

Byzantine Influences on the Otkhta Monastic Church in Tao-Klarjeti: A Social Research Article

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, Georgians have always held the southern gates of the Caucasus in their hands and gained a great commercial power in some periods, therefore they were invaded by the great powers of the period in almost every century. Throughout history, they have been exposed to Roman, Sassanid-Persian, Byzantine, Arab and Turkish raids. In the Middle Ages, a power struggle between the Arabs and the Byzantines had a negative impact on Georgia. Especially as a result of the great Arab raids in the seventh century, the Kingdom of Iberia weakened and was disintegrated with the establishment of an emirate in Tbilisi in 736 (Margarian & Asatrian, 2004). In this period of turmoil, the heir of Iberia, Ashot I (813-826) (Toumanoff, 1956), took the title of "curopolates" (Kazdhan, 1991) from the Byzantine Emperor and came to Klarjeti, which was his father's legacy, and proclaimed his kingdom (Metreveli, 2014). He found and repaired the Ardnuç Castle, which was built by the Iberian King Vahtang Gorgaslan (Huxley, 1982) in the 5th century, had a city built on the outskirts of the rest, and strengthened the economy by re-establishing villages

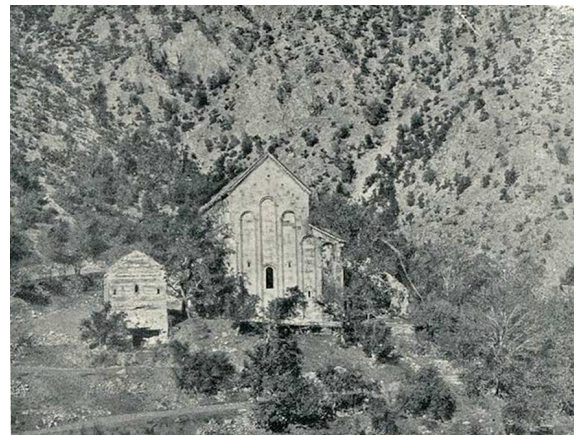
destroyed by epidemics such as typhoid (Canöz, 2019). Due to the support of Byzantium and being a closed area to raids, his kingdom grew rich in a short time. After his death, his kingdom expanded to the inner regions of Kartli such as Tao, Javakheti, Samske, Adjara, Lazeti, Tsalka. During this rich and peaceful period, many monasteries and churches were built in the valleys of Artvin (Metreveli, 2014). One of these churches is the Otkhta Monastery (Dörtkilise Monastery), which is located in the Tekkale Village hamlet of Artvin's Yusufeli district, which is the subject of our article.

1. THE HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY AND THE CONSTRUCTION PHASES OF THE CHURCH

Otkhta (Dörtkilise/Tekkale) Monastery is located in a valley in the hamlet of Tekkale Village in Artvin Province, Yusufeli District. Remains of the church, dining hall, seminar room, workshops, four chapels and other places of the monastery have survived from the monastery (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Its current state and its situation in 1917¹



¹ http://www.dzeglebi.ge/dzeglebi/o/otxta/otxta_02.jpg and from the Takaisvili archive.

Asomtavruli:

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Transcription: "Jesus glorify King David Kuropalat".

2. PLAN AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Approx. 18.00x28.00 m from the outside. building with dimensions; It was built with a three-nave basilical plan (Fig.2). The naos is divided into three naves with four rows of cruciform piers. The middle nave is higher and wider than the side naves. The naves are connected to each other by round arches. A gallery

in the middle of the apse. In the lower part of the window, there are two niches in the north and south. Pastophorion cells are located on both sides of the apse. Pastophorion cells are arranged in two layers. The cells are divided into two sections by a wall in the middle. Deep niches were dug in the eastern corner of the interior rooms in the apse. The entrances of the Pastophorion cells are given from the side naves.

The narthex(?) or burial chamber in the west was designed in a rectangular plan in the north-south direction. It is divided into three parts with an internal pier. In the lower part of the middle section, a rectangular-planned and vaulted crypt is placed. To the west of the place are other places connected with the monastery.

