambulatory of Zvartnots was the only case of a cylindrical surface decorated with such a device). This fact may suggest, as Armen Kazaryan notes, an origin linked to the late antique form of the rotunda.²¹ Of course, the rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, called Anastasis,²² immediately springs to mind, as does the aedicula at its center, where is located the tomb of Jesus Christ (**fig. 2d**).²³

¹⁹ Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 66-67.

²⁰ Donabédian, Patrick, Les thèmes bibliques dans la sculpture arménienne préarabe, in: Revue des Études Arméniennes 22 (1990-1991), 253-314, esp. 275-276; Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 196.

²¹ Kazaryan, Fasadnaja arkatura, 36; Kazaryan, The Blind Arcade, 348-349.

²² The rotunda of the Anastasis was, if not entirely, at least largely destroyed when Jerusalem was taken by the Persians in 614. Its original structure and aspect are therefore not precisely known. Nevertheless, as Richard Krautheimer summarizes, it is highly likely that it was a round building from the time of its construction around 350; in addition to the interior ambulatory (with an "open" colonnade-arcade), it probably also had an "outer ambulatory [which] apparently encircled the whole building." This may have been also a gallery with a colonnade-arcade. See Krautheimer, Richard, Introduction to an "Iconography of medieval architecture", in: JWarb 5 (1942) 1-33, esp. 5.

²³ The latter is depicted on several early Christian images and in particular on 6th-century Palestinian ampullae as a ciborium with twisted columns bearing arches (and a pleated or pyramidal roof). See Grabar, André, Les ampoules de Terre sainte (Monza – Bobbio), Paris 1958. *Claustreae* (light openwork partitions) occupied the spaces between the columns, which could, to a certain extent, create the image of a blind colonnade. See Formigé, Jules, Un plan du Saint-Sépulcre découvert à la Basilique de Saint-Denis, in: Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot, 48/2, Paris 1954, 107-130, esp. 120, 122. These *claustrae* are curiously called "clerestory" by Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel. See

However, the research carried out by Rouzanna Amirkhanian on the canons of concordance (tables in the form of an arch on two columns, housing the epistle of Eusebius of Caesarea and the series of correspondences between the various passages of the synoptic Gospels) placed at the beginning of the medieval manuscript Gospels, suggests another track: this kind of arcade created on the first pages of the Gospel can be seen as a symbolical representation, not exactly of the rotunda of the Anastasis but rather of the "Martyrium" Basilica, just to the east of it. This was a longitudinal shrine also built by emperor Constantine in the 4th century to mark the holy place of Christ's Passion, and it had monumental arched galleries, a representation which was perceived as a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem.²⁴ Could this tempting hypothesis also apply to the blind colonnade-arcades of our churches, independent of the configuration, rounded or rectilinear, of the façades on which they are located? According to Rouzanna Amirkhanian, in any case, the interpretation of the arcade (evoking the grandiose monuments of Golgotha)

[p. 52, fig. 8]

as a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem would also apply perfectly to the arcades carved on the side faces of the early Christian sarcophagi.²⁵ It remains however that, until the end of the 7th century, in Armenia, only polygonal (or round) surfaces bore such a device.

There are about ten examples of blind arcades on Armenian churches between the years 660 and 680, which demonstrates a remarkable unity of style and a great popularity: in a few decades, the new form spread throughout the country. After Dvin and

[p. 53, fig. 9, 10]

[p. 54, fig. 11]

Zvartnots (leaving aside Aygeshat, which presents a different type)²⁶, the new device can be seen on the apses and conches of Artik²⁷ and T'alın²⁸ and on the heptaconch of Irind (**fig. 9**),²⁹ as well as on the drums of Arutj,³⁰ T'alın (rebuilt), Dədmashen (rebuilt),³¹ Hnevank,³² Sisian,³³ and Voskepar (**fig. 10**).³⁴

The supports, as we said, are twin half-columns, and the imposts have the shape of double cubic capitals (except at the ends of the strips, where the column has a single shaft, and the impost, which has a single lobe).³⁵ The strips of the arches are molded or decorated with a

Vincent, Hugues / Abel, Félix-Marie, Jérusalem. Recherches de topographie, d'archéologie et d'histoire. Tome second. Jérusalem nouvelle, Paris 1914, 183.

²⁴ Amirkhanian, Rouzanna, Les tables de canons arméniennes et le thème iconographique de la Jérusalem céleste, in: *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 31 (2008-2009), 181-232. The motif of the "Tempietto," a baldachin suggesting a rotunda shape, often figured at the end of the series of canons of Eusebius. It represents, according to Amirkhanian, the rotunda of the Anastasis and the tomb of Christ.

²⁵ Amirkhanian, Les tables de canons, 205. The pre-Christian, antique Roman origin of the blind arcade on the sarcophagi is not taken into account here. Indeed, it does not interfere with the new symbolic meaning it acquired.

²⁶ Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 165-166.

²⁷ Thierry / Donabédian, Les arts arméniens, 494-495.

²⁸ Thierry / Donabédian, Les arts arméniens, 580-581.

²⁹ Thierry / Donabédian, Les arts arméniens, 539.

³⁰ According to Tokarskij, Nikolaj, *Arxitektura Armenii IV-XIV vekov*, Yerevan 1961, 109 and 171, a stone bearing part of a pair of half-columns provides "reliable confirmation" that there was a blind colonnade-arcade on the drum of Arutj.

³¹ Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 129-130.

³² Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 148.

³³ Thierry / Donabédian, Les arts arméniens, 576.

³⁴ Donabédian, L'âge d'or, 161-162.

³⁵ The creation, during the Armenian Golden Age (7th century), of the cubic or spherical-cubic capital (also called a cushion capital) form for the imposts of the portal jambs and of the half-columns of the

large choice of motifs, mainly vegetable and linear. The arcade of Irind is very original because it alternates flat and prominent arches.

Research carried out during last decades by Armen Kazaryan has led him to add to this repertoire two 7th-century structures: the drum of Echmiadzin Cathedral, with a hypothetical umbrella above it, and] the church of Zarinja.³⁶ However, several arguments seem to oppose their inclusion: a) there is an awkwardness to the forms of Zarinja, of its drum, and of the umbrella that crowns it—these elements are totally foreign to the period in question and are marked by a high conceptual and technical quality; and b) the twisted columns and the umbrella that he proposes as part of the framework of 7th-century architecture do not appear on any of the sixty (approximately) remarkable monuments of this period. Therefore, these proposed hypotheses have not been adopted in this study.

