Erga Shneurson

Georgian Church Porches
The Gate to the House of God for the Righteous

"This is the gate of the Lord,
the righteous shall enter through it"
Psalms 117:20

Introduction

Wandering through Georgia is an adventurous journey through Land, History, and Culture. Historical landmarks are vividly embodied by the towering churches and cathedrals with their imposing façades, dominating the rural landscape, the centers of villages, and cities. These edifices, with their vast exterior reliefs of foliage, geometric forms, and biblical scenes, present a mystical experience which uplifts the viewer to the heavenly realm and revelation.

Several churches and cathedrals exhibit splendid architecture in their porches. The more I delved into these porches – their structure, decoration, and function – the more I became convinced that they play an essential role in the church, beyond a liminal zone connecting the outside world and a spiritual religious one. The sheltering entrance welcomed those approaching a passage area into the building which fulfilled a symbolic mission in the religious life of the congregation and liturgical rituals, both independently of the church and as an integral part of it.

Façades became a significant element of church decoration and were a widespread phenomenon across medieval Georgia.[1] These beautiful sculptures attracted attention due to their enigmatic presence and their unexpected appearance on the outer church walls. I argue that despite the impression that this was a separate entity which functioned as a liminal area, one should see it as a vital organ of the edifice's wholeness and an integral element of the overall exterior decorative messages of the façades.[2] The function and decoration of porches played a significant role within the Divine

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[1] For a general introduction to the intricate subject of sculptural decoration in Georgian churches see the seminal studies Takaishvili, *Arkheologicheskaya ekspeditsiya*; Barkava (et al.), *Chubinashvili*; Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries*; Beridze, Alpago-Novello and Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Art and Architecture*. For the figural decoration and its political meaning, see the studies of Aladashvili, *Pamyatniki*; Eastmond, *Royal Imagery*. On the façade's decoration read, forthcoming, Shneurson, *Veil of Sacredness*.

[2] Kaffenberger, *Liminal Spaces*, pp. 117-137 designated the porch as liminal space of the church, while emphasizing its importance.

Liturgy of the church,[1] reflecting theological and philosophical theories which evolved throughout the Byzantine Empire and Georgian society over the centuries. Porches occupied a space that served as an entrance vestibule, a liminal zone between the outside world and the inner 'paradisiacal vision' of the sanctuary.

Georgian porches, in most cases, were located at the south façade.[2] Many structures were richly decorated with reliefs, and some wall paintings have partly survived until today. The existence of porches and porticos raises enigmatic questions which I aim to investigate:[3] Why were they decorated so extensively and what message did they convey? Furthermore, why did the initiators pay them so much attention? Assuming that they fulfilled political and geopolitical purposes, what were they? What other functions did they hold, if any? Are there differences in structure, function, and meaning between one place and other? Studying the culture, history, and the façades decoration reveals that Georgia was a sophisticated society in which the written word was a crucial component in its cultural development.[4] It is apparent that the stylistic effect of the edifices was also significant. The decorative system adorning the façades proves it, and even more. The meanings, symbolism, and theological ideas greatly impacted the façades' sculpture throughout the centuries.[5]

Examining Georgian historical architectural and artistic literature, together with current research, one can find various interpretations and information about the porches, such as the articles written by Thomas Kaffenberger on Manglisi church and Nato Gengiuri on Georgian church porches. However, one should bear in mind the philosophical perceptions attached to this architectural element by Georgian society, as well as its theological and liturgical implications. After all, the porch was the first area which the congregant entered upon arrival to the church. What was the role of the portico/porch in the liturgy, if any? These were neglected in many case studies, and they will be a central theme of this investigation.

It makes no sense to detach the cultural aspects from their architectural and artistic development. The visual elements played a significant cultural role in harnessing art

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[1]   On liturgical aspects of the porches, see Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, p. 1. Marinis argues that some parts of the church functioned apart from the liturgy, occasionally acquiring new or different uses than "form follows function," an idea that dominated the Byzantine church architecture.

[2]   Eastmond, *Art and Identity*, p. 35.

[3]   A porch is defined as an extension of the floor edifice, which appears either on the front or back entrance. It may be covered with an inclined roof and have light frame walls extending from the main structure. A portico is a type of porch supported by a regular arrangement of columns, leading to an edifice. Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* pp. 88-90.

[4]   Dolidze and Kochlamazashvili, *Old Georgian Translations*, p. 580. Already in the early period, Georgian translations were mainly from Greek, although we also find translations from Armenian, Syriac, and Arabic.