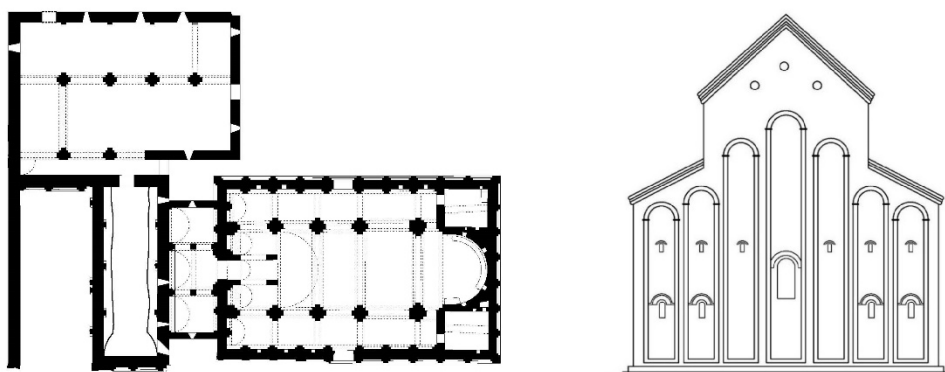


Fig. 2. Plan of the monastery and the east façade of the church (Canöz's Archive).

floor was added to the west of the naos, located in the north and south directions. The gallery was supported by two small piers apart from solid cross-like piers. The apse to the east of the naos; It is designed as a half-round inside and is limited by a flat wall from the outside. A large round-arched window is placed

The monastery complex is located on a sloping land in the east-west direction. Due to the slope of the land, the church was seated on a stepped platform. This platform can be partially seen on the east and north facades. Due to the fact that it was empty for many years, the south façade of the building remained under the ground. Soil, stone, etc. from the hills. mate-



Fig. 3. General view from the north (Canöz's Archive).



Fig.4. The south façade of the church, the entrance gate and the arcade layout (Canöz's Archive).

rials were filled from the south door into the middle of the building. Due to the intense destruction, many cladding stones on the facades were removed. The naos is double chamfered, and the side naves are covered with a sloping roof. The roof covering has deteriorated to a large extent (Fig.3).

When we look at it from the point of view of the façade layout, the east façade has the same characteristics and quality as the west façade, and the south façade is similar to the north façade. On the east and west facades, arcades rising gradually towards the middle nave can be seen. The interiors of the arcades were designed with crenellated windows arranged in two-floor order, and aesthetic concerns were eliminated with arch layouts. A rectangular window with a round arch was placed on the east façade, which is the apse façade, at the level of the middle nave, emphasizing the "holiness of the east".

Undoubtedly, the Renaissance understanding of the period and the perception of pure beauty are of great

importance in this symmetry. As a feature of the plan typology of Georgian church architecture, the entrance doors are placed in the middle of the north and south facades. While the gate in the south is heavily damaged, it is more solid than the other in the north. The northern entrance door draws attention with its three-stage arch system.

3. DECORATION FEATURES

The decorations in the Othta Monastery Church mostly consist of sashes on the window arches and arcades. The decorations in the building are mainly located on the eastern façade. In terms of genre, it is seen that stone decorations and wall paintings are included. In stone decorations, mostly herbal (palmette, rumi, curled branch, etc.) and geometric (knitted, interlaced, etc.) compositions were preferred. The murals are only seen on the apse wall.



Fig.5. A view from the north side (Canöz's Archive).

No detailed explanation will be given here for stone ornaments. Since our subject is direct interaction, it would be a more accurate and appropriate explanation to give a few examples for decorations according to their types. Among the examples of stone decoration that have survived to the present day, the window arch decorations on the east façade are among the examples that can be given.

(Fig.7). The paints in the western corner have largely deteriorated today.

In addition to vegetal and geometric depictions, cross reliefs are included in the ornament groups. Cross reliefs, on the other hand, are grouped separately as Greek Cross and Maltese Cross (Fig.8).



Fig.6. *Ornaments on the east façade (Canöz's Archive).*

The reciprocal "S" curved motifs on the window arch of the diaconicon room and the interlacing motifs consisting of circles on the arch surface of the apse window are important examples for stone ornaments (Fig.6).