A Curious Experiment at Ts'romi in Georgia, circa mid-7th century

In Georgia at the same time, we find a possible echo of a blind arcade. The church of Tsromi, probably from the mid-7th century,³⁷ shows on its eastern façade a brief "sequence" of an arcade. It is reduced to a central niche, flat and arched, placed between two dihedral/trapezoidal niches, the whole creating a kind of portion of a "blind arcade."³⁸ Moreover, this device is, for the first time, applied to a rectilinear surface (**fig. 11**).

The configuration of the eastern façade of Ts'romi raises questions that could lead to the hypothesis of a remodeling. The central arch does not seem homogeneous with the two "supports" on which it rests. Their ill-fitting junctions with the two ends of the arch and their decorative treatments seem to betray an intervention slightly later than the construction. The vertical ornamental band with interlaces that border the central niche, characteristic of Armenian cornices of the second half of the 7th century, could reflect a slightly later change.

Nevertheless, the compositional consistency of the façade seems to invalidate the hypothesis of a major remodeling. The thickness of the eastern wall, probably designed to allow three niches to be "hollowed out,"³⁹ the homogeneity of the masonry in the area comprising the arcade and the wall above it, and the harmony created by the three arches design all seem to testify to a coherent conception.

There remains the question of the intention of the sponsors and the architect. For Giorgi Chubinashvili, it was a reinterpretation of the Jvari model of large, flat niches.⁴⁰ However,

blind colonnades-arcades is a subject of great interest. However, it cannot be dealt with in the limited space of this article. On this subject, see Donabédian, Patrick, *Le portail dans l'architecture arménienne du haut Moyen-Âge*, in: *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 20 (1986-1987) 337-380, esp. 349-350; and Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 233 and 239.

³⁶ Kazaryan, *Kafedral'nyj sobor*, 78-84, 107, 168-170; Kazaryan, *Armen, Cerkovnaja arxitektura stran Zakavkaz'ja VII veka*. 4 toma, (The church architecture of the South Caucasian countries of the 7th century, Four volumes, vol. 1, Moscow 2012, 333-334, 343, 362; vol. 2, 226-237.

³⁷ Beridze, *Vakhtang, Dzveli kartuli khurotmodzgyvreb*, Tbilisi 1974, 33-35, 112-113; *Sakartvelos ist'oriisa da k'ult'uris dzeglta agts'eriloba*, vol. 5, Tbilisi 1990, 457-460; *Skhirtladze, Zaza, Ts'romis tadzris ist'oriisatvis*, in: *Matsne* 3 (1985), 165-170. On the close relationship of this monument with contemporary Armenian churches, and its probable dating to the mid-7th century (instead of the dating to 626-634 often mentioned in publications), see Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 115-118; see also Kazaryan, *Cerkovnaja arxitektura* 3, 325-363, esp. 333-336, where a dating to the decades of the 670s or 680s is proposed.

³⁸ Bérédzé, *Monuments de Tao*, 82 and 253, identifies the "three-arch composition" of Ts'romi as a "decorative arcade."

³⁹ This choice is underlined by Kazaryan, *Cerkovnaja arxitektura* 3, 331.

⁴⁰ Chubinashvili, Giorgi, *Cromi. Iz istorii gruzinskoj arxitektury pervoj treti VII v.*, Moscow 1969, 55. For a comparison with the niches of Jvari, see Mépisachvili, *Rousoudane / Tsintsadzé, Vakhtang, L'art de la Géorgie ancienne*, Leipzig 1978, 82-83.

another hypothesis seems possible. Given the numerous elements at Ts'romi linked to Armenia, should not the eastern façade be seen as an attempt to echo the great "fashion" for blind arcades that prevailed in the neighboring country? At the same time, there could be an intention to create distance by choosing the "recessed niche" variant and to innovate by placing the arcade on a straight façade.

Post-Arab Blind Arcades in Armenia vs. Byzantium: an Opposite Polarization

It was not until the end of the Arab domination that the blind colonnade-arcade, while remaining on polygonal or cylindrical volumes, began to be applied to

[p. 55, fig. 12]

rectilinear façades. This was the case in Armenia and in Georgia, as well as in the border region of T'ao-K'larjeti (geo.) or Tayk-Kəgharjk (arm.), then Iberized.⁴¹ This was also the case in Byzantium, whereas in the earlier period this form was practically unknown to Byzantine architects.

The earliest examples of the post-Arab revival seem to be found in Georgia, on monuments attributed to the "transitional period" (presumably the 8th–9th centuries). Rows of arched flat niches appear on the Nek'resi octagonal drum⁴² and on the lateral rectilinear façades of Ts'irkoli.⁴³ While in Telovani, a prominent colonnade-arcade girds the octagonal drum (**fig. 12**).⁴⁴ If we ignore the uncertain experiment of Ts'romi, these three monuments are the oldest examples of blind arcades in Georgia. They show straight away that the two formulas coexisted. If we adopt the traditional dating of the "transitional period," Ts'irkoli has the first example in Georgia of the application of a set of three vertical flat niches on rectilinear façades.

From the 10th century there appears a clear difference in the application of the blind arcade between Armenia and Byzantium. In Armenia, it is almost exclusively the model of a projecting colonnade supporting a projecting arcade that is applied. In Byzantium, on the contrary, the façades most often present a row of flat recessed niches delimited by flat arcades on flat pilasters, the latter being placed at the level of the wall. Those in T'ao/ Tayk and Georgia oscillate between the two poles.

There are, however, interesting exceptions from both sides. Thus, in Byzantine Asia Minor, one of the oldest blind arcades, in Fisandon/Dereköy (9th–10th centuries, near Karaman), is a prominent colonnade-arcade slightly but clearly protruding from the façade, adorning the upper part (**fig. 13a**).⁴⁵ This is very unusual for Byzantium. Almost simultaneously, the blind arcade of the Byurakan church (early 10th century), the first Armenian example of a post-Arab blind arcade on a straight surface, has an unexpected kinship with it the one in Fisandon: it is also slightly protruding and placed high, practically on top of the eastern part of the church. It is also an exception to what was then practiced in Armenia (**fig. 13b**). The high position of these two bands reminds us of what we saw several centuries earlier on the northern portal of Diocletian's palace in Split (**fig. 1a**).

⁴¹ On the history of this region, see below and note 83.

⁴² Sakartvelos ist'oriisa da k'ult'uris dzeghta agts'eriloba, vol. 1, Tbilisi 2013, 421-434; Beridze, Vakhtang, Dzveli kartuli khurotmodzegovreba, Tbilisi 1974, 87; Elizbarashvili, Irine, Nek'resi, Tbilisi 1986.

⁴³ Beridze, Vakhtang, Dzveli kartuli khurotmodzegovreba, Tbilisi 1974, 40-41.