Perhaps the most interesting one among these stone ornaments is the motif that Turkish researchers call "çintemani" (Korkut, 2018)(fig.9). There are many debates about the origins and identification of this



Fig.7. *Bicolor paint decorations on the east façade (Canöz's Archive).*

In addition, it appears as a period feature in the decorations made with paints. Although the arches of the windows on the arcade surfaces of the north nave, which reflect on the eastern façade, were kept simple, the ornament program was carried out by obtaining a passionflower motif with blue and red root paints

motif, which is seen on the window pediment on the south façade (Bulut, 2018).

There are frescoes only in the apse part of the church. A The frescoes, which are largely destroyed today, were carved in sections on the apse half-round and



Fig.8. *Ornaments on the west façade (Canöz's Archive).*



Fig. 9. *The motifs of Çintemani (Canöz's Archive).*

apse dome. The frescoes are located on five generations horizontally. Based on old publications, "Christ the Redeemer" is depicted in the sky inside the mandorla on the apse dome. Alongside the Messiah, the scene called "The Hand of God" is featured in this episode (first episode) (Skhirtladze, *The Frescoes of Othkta Eklesia*, 2009). In the middle of the second part, the holy throne placed in a halo is carried by two angels. In the scene defined as "Hetoimasa"², there are sixteen angel figures on both sides of the throne (Skhirtladze, *The Frescoes of Othkta Eklesia*, 2009). In the third section, which coincides with the middle of the apse, there are frescoes on the Virgin Theotokos and the Apostles (Skhirtladze, *The Frescoes of Othkta Eklesia*, 2009). Today, however, these frescoes have largely disappeared. In the sash in the fourth section, there is an apse window in the middle. The murals on the apse window have survived to the present day, mostly intact. On the right and left of the window, the prophet and church fathers are depicted in their traditional

the figures belong to. In the lower part of the apse, there are scenes from the lives of Jesus and Mary, which have largely disappeared today. Researchers have listed these scenes as follows: Appearance of Jesus to Women, Anastasis, Transfiguration, Baptism, Crucifixion, Birth, Annunciation, Presentation of Mary to the Temple, Mary at the Empty Tomb (Skhirtladze, 1995).

The frescoes in the fourth section consist of wall paintings that have survived to the present day and contain the most remarkable subjects. The first figure on the left of the window represents King David, while the figure on the right of the window represents King Solomon (Skhirtladze, 1995). The figures that follow them are the church fathers. Perhaps the most striking element at the point of iconographic analysis is the depiction of King David as a young man and the emphasis on individuals with gray halos. Even from this point of view, it shows that a rich "Tao-Klarjetian



Fig. 10. *The Church Presentation of St. Zion³ (Canöz's Archive)*

clothes. The figures are depicted standing facing the audience. A total of 16 figures are placed, eight on the right and left. It cannot be determined exactly who

Painting School" (Soltes, 1999; Didebulidze, 2006) has emerged in the region, which has the power to distinguish itself stylistically from Byzantium. In addition to these, the figures are dressed in clothes such as *dibetesion*, *epicrochelion*, *stikharion*, *epimanikia*, *loros* and *omophorion* (Kılıç, 2004), which are often worn by religious characters in Byzantium.

² Hetoimasa consists of an empty throne figure decorated with some motifs. In Christian Art it is associated with the figure of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Often there is a cross motif on the throne and an open Bible. See: Alexander P. Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, II, p. 936.

³ Illustration taken from Zaza Skhirtladze.

There are three separate scenes on the inner surface of the window. “The Church Presentation of St. Zion” is placed on the upper part, “King Melchizedek’s Eucharist Rite” on the lower left part, and “Moses and the Ten Commandments” scene is placed on the right part (Skhirtladze, 1995).

The most discussed scene is The Church Presentation of St. Zion (Skhirtladze, 1995)(Fig.10). On the right side of the figure’s head, “Sion” is written in the Asomtavruli alphabet, largely destroyed. The great destruction of the name engraved on the side of his head, by researchers, the figure of St. Sophia, St. Katherina or the Georgian Queen St. Nana has also caused it to be interpreted (Michel & Thierry, 1977; Skhirtladze, 1995; Dvali, 2011). The figure holds a three-aisled basilica, similar to a model of Othta, between its hands. As a result of their studies on the saint figures holding church models in their hands, the researchers came to the conclusion that this scene is related to the sanctity of the church and that the saint is the guardian of the church (Dvali, 2011; Skhirtladze, 1995).