⁴⁴ Sakartvelos ist'oriisa da k'ult'uris dzeghta agts'eriloba, vol. 5, Tbilisi 1990, 316-318; Tsintsadze, Vakhtang, Telovanis Jvarpatiosani (VIII-IX s dzegli), in: AG 5 (1959) 73-89.

⁴⁵ Eyice, Semavi, Karadağ (Binbirkilise) ve Karaman Çevresinde Arkeolojik İncelemeler (Recherches archéologiques à Karadağ (Binbirkilise) et dans la région de Karaman), İstanbul 1971, fig. 221-227.

[p. 56, fig. 13]

This double exception confirms the rule: most of the time in Byzantium we see arched niches, at least on the façades, and, on the contrary, in Armenia there is a prominence of the colonnade-arcade on the façades as well as on the drums. In Byzantium, there are many examples from the 10th and 11th centuries, including, in Constantinople, the Church of Christ Pantepoptes (Eski İmaret Cami, 11th century),⁴⁶ in Chios, Nea Moni (11th century);⁴⁷ in Thessaloníki, Panaghia Chalkeon (1028);⁴⁸ in Asia Minor, Üç Ayak Kilisesi (Kırşehir, late 10th–11th century)⁴⁹ and Çanlı Kilise (Akhisar, 11th century?).⁵⁰ For the drums, Byzantine architects elaborated an original formula: they almost always created the effect of an arcade by placing semi-columns at the angles of each face of the drum and by covering them with salient arches. Among the many examples of this solution from the 10th century onward are, in Constantinople, the church of the Myrelaion Monastery or Bodrum Cami (ca. 920–930),⁵¹ Eski İmaret Cami (11th century),⁵² and Kilise (or Vefa) Cami (ca. 1100);⁵³ in Athens, several 11th-century churches, including Saint Apostles (ca. 1020),⁵⁴ Kapnikarea (ca. 1060),⁵⁵ and Saint Theodore (ca. 1070);⁵⁶ in Thessaloníki, Panaghia Chalkeon (1028); and at Mount Athos, the Catholicon of the Great Lavra (11th century).⁵⁷

Byzantine architects also often applied this protrusion of the extrados to the top of the row of flat niches that animated their façades. More generally, from the 12th century onward, in Byzantium, the ranks of high niches played a major role in the treatment of façades. Many examples can be cited in the 12th–14th centuries, notably in Constantinople and in Greece.

[p. 57, fig. 14]

In medieval Byzantine monuments in the Balkans and particularly in Bulgaria, we find the same principle of flat niches under arches that do not project often treated with great sobriety (in Asenovgrad, Asen's Church, ca. 12th century⁵⁸ and in Nesebar, Holy Archangels, ca. 13th century).⁵⁹ An exception can, however, be seen at the Petritzos or Bachkovo monastery (Bulgaria). The ossuary built in 1083 by Prince Gregorios Pakurianos/Grigor Bakuriani is covered with a blind colonnade-arcade quite different from those widespread in the Byzantine world (**fig. 13c**).⁶⁰ It is slightly and equally salient and, because of this, it clearly evokes the region of origin of this high-ranking Byzantine officer: the South Caucasus, and more precisely, the province of T'ao/Tayk.

⁴⁶ See Asutay-Effenberger, Neslihan / Effenberger, Arne, Eski İmaret Camii, Bonoszisterne und Konstantinsmauer, in: JÖB 58 (2008), 13-44.

⁴⁷ Voyadjis, Sotiris, The Katholikon of Nea Moni in Chios unveiled, in: JÖB 59 (2009), 229-242.

⁴⁸ Tsitouridou, Anna, The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon, Thessaloníki 1985.

⁴⁹ Eyice, Semavi, La ruine byzantine dite "Üçayak" près de Kırşehir en Anatolie centrale, in: CahArch 18 (1968), 137-155.

⁵⁰ For a 13th-century dating, see Restle, Marcell, Kappadokien, in: RBK 3 (1978), 977-115, esp. 1027; see also Asutay-Effenberger, Neslihan, Byzantinische (griechische) Künstler und ihre Auftraggeber im seldschukischen Anatolien, in: Speer, Andreas / Steinkrüger, Philipp (eds.), Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehung, Berlin / Boston 2012, 799-818, esp. 811-812.

⁵¹ Striker, Cecil, L., The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul, Princeton 1981.

⁵² See Asutay-Effenberger / Effenberger, Eski İmaret Camii.

⁵³ For the question of the patron, see Effenberger, Arne, Die Klöster der beiden Kyrai Martha und die Kirche des Bebaia Elpis-Klosters in Konstantinopel, in: Millennium 3 (2006), 256-293.

⁵⁴ Coche de la Ferté, L'art de Byzance, 507.

⁵⁵ Coche de la Ferté, L'art de Byzance, 506-507.

⁵⁶ Coche de la Ferté, L'art de Byzance, 506.

⁵⁷ Coche de la Ferté, L'art de Byzance, 516.

⁵⁸ Dimitrov, Dimitr / Yordanov, Yordan (eds.), Kratkaja istorija bolgarskoj arxitektury, Sofiya 1969, 119, 121.

⁵⁹ Dimitrov / Yordanov, Kratkaya istorija, 120-122.

⁶⁰ Dimitrov / Yordanov, Kratkaya istorija, 122-124.

A General Prevalence of High, Flat Niches, Except in Armenia

It is not possible to present in detail in this short essay the diverse forms the blind colonnade-arcade takes in the medieval world. In the West, it is the Ravenna and Byzantine principle of the "arched flat niches" that is the most widespread. There are countless examples. Even in the most brilliant monuments of Tuscany (Pisa and Lucca, 11th–12th centuries), where a profusion of luxury and diversity exists, along with open colonnades-arcades, the system with flat niches prevails, although they are placed under partly protruding arches carried by protruding columns or pilasters.