4. MATERIAL AND TECHNIQUE

In general, smooth volcanic cut stones were used in the construction of the church. The brick materials in the arches in the interior are quite remarkable. As a construction technique, the infill wall technique, which is frequently repeated in the region, was applied. It was mixed with mortar and rubble stones inside, and it was covered with quality smooth cut stones on the outside. The interior is covered with coarse cut stones and bricks. It is seen that low relief and carving techniques are applied in stone decorations. In addition to these, it is seen that the “painting” technique has emerged with the use of ornament compositions obtained by painting the stone surfaces in different colors.

5. EVALUATION OF BYZANTINE INFLUENCES DETECTED IN THE CHURCH

5.1. Plan

The basilical plan scheme applied in the Othta Monastery Church has been a scheme encountered in almost every region since the early periods in the Byzantine lands. In most of the basilicas built, the nave was emphasized and elevated. Longitudinally developing schemes have been indispensable elements of basilicas. Pastophorion cells and narthexes were the main elements in the basilicas built in the Byzantine lands.

Othta Monastery Church, with its plan scheme, incorporates all the features of Byzantine type three-nave basilicas. However, when evaluated as of the date of construction, it is seen that different plan types are popular in the Byzantine lands. However, it would be wrong to consider the historical order as the most basic in determining the influence of the structures on each other. Because in this structure, all the features of the Byzantine type basilica scheme can be followed (Canöz, 2019).

Othta Monastery Church has the effects of basilica style mostly in Syria and its surroundings (Fig. 11). In particular, highlighting the longitudinal nave phenomenon in the building, ensuring the separation of the nave with the numerous piers arranged in two rows, keeping the middle nave twice as wide as the side naves are some of the most basic features of the early Syrian basilica style (Krautheimer & Ćurčić, 1986).

The fact that the pastophorion cells of the Othta Monastery Church have two floors and a gallery floor reveal their differences with the Syrian type basilicas. Pastophorion cells in Syrian type basilicas are mostly arranged in a single layer.

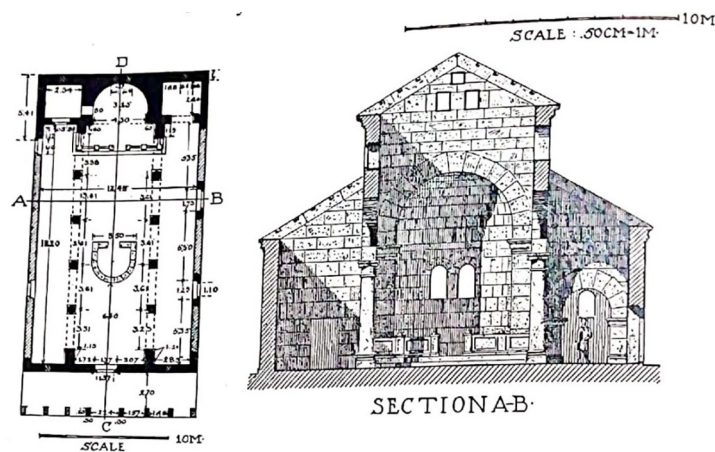


Fig. 11: Plan and Section of the Kharab Shams Basilica in Aleppo (Butler's Archive).

From Syrian basilicas; The proportion of the side naves to the middle nave of the Kharab Shams Basilica (5th century) (Butler, 1929) in Aleppo is similar to the Othta Monastery Church in terms of many other features, such as the clear light floor, the flat reflection of the apse wall, and the connection of the piers to each other with huge round arches. Similarly, Dar Qita St. Paul and Moses Church (418), Umm-es-Surab Monastery Church (489), and Rusafa St. Sergius Basilica (520) (Krautheimer & Ćurčić, 1986). The monumen-

a crypt. It comes to mind that its multi-functional and worship-oriented structure such as the food warehouse, the burial area and the narthex may have emerged as a place where liturgical items used in the Eucharist ritual are generally stored (İşler, 2010). When this space is evaluated in terms of form, it reminds of the narthexes in Byzantine churches and the jamatuns⁴ seen in Armenian architecture. The practice of burial in jamatun, which is frequently seen in Armenian architecture, strengthens the possibility that the



Fig. 12. Syria Basilica of Mushabbak³

tal appearance, the systematic of the materials used and the similarities in the plan typology prove that the Georgians learned “church building” by the Syrian Church Fathers a few hundred years before the construction of this church. At the same time, he conveys to us that although a few centuries have passed, the architectural tradition has been preserved by clinging to it.