In the Muslim world, probably in the continuity of the Sassanian tradition, the early monuments exclusively present flat and arched niches: the Abbasid palace of Ukhaidir (Iraq, the 770s),⁶¹ the Great Mosque of Kairouan (Tunisia, 9th century),⁶² and the Bab al-Mardum mosque (Toledo, late 10th century)⁶³ are some of them. As we shall see later, on the contrary, the medieval Turkish mausoleums called *türbe* (13th–14th centuries), in the shape of a cylinder surmounted by a cone, adopt the solution with slightly protruding arches mainly on twin half-columns, probably due to some links with Armenian (and T'ao/Georgian) models.⁶⁴

In Armenia, the formula of the prominent arcade has been present everywhere since the end of the 9th century, first of all on the drums: Oguzlu (the 890s)⁶⁵ and Zarindja⁶⁶ (perhaps late 9th or early 10th century; the arcade is combined with the umbrella in an archaic formula), Saint Apostles of Kars (the 930s),⁶⁷ Saint Gregory of the Pahlavunis in Ani (late 10th century, with original traits: two arcades are superimposed and there is no caesura between the half-columns and the arcade),⁶⁸ Saint Savior of Ani (1036, but the drum was rebuilt in the 13th–14th century, with a colonnade of extreme fineness, a slightly projecting arcade, and slightly recessed "niches" under the arcade),⁶⁹ and the Holy Sign chapel of Kecharis (1051) (**fig. 14**).⁷⁰

Returning to the first umbrella-shaped domes, note that in Zarindja, as well as in Opiza⁷¹ and Khandzta/Porta⁷² in K'larjeti, the umbrella in its first period was combined with the blind arcade or was juxtaposed to

[p. 58, fig. 15]

it. But from the 11th century, when the umbrella dome spread widely in Armenia, the arcade, having merged into the series of gables, disappeared, and the umbrella dominated exclusively.⁷³

After the drums, there are, for the 10th–11th centuries in Armenia, arcades on flat, polygonal, or rounded facades. The abovementioned Saint John of Byurakan (early 10th century), with its curiously barely prominent arcade at the top of the eastern part of the church, is the first example known in Armenia of an arcade on a flat façade; there are also those at Saint

⁶¹ For a color photo, see Blair, Sheila / Bloom, Jonathan, *Architektur*, in: Hattstein, Markus / Delius, Peter (eds.), *Islam. Kunst und Architektur*, Köln 2000, 98.

⁶² For a color photo, see Mazot, Sibylle, *Architektur der Aghlabiden*, in: Hattstein / Delius, *Islam*, 132.

⁶³ For a color photo, see Kubisch, Natascha, *Architektur*, in: Hattstein / Delius, *Islam*, 228.

⁶⁴ For several examples, see Önkal, Hakkı, *Anadolu Selçuklu Türbeleri*, ²Ankara 2005.

⁶⁵ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 562.

⁶⁶ Kazaryan, *Cerkovnaia arxitektura* 2, 226-237. This author proposes to date the monument to the 7th century (630s-640s).

⁶⁷ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 544.

⁶⁸ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 482-484.

⁶⁹ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 486.

⁷⁰ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 546 and pl. 56.

⁷¹ Donabédian, Patrick, *L'éclatante couronne de Saint-Serge : Le monastère de Xckōnk' [Khōtzkonq] et le dôme en ombrelle dans l'architecture médiévale*, in : *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 38 (2018), 195-355, especially 217-218, 278, fig. 47.

⁷² Donabédian, *L'éclatante couronne*, 217-218, 279, fig. 48.

⁷³ On the umbrella dome in Armenia and in the medieval world, see Donabédian, *L'éclatante couronne*, esp. 215-240.

Savior of Sanahin (966–972), on the eastern part of the church,⁷⁴ Ani Cathedral (989–1001),⁷⁵ and the polygon of Saint Savior in Ani (1036) (**fig. 15**).⁷⁶

On the cathedral of Ani, the single-shaft colonnade that carries the arcade has a great thinness and is almost unique in Armenia, with a sole precedent from the 7th century at Zvartnots; around the 9th century, there was also such a form in Georgia on the drum of Telovani. Single shafts appeared a few years before Ani in Oshk'(i), the largest cathedral in T'ao/Tayk, built in 963–973 by the great prince David Bagratid. The same type of column with a single shaft is reproduced on parts of the cathedral of King Bagrat', in his capital, Kutaisi, completed in 1003.⁷⁷ We thus see at the same time the same very rare form being used on the biggest sanctuaries of the three entities: T'ao, Armenia, and Georgia (**fig. 16**).

It is interesting to note in 11th-century Armenia a small change that can be seen as a slight step toward Byzantine models but is more probably inspired by the innovative forms created by the T'ao/Tayk school (see below): the colonnade-arcade remains prominent, but the surface under the arches is set back from the top of the façade—sometimes weakly, sometimes more clearly. This is the case in Saint Sergius of Khətzkonk (1024)⁷⁸ (note, on the drum, here as well as at Amberd [1026]⁷⁹ and Marmashen [1029],⁸⁰ how the arcade blends totally into the gables that carry the umbrella) and at Marmashen (1029) and Saint Savior of Ani (1036), on the main body of the church (as well as on the drum, which was redone later). The contrast is more marked at Noravank of Bghen (1062), on the

[p. 59, fig. 16]

western façade of the gallery: the colonnade-arcade delimits clearly recessed niches (**fig. 17**).⁸¹

Innovations Introduced by the T'ao/Tayk School of Architecture⁸²

At the same period — the second half of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century — the blind colonnade-arcade or row of flat and arched niches has a remarkable development in the school of T'ao-K'larjeti/Tayk-Kəgharjk, which is, as indicated above, a province between Armenia, Georgia, and Byzantium. The complex history of this region is

⁷⁴ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 568.

⁷⁵ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 484 and pl. 49.

⁷⁶ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 486.

⁷⁷ Tsintsadze, *Vakhtang, Bagrat'is tadzari*, Tbilisi 1964.

⁷⁸ Donabédian, *L'éclatante couronne*, 266, fig. 29, and 274, fig. 41.

⁷⁹ Donabédian, *L'éclatante couronne*, 281, fig. 50, and 282, fig. 52.

⁸⁰ Donabédian, *L'éclatante couronne*, 282, fig. 53.

⁸¹ Thierry / Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 506.

⁸² The author of these lines is extremely grateful to his colleague Nina Iamanidze, who was kind enough to prepare specially for this article a selective bibliography on the architecture of T'ao-K'larjeti: Djobadze, *Wakhtang, The Georgian churches of Tao-Klarjet'i: Construction Methods and Materials*, in: *OCh*, 1978, 62, 114-134; Djobadze, *Wakhtang, Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klardjet'i and Šavšet'i*, Stuttgart 1992; Bérizé, *Monuments de Tao-Klardjéti* (mentioned above); Khoshtaria, David, *Udzvelesi monast'rebi sakartveloshi* (Early Monasteries in Georgia), in: *Arkitekturuli memkvideroba* (Architectural Heritage), vol. 1, Khimshiashvili Kakha / Khoshtaria, David (eds.), Tbilisi, 2001, 49-56; Khoshtaria, David, *Past and Present of the Georgian Sinai: A Survey of Architectural History and Current State of Monasteries in K'larjeti*, in: *Soustal, Peter* (ed.), *Heilige Berge und Wüsten: Byzanz und sein Umfeld*, Vienna 2009, 77-83; Khoshtaria, David, *Builders of the Churches of Tao-Klarjeti: Some Preliminary Notes* in: *Giviashvili, Irene / Akder, Feyza* (eds.), *The Georgian Kingdom and Georgian Art. Cultural Encounters in Anatolia in Medieval Period. Symposium Proceedings* (15 May 2014, Ankara), Istanbul 2021, 113-121. To these references, the author allows himself to add the following titles: Bayram, *Fahriye, Artvin'deki Gürcü Manastırlarının Mimarisi*, Istanbul 2005; Giviashvili, Irene / Koplastadze Irakli, *Tao-Klarjeti*, Tbilisi 2004; Giviashvili, Irene / Khizanishvili, Natia, *Medieval Georgian Monuments of Tao-Klarjeti*, in: *Giviashvili / Akder, The Georgian Kingdom*, 161-318 [with a rich bibliography].