5. 2. Architectural Elements

5. 2. 1. Additional Space (The Narthex?)

The additional space to the west of the church should be considered as a burial chamber rather than a narthex. Similar texture patterns are also seen in contemporary Tao-Klarceti churches. The arrangement of these adjacent to the church suggests that a narthex may have been used. However, it is not known exactly for what purpose these additional spaces were built. There is a wine jar buried in the ground in the annex of the Khakhuli Monastery Church. From this point of view, it is understood that it actually functions as a supply warehouse. One of the statements put forward is that the additional space in the Othta Monastery Church functions as a burial chamber because it has

additional space of the Othta Monastery Church was built for similar purposes. However, these additional spaces seen in Byzantium and Armenians have an independent door. However, it complicates the situation as there is no such practice in the church we examined. Their mere association with naos strengthens the possibility that it could have been used purely for religious purposes (Djobadze, 1992).

5. 2. 2. Naos

The spatial setup of the Othta Monastery Church is a continuation of the traditional early basilica styles. Here, the spatial setup of the monumental three-aisled basilica scheme of Byzantine architecture stands in all its splendor. The nave, which is the main place of worship emphasizing the bema and the apse,

⁴ In Armenian church architecture, these places called gavit or jamatun, which are added to the west of the main church and can sometimes be designed larger than the church, were basically built for religious purposes. In addition, it is stated by researchers that it is used for socio-political needs.. See: Y. Karaca, Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi Hristiyan Dini Mimarisinde Jamatun Yapıları, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yüzüncü Yıl University, 2004.

⁵ <https://syrian-heritage.org/mushabbak-byzantine-basilica-general-view-from-south-west/>

is emphasized like the basilicas of the Syria and Capadocia regions. The monumental cross-like piers separating the naves are connected to each other by round arches. Qalb Lozeh, Al-Mushabbak (Fig.12), Kharab Shams and other Syrian-type monumental basilicas have similar spatial setups to Othta, if not contemporary.

In the buildings here, the middle nave has been raised, the light floor has become clear and plenty of windows have been used. However, the brick arches and windows seen on the northern and southern facades of the side naves bring to mind the alternating brick and stone structures that are commonly seen around Istanbul and Bursa. The tomb chapel application, which we see in the early Syrian structures in Byzantine architecture, is in a way similar to Othta. From a fictional point of view, the fact that there is a crypt in both applications and that they are dependent on the church also shows that Byzantium could be effective in this regard. When we look at it from a general point of view, the Syrian influences in terms of architectural form and plan typology strengthen the possibility that this place may be of Syrian origin. As a result, it would be a more correct approach to search for the typological and fictional meanings of the space in Early Byzantine architecture.

5. 2. 3. Apse-Bema

The bema, emphasized by a platform in Othta, is similarly arranged in almost all Byzantine buildings. It is unthinkable for the Georgians, who had similar liturgical traditions until the 10th century, to design a holy place like the bema differently from the Byzantines (Canöz, 2019).

The apse setup was designed with three or five naves from the inside in the cultures around the Mediterranean, reflected outside or limited as a flat wall according to the architectural understanding (Leeming, 2018). The apse of the Othta Monastery Church is arranged in a semicircle from the inside and is limited by a flat wall from the outside. The tradition of concealing the semicircular apses from the outside and projecting them out as a flat wall constitutes the stylistic feature of Anatolian and Syrian churches. Kharab Shams Basilica (5th century), Djeradeh Church (5th century) and Ruweha Basilica (5th century) in Syria are similar examples in terms of apse forms (Butler, 1929). Alahan Monastery Eastern Church (6th century) (Gough, 1968), which is one of the structures in Anatolia, and Anavarza chapels and churches from the Rough Cilicia Region (5-8th centuries) (Edwards, 1983) are some of the similar examples that are limited from the outside in the form of a flat wall. As a result, it can be clearly stated that the apse applications, which are

reflected outside as a flat wall, are of Byzantine origin. The fact that the tradition has not been spoiled here also proves that Byzantium is still an important power center in terms of culture.