beyond the scope of this article, so I will only give a brief summary here.⁸³ The original population, probably predominantly Iberian (Georgian) in the north (K'lardjeti/Kəgharjk), and Armenian in the south (T'ao/Tayk), had been greatly diminished by the heavy Arab domination. At the end of the 8th century, this decline was reversed by a double population flow: an Iberian immigration from Kartli and an Armenian immigration from Vaspurakan. The principality gradually became a politically autonomous entity, nominally subject to Byzantium. The rapid spread of Orthodoxy, under the influence of the energetic Iberian monk Grigol (Gregory) of Khandzta (late 8th–first half of the 9th century), integrated the population into the Georgian community, both confessionally and culturally. This population displayed both strong architectural creativity and notions of identity, particularly in the second half of the 10th century and the first decades of the 11th century. Upon the death of its grand prince, David the Curopalate, in 1001, the principality was annexed to Byzantium, and its southern districts became part of a new Byzantine province, the theme of Iberia. After long clashes with Byzantium, the northern districts were gradually attached to Georgia, which then became completely unified.⁸⁴

Let us return now to the blind arcade and its treatment in the principality of T'ao/Tayk. With regard to the general arrangement of the blind arcade, a new formula was developed, which would often be used in Georgian architecture and distinguished itself from that of Armenia. It was applied to gable façades (at the end of volumes covered by a two-pitched roof), and its height increased gradually, following the incline of the roofs. It can be seen in T'ao-K'larjeti, in the second half of the 10th century, at Oshk'(i)⁸⁵ (southern and eastern branches of the cross), Chordvan(k)/Otkhta Ek'lesia,⁸⁶ Parkhar/Parkhali,⁸⁷ and then at T'beti (late 10th–early 11th century)⁸⁸ and Ishkhan(i) (1032) (**fig. 18**).⁸⁹ From T'ao it passed to Georgia proper and was used on the cathedral of King Bagrat' in Kutaisi and on several other Georgian monuments of the first half of the 11th century (Sveti-Tskhoveli and Alaverdi cathedrals, Samtavisi, Samtavro church in Mtskheta).⁹⁰ In Armenia, however, the blind colonnade-arcade forms a horizontal band, except on the central part of the façade, where it was enlarged and raised.

⁸³ Summaries of the province's history, based on an abundant bibliography often used with a bias toward the Armenian on one side and the Georgian on the other, can be found in the following studies: Marut'yan, *Tiran, Khoraguyn Hayk'* [Profound Armenia], Yerevan 1978, 168-171; Bérizdé, *Monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 18-24, 217-223; Katvallyan, Maksim, "Tayk" and "Curopalate of Tayk", in: *Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia*, 11, Yerevan 1985, 559-561; Tokarskij Nikolaj, *Iz istorii srednevekovogo stroitel'stva v Tajkskom knjazhestve*, Yerevan 1988, 33-35, 49-54; Khoshtaria, *Udzvelesi monast'rebi sakartveloshi*, 49-56. A detailed, up-to-date bibliography on T'ao/Tayk's history can be found in: Bayram, Fahriye, *A brief history and surveys*, in: *Giviashvili / Akder, The Georgian Kingdom*, 39-54; however, Armenian publications and references to the Armenian historical stratum are almost absent.

⁸⁴ A note on the toponyms in the province of T'ao-K'larjeti (in Georgian) or Tayk-Kəgharjk (in Armenian): in order to make a lesser-known historical stratum visible to the reader, the author indicates the Armenian form of the toponyms, alongside the more familiar Georgian name. Often, the difference is minimal: a final -i is all that is needed to go from Armenian "Ishkhan" and "Oshk" to Georgian "Ishkhani" and "Oshk'i." In the case of "Parkhar" (Arm.) and "Parkhali" (Geo.), similarly, the difference is barely noticeable. On the other hand, in the following case, while the meaning is more-or-less the same ("Four churches" or "Fourth monastery"), the forms are different: Chordvan or Chordvank (Arm.), Otkhta ek'lesia (Geo.) [Dört kilise (Tur.)].

⁸⁵ Dvali, Tamaz / Andghuladze, Nugzar / Silogava, Valeri, *Oshki, 10th century architectural monument (in Georgian and English)*, Tbilisi 2009.

⁸⁶ Dvali, Tamaz / Andghuladze, Nugzar, *Otkhta eklesia (in Georgian and English)*, Tbilisi 2011.

⁸⁷ Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 167-168, 304-305.

⁸⁸ Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 175-177, 309-310.

⁸⁹ Dvali, Tamaz / Andghuladze, Nugzar / Devdariani, Fler / Silogava, Valeri, *Ishkhani (in Georgian and English)*, Tbilisi 2010.

⁹⁰ Mépisachvili / Tsintsadzé, *L'art de la Géorgie ancienne*, 142-145 (Kutaisi), 146-147 (Alaverdi), 150-153 (Svet'i-Tskhoveli), 158 (Samtavisi), 162 (Samtavro).

In terms of device configuration, the T'ao/Tayk region used both types. First, the (slightly) projecting colonnade-arcade (with a modest treatment) is found on the earliest examples, predating the mid-10th century: Bana/Banak,⁹¹ Kyagmis-Alti,⁹² and the remnants of an "octaconch" at T'beti,⁹³ as well as on several drums (Opiza,⁹⁴ Khandzta/Khantsta,⁹⁵ Dolisq'ana,⁹⁶ Ekeki/Egrek,⁹⁷ Yeni Rabat⁹⁸). Second, the row of flat, arched niches separated by flat "pilasters" (the Trier and Ravenna principle) is found on several 10th-century monuments: Opiza, Parkhar/Parkhali,

[p. 60, fig. 17]

Chordvan(k)/Otkhta Ek'lesia, Chala/Jala,⁹⁹ and Yeni Rabat (not only on its façades but also on the inner face of its drum,¹⁰⁰ like in 7th-century Armenia's Aygeshat and Talin). This series of flat niches under the arcade reveals a kinship between the monuments of T'ao/Tayk and the Byzantine architecture of the 10th–11th century. Although, as we saw, the principle had already existed in the region for a long time and had been used in some 7th-century Armenian churches and several times in Georgia since the 8th-9th century.