Apart from the examples mentioned above, the apse walls of some Assyrian churches, especially in the Tur Abdin Region, are bordered by a flat wall from the outside. The similar design of the eastern walls of Syrian churches, which share common borders with Northern Syria, is interpreted as a product of a regional style (Korkut, 2019). Among these, Midyat Mor Gabriel Monastery Anastasia Church (5th century), Midyat Mor Abrohom Monastery Mor Hobil Church (5th century), Midyat Altıntaş Village (Keferzi) Mor İzozoel Church (700) and Midyat Anıtlı Village (Hah) Virgin Mary Church (740) can be given as an example with apse forms (Keseser, 2002). Thus, we see that the ancient tradition of the Syrian region became Christian and over time created an area of influence from the south to the north, and its borders reached the Black Sea (Leeming, 2018). All these factors show that the traditionalist structure in the Middle Ages did not actually have a radical view, and in this context, borders and art were perceived differently from today's mentality.

5. 2. 4. Pastophorion Cells

In the Othta Monastery Church, a wall divides the pastophorion cells in the middle. However, these walls descend from the top to half of the body walls and do not reach the floor. From this point of view, these spaces are arranged in two parts within themselves. This two-story arrangement was repeated in the cathedral-sized churches in the region. Pastophorion cells, which are the starting point or protector of many liturgies in the main churches of monasteries where religious sensitivity is more intense, are the dimension of religious perception reflected in architecture. There are also pastophorion cells in Byzantine churches.

Byzantine church architecture has always had a strong liturgy. From its beginning until its collapse, it tried to shape many cultures that it was a neighbor of through its own liturgical perceptions. It is undoubtedly inevitable that these shaping works influenced Georgian church architecture. Considering that the liturgical traditions in the Byzantine and Georgian churches began to separate after the 10th century, we can say that the construction of the pastophorion cells traditionally passed from Byzantine architecture to Georgian architecture.

The closest examples with their two-storey layout can be seen in churches in Syria. Of these; Syria Qalat Seman St. Simon Stylites Monastery Baptistery (476-490) (Gary, 1982), Gerasa St. Theodore's Basilica (496) (Ken-

nedy, 2006), Rusafa St. The Basilica of Sergius (520) (Burns, 2009), the Basilica of the Virgin Mary of Sheikh Suleiman (602) (Burns, 2009) and the Basilica of Bishop Genesios of Gerasa (611) (Scheck, 1997) have similar characteristics with the two-storey pastophorion cells.

5.3. Ornaments

Georgian churches have a strong tradition of stone decoration in the Middle Ages. However, most of the stone decorations in the Othta Monastery Church were destroyed. When we look generally, compositions with herbal characters such as palmette, curled branch, rumi, lotus and geometric compositions such as crossing and knitting have been the main characters of stone decoration. When we look at the early periods of Byzantium, a very high level of workmanship is seen. The rich stone decoration tradition of the ancient world continued until the 8th century, when Byzantium was in partial collapse. During this process, a wide variety of floral and geometric compositional patterns emerged.

Herbal compositions from Byzantium; two column capitals from the Tirilye Panagia Pantobasilissa Church for the curved branch (Mango & Sevckenko, 1973); for palmette, on the column capitals and lintels of the Lycian Alakilise, Karabel and Muskar Churches (6th century) (Serdar, 2010); for rumi the ambon balustrade from the Middle Byzantine period in the Afyon Museum (Parman, 2002); A plate belonging to the Dereagzı Church (9-13th century) (Morganstern, 1986) can be given as an example. Likewise, for geometric compositions; templon architrave and ambon balustrade (10-11th century) in Antalya Archeology Museum for the circle motif (Serdar, 2010); a plate (5-6th century) in Kocaeli Museum for the passage; The column capital of the İznik Koimesis Church (9-13th century) (Dennert, 1997) can be given as an example for knot & knitting.