But some monuments are intriguing because they possess a combination of the two types. The first stage appears on the façades of Oshk'(i) (963–973). A large colonnade-arcade (with a single shaft) is projecting from the façades, but the spaces under the arches are slightly recessed. This shift between the two levels of the façade is made more noticeable by the addition of a second roll under each of the arches and, in continuity with this roll, of a vertical step on each "inner" side of the half-columns. This principle is significantly amplified, a few decades later, in T'beti (late 10th century) and especially in Ishkhan(i) (1032), where the difference between the two levels is bigger and underlined by a multiplication of rolls on the arches and of jambs on the half-columns.¹⁰¹

The Georgian cathedral of Kutaisi (1003) bears a juxtaposition of two

[p. 61, fig. 18]

approaches: flat arched niches on the western branch and, on the rest of the façades of the church,¹⁰² the Oshk'(i)-T'beti-Ishkhan(i) formula (there is a contrast between the upper and the lower parts of the façade, signified with a protruding colonnade-arcade). The solution elaborated in Oshk'(i) and developed in T'beti and Ishkhan(i) spread widely in Georgia in the first half of the 11th century and, although less visible, in the first decades of the 12th century in Gelati. We see a reserved use in Armenia on some churches of the first half of the 11th century; it is also present on some monuments of the first decades of the 13th century in the town of Ani (see below).

⁹¹ Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 136-137, 282-283, and pl. 16-18; Mépisachvili / Tsintsadzé, *L'art de la Géorgie*, 95.

⁹² Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 190, fig. 136; 191, 287, and pl. 5.

⁹³ Giviashvili / Khizanishvili, *Medieval Georgian monuments*, 286-292, esp. 288, fig. 3 and 4.

⁹⁴ Giviashvili / Khizanishvili, *Medieval Georgian monuments*, 245-248, esp. 245, fig. 1.

⁹⁵ Giviashvili / Khizanishvili, *Medieval Georgian monuments*, 229-233, esp. 232, fig. 5.

⁹⁶ Giviashvili / Khizanishvili, *Medieval Georgian monuments*, 192-197, esp. 193, fig. 3.

⁹⁷ Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 191-193, 287-288 and pl. 26-27.

⁹⁸ Uygun Yazıcı, *Selda, Façade Articulation and Architectural Ornamentations of the Yeni Rabat Monastery Church*, in: Giviashvili / Akder, *The Georgian Kingdom*, 140-158, esp. 140, 144, 152, fig. 16.

⁹⁹ Bérizdé, *Les monuments de Tao-Klardjéti*, 145, 285, and pl. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Uygun Yazıcı, *Façade Articulation*, 140, 145, fig. 3, and 150, fig. 9; Giviashvili / Khizanishvili, *Medieval Georgian monuments*, 298-301, especially 299, fig. 2, and 301, fig. 5.

¹⁰¹ Dvali / Andghuladze / Devdariani / Silogava, *Ishkhani*, 5, 16, 22, 27.

¹⁰² Mépisachvili / Tsintsadzé, *L'art de la Géorgie*, 142, 143, 145.

New Interpretations during the Period of Queen Tamar

After the Seljuk Turkish invasion, in 13th-century Armenia, the blind colonnade-arcade, in its traditional, prominent form, maintained its presence on its favorite vessel, the drum, but was found relatively less frequently on the façades. In the town of Ani, presumably to maintain a harmony with the architecture of royal Bagratid period, the churches built in the early 13th century were decorated, on their façades, with elegant colonnades-arcades. They are distinguished by the richness of their decoration, with — in a distant echo of 7th-century Zvartnots — an abundantly ornamented upper horizontal band. Another feature is perhaps a reminiscence of Byzantine forms or was inspired by the creations of the T'ao/Tayk region and, at the same time, an original development of the trend observed at the beginning of the 11th century: a horizontal decorative band that overcomes the arcades or even the arcade itself is placed at the level of the top of the facade, while the bottom is slightly "hollowed out". This was the case at the church of the Girl's Fortress (early 13th century),¹⁰³ at the Convent of the Virgins (before 1215),¹⁰⁴ and at Saint Gregory of Tigran Honents (1215) (**fig. 19**).¹⁰⁵ Perhaps imitating what was done in the capital, this principle is repeated here and there in the provinces, for example in the monastery of Dadivank in Artsakh.¹⁰⁶ On the brick drum of Kirants (13th century), the colonnade-arcade takes the form of a row of "Islamizing" niches (in their form, material, and decoration), which are very unusual.¹⁰⁷ In most other cases, outside of Ani, on the Armenian façades of the 13th–14th century, the blind colonnade-arcade metamorphoses into new forms, sometimes very original, with polylobed or complex angular lines. These vigorously molded compositions

[p. 62, fig. 19, 20]

[p. 63]

are often associated with a large cross that dominates the façade, probably borrowed from Georgian models.¹⁰⁸ In Georgia, we observe roughly the same evolution as in Armenia, but in a more accentuated way: after the 11th century, the blind arcade tends to become very rare and almost to disappear, except on the drums. Its last real manifestations can be seen in the 12th century at Gelati Monastery¹⁰⁹ and Ikorta.¹¹⁰ On a few rare façades of later periods, it is replaced by simplified compositions.

We mentioned above the Muslim mausoleums of Asia Minor (13th–14th century), which also carry blind colonnades-arcades (**fig. 20**). It is most likely from the model of drums and churches of the "Armenia/T'ao/Georgia" region that the blind colonnade-arcade (slightly

¹⁰³ Donabédian, Patrick, Ani Multicultural Milieu and New Trends in Armenian Architecture during Queen Tamar's Period, in: Skhirtladze, Zaza (ed.), Ani at the Crossroads. International Conference, 17-18 November 2017, Tbilisi 2019, 121-152, esp. 130, fig. 6b.

¹⁰⁴ Donabédian, Patrick, Ani Multicultural Milieu, 130, fig. 6a.

¹⁰⁵ Kalas, Veronika / Özkaya, İsmail Y., The Georgian Aspects of Medieval Architecture at Ani in the Thirteenth century: The church of Tigran Honents and the Mosque of Minuchir, in: Skinner, Peter / Tumanishvili, Dimitri (eds.), Vakhtang Beridze 1st International Symposium of Georgian Culture. Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures. June 21-29, 2008, Georgia, Tbilisi 2009, 211-216; Donabédian, Patrick, Ani Multicultural Milieu, 129, fig. 5, and 131, fig. 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ayvazyan, Samvel, Dadivank'i verakangnumə, 1997-2011 t't'. (The restoration of Dadivank, 1997-2011), Yerevan 2015, 29, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Donabédian, Patrick, Parallélisme, convergences et divergences entre Arménie et Géorgie en architecture et sculpture architecturale (2), in: Augé, Isabelle [et alii] (eds.), L'Arménie et la Géorgie en dialogue avec l'Europe, du Moyen Âge à nos jours, Paris, 2016, 19-130, especially 79, pl. 19.

¹⁰⁸ Donabédian, Patrick, Ani Multicultural Milieu, 148, fig. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Donabédian, Parallélisme, convergences et divergences, 21, pl. 1.

¹¹⁰ Donabédian, Parallélisme, convergences et divergences, 23, pl. 2.

protruding arches mainly on twin half-columns), together with the architectural volume of a cone on a cylinder, was applied to these mausoleums (*türbes* or *kümbets*). The material, profiles, proportions, technique, and style are almost identical and were probably done by craftsmen from that region.

Thus, the blind colonnade-arcade, and its variations, having been solidly inscribed in the Armenian and Georgian tradition since the early Christian period, became a characteristic element of these architectures. It remained present over the centuries, especially on the upper part of the sanctuary, the drum, a trait which reminds us of the presumed meaning of this form—a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem. Its use decreased in the late Middle Ages and regained a new breath in the 20th and 21st centuries. At the same time, it is a link between the South Caucasus and all the Christian cultures, as well as those of Islam. Finally, it is an element of identification, specific to the South Caucasian cultures, and with features belonging to each of them.

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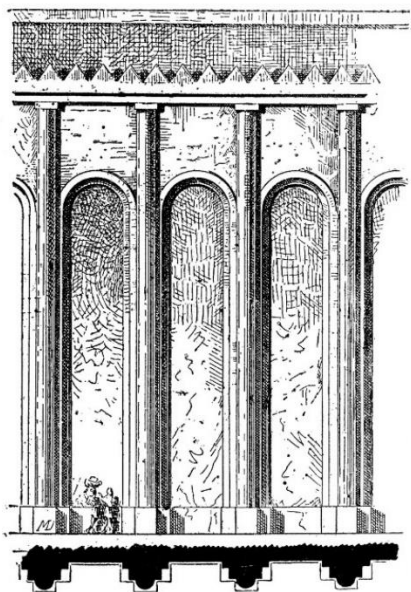


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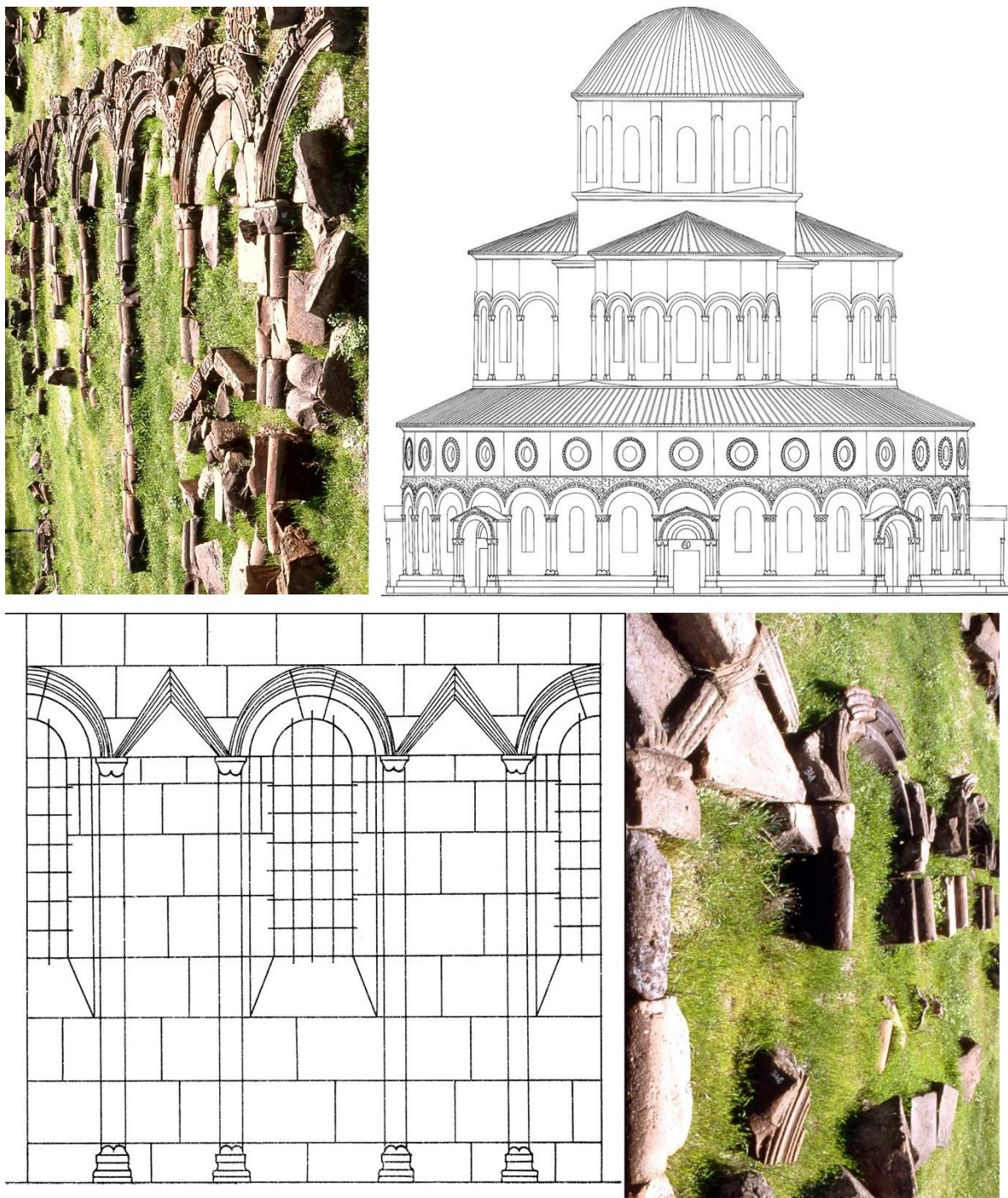