In addition to the geometric characters, the depictions of the cross, which is the holy of Christianity, also found a place in the stone decoration. There are three Greek and Maltese Cross motifs in the Othta Monastery Church. Two of them are made with low relief technique, while the third is made with paint. It is unthinkable that the depiction of the cross, which is seen in almost all architectural areas of Christianity, did not exist in Byzantium as well. Of course, at this point, the existence of the interaction dimension is open to discussion. However, when evaluated in terms of form and typology, these decorations, which are considered as "Greek" and "Maltese" crosses, do not deny their Byzantine roots. Greek and Maltese crosses

on the surfaces of two plates in the Anamur Museum can be given as an example (Aydin, 2008).

Along with stone decoration, wall paintings have an important place among the decoration elements. The works that are the product of the painting style called Tao-Klarceti Painting School were mostly in connection with the Byzantine world. In particular, the stylistic features in the Pontus region, which is connected with Cappadocia, have similar characteristics with the Tao-Klarceti Painting School. Especially in single figures, similarities and interactions increase. For example, for the Prophet Solomon; It has similarities with Göreme Kılıçlar Church (9th century), Ortahisar Cambazlı Church (11th century), Elmalı Church (1190-1200) and Dark Church (13th century) (Koyun, 2014).

The scene of the Presentation of the Church of St. Sion has a very special place among the wall paintings. The figure is depicted as a portrait. The female figure wearing a maphorion-like dress like the Virgin Mary is holding a three-nave basilica. Scenes that repeat each other stylistically are interpreted as an indication of the painting school in the region. Similarly, a scene related to the "Church Presentation of St. Sion" could not be determined in the Byzantine period churches. For this reason, it is thought that this presentation scene has the characteristics of a regional style. The Presentation of King Melchizedek and the Ten Commandments, which are of Torah origin and adorn the apse window, occupy a quite different place in the Byzantine tradition. Torah-themed scenes are not very common in Byzantine art. However, the king is depicted in portrait on the surface of the western arch of the parakhlesion (14th century) of the Chora Monastery Church and on the eastern wall (Akyürek, 1995). Although it is late, it is important for the awareness of the scene. However, when we evaluate it from a stylistic point of view, all of the wall paintings are one of the important works of the "Tao-Klarceti Painting School" skillfully.

CONCLUSION

This church, which is the subject of our article, has survived until today as an important product of interaction built in Artvin in the Middle Ages. Church; It has a great importance in terms of history, architecture and decoration. It is also important in terms of showing the architectural activities of the Tao-Klarceti Kingdom, which ruled in the Middle Ages. When the evaluations made on the plan features are examined, it is seen that the basilical scheme has preserved its Byzantine roots by improving its existence. It is understood that the Byzantine period basilica styles predominate in Syria and its surroundings. At the same

time, it is very important that it blends and presents local styles. When we look at it in terms of architectural design, it can be seen that especially the designs with arcades are of Syrian and Mediterranean origin. However, as the arcades, which contain very intense ornamental elements, expanded their area of influence towards the north, they became simplified and their dimensions grew.

When the spatial setup is examined; The close relationship with the building traditions in Syria, Karman-Montenegro, Cilicia and Cappadocia comes to the fore. Especially the apse arrangements are an important space that shows the dimensions of the effect. The outer boundary of the apse by a flat wall is directly similar to the spatial arrangement of the Syria and Cilicia regions. The fact that the gallery floor, which is common in Byzantium, is not preferred in Georgian churches and that it is located in Othta, makes the layout and design of the place special.

Ornamentation, which developed depending on the architecture, developed within the limits allowed by

the Christian faith. It is seen that the ornamental elements in the buildings in Tao-Klarceti rose especially in the 9th century and a general ornamental style was formed. When evaluated in terms of composition, it is understood that it has connections with Anatolian and Caucasian cultures. In the selection of the motifs, the nature of the geography in which they are located is mostly inspired. However, geometric compositions seem to be in the foreground.

As a result, it is understood that the Othta Monastic Church is in a position to adhere to local traditions and open to the traditional styles of other cultures. The fact that artists and architects do not completely reject external influences can be considered as the main factor that reveals this cultural interaction.

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