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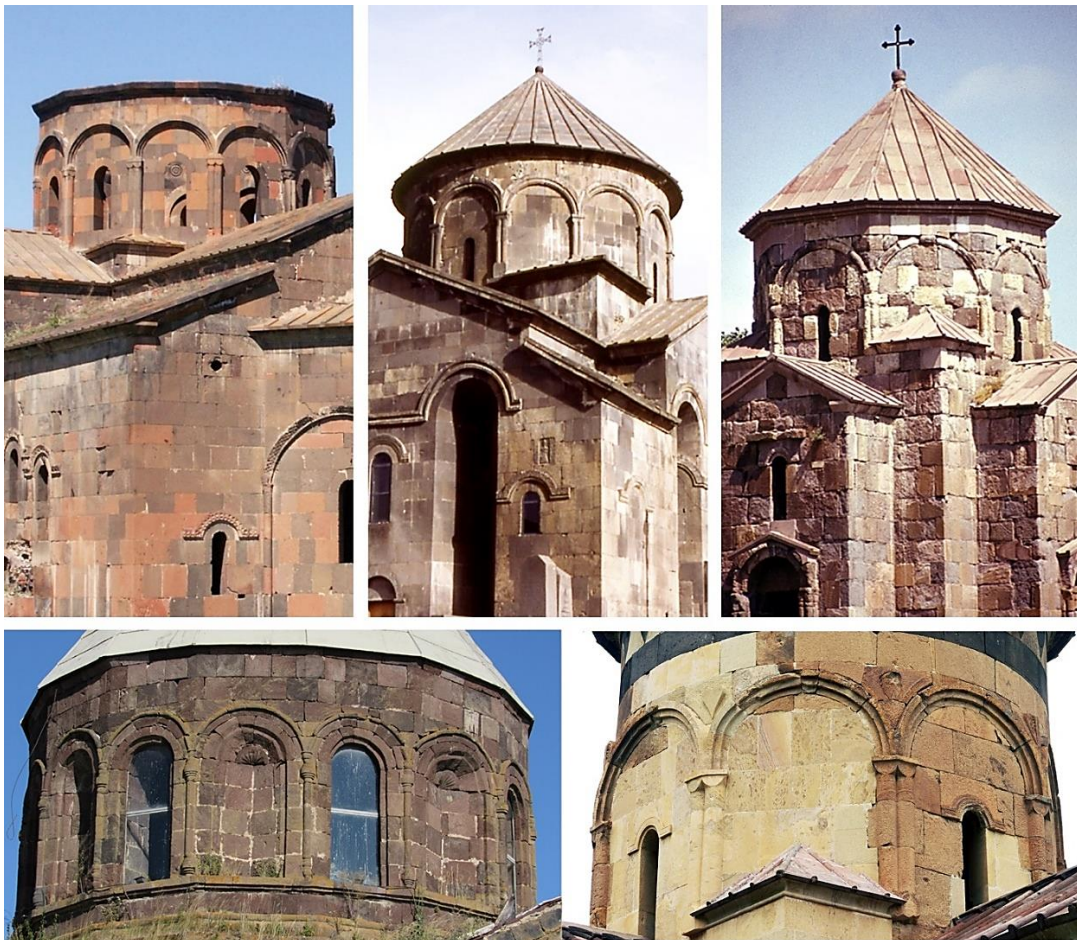


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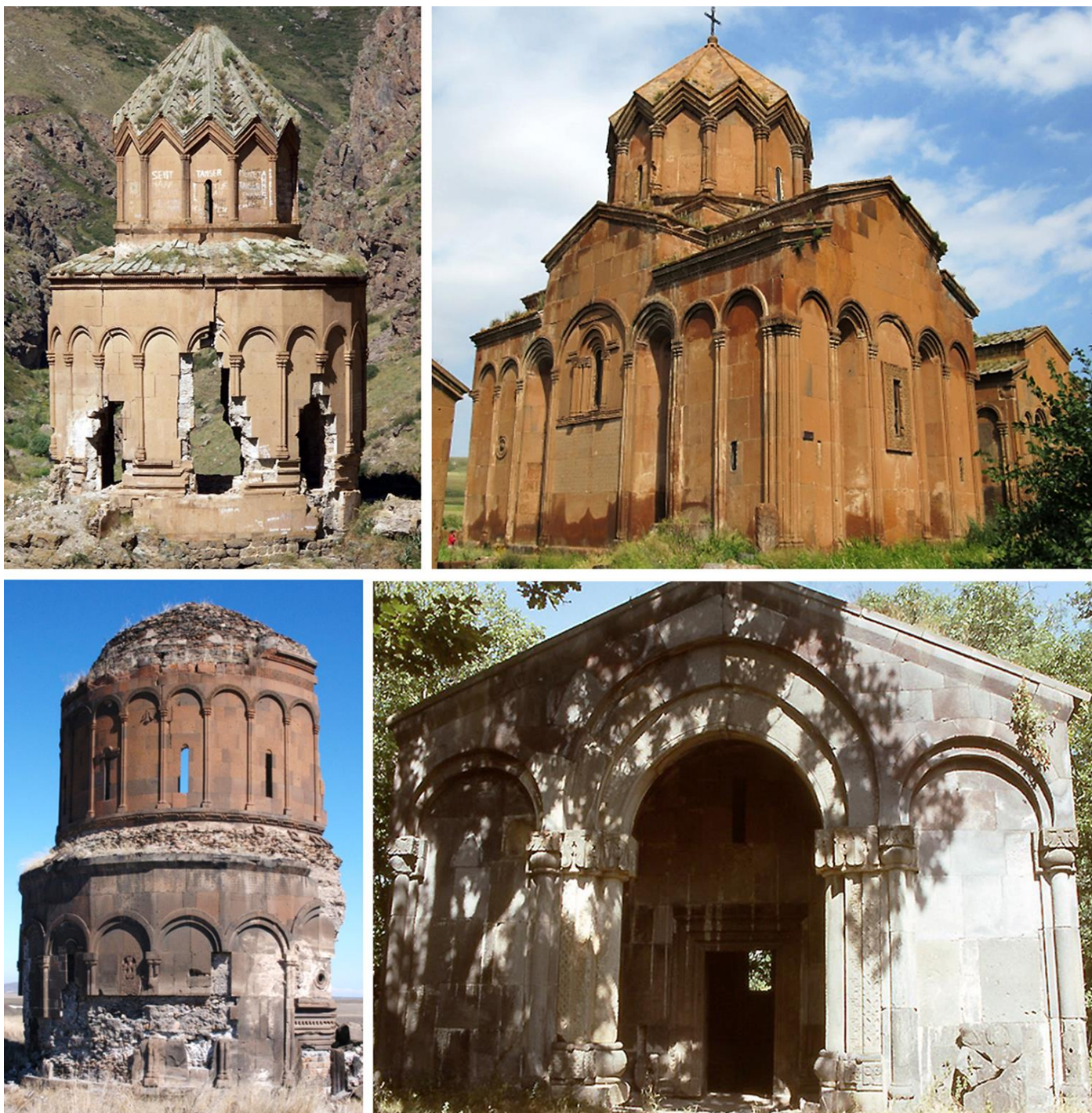


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