[5]   Shneurson, *Veil of Sacredness*, forthcoming.

and the written words to express theological and philosophical perceptions combined with political messages and historical events alongside them. Recognizing the meaning and symbolism behind architectural elements seems to be one aspect which led to the porch's development.[1] Thus, the primary purpose is to establish a theoretical foundation to the porch phenomenon based on their architectural construction and decoration. In addition, the focus is on the possible liturgy conducted at the gate, entrances, porch, annex, and doors, as well as on theological and philosophical thoughts expressed in early Christianity, and finally on the political climate and cultural environment of the period under discussion.

Several stages of investigation underscore this study. First and foremost, the starting point is the subject of the veil as it appears in the *OT*. The reason is because the *OT* is the oldest and most significant source for Christianity throughout history, and the veil was a unique and essential object in the *OT*. It is an object of separation, playing various roles in the *Ohel-Moed*, the Tabernacle, and the first and second Temples. Next, the study introduces the reader to diverse kinds of porch structure that evolved in Georgia. In the second stage, the study shows how the churches exemplify each type of porch as test cases. Each form of architecture and decoration is compared to other churches in Georgia and beyond; consequently, several churches will serve as a test case. Furthermore, the study examines the liturgical elements derived from theological aspects related to the porch. The relationship between Georgia and Byzantium fluctuated between development and changes; these were both influential and competitive, and they had a tremendous impact on Georgian culture. Thus, the architectural and liturgical influences between the two entities are intertwined throughout this study. Philosophical perceptions of the period under discussion are also crucial to this research. The Georgian elite placed tremendous importance on the Greek philosophy of Plato, Calcidius, Neoplatonism, and Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite Christian philosophy. The current study addresses theological, philosophical perceptions through the prism of their approaches and interpretations of the relationship between the Creator and the created, the earthly versus the celestial realm, and how they may have influenced porch structure and development.

Entrance – Gate – Door – Porch Reverberated in Christian Theology

Porches had a significant architectural and ritualistic role in the church edifice and daily congregational life. The ritualistic aspects consisted primarily of a liturgical cere-

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[1]   Kaffenberger, in his article devoted much attention to the architectural aspects of the porches. I thus provide a note to his article when it is relevant.

mony, a series of codified services that composed the Byzantine rite. Services such as the Divine Liturgy – the Eucharist – are the main focus. The decoration of the porches is significant and reflects theological ideas expressed in the artistic architecture and its adornment. However, how can this approach be extracted from the scriptures and theology?

Historical evidence from written sources shows that Georgians were well acquainted with the corpus by Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite (hereafter Ps. Dionysius) from the sixth-seventh century, and nowadays, some scholars have shown that he was of Georgian origin.[1] However, one controversial question about Ps. Dionysius's perception is the relation between Dionysius' texts and architecture. Ps. Dionysius's theological perceptions on church architecture and its influence on Christian liturgy and rites are of great importance and had tremendous implications on the overall development of Christianity. In the Christian East, historical evidence is limited, and surviving textual references to the Dionysian legacy in arts and architecture are sparse. However, the complex surviving architectural programs of the buildings tell a different story. It seems reasonable that some specifically Dionysian themes of light, hierarchy, and symbolism were used in medieval architecture and monumental decoration.[2]

In his corpus, the section about the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (hereafter *EH)* deals with hierarchical structure.[3] Dionysius divided the church into sections and linked them to various liturgical categories, social groups of worshipers who were activated by the division, and fulfillment of theological destinations. Ps. Dionysius's principle was based on the coordination between the macrocosm and the microcosm, outer and inner, objective and subjective, institutional and personal. He also divided the church edifice into three hierarchical levels that served as areas of action:

Within the veiled sanctuary and all the actions around the altar was the liturgy of heaven. The liturgy of earth took place in the nave for individual Christians.

The catechumens gathered outside the entrance doors to the church. This division occurred in the following order: first the holy man was typified by the sacrament; second coordination between heaven and earth liturgies occurred; and third, there was identification of the altar on high with God, and the altar on Earth with man.[4] "It is both celestial and of Law, for it occupies a place halfway between two opposites."

The ecclesiastical hierarchy is linked to the celestial one by means of spiritual contemplation and legal hierarchy, through various perceptible symbols leading to the

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[1] The theme has been studied by Zaga Gavriilović, in the Abastasis at Dečani church, Serbia. Bogdanović, *Rethinking the Dionysius Legacy*, p. 113.

[2] Bogdanović, *Rethinking the Dionysius Legacy*, p. 118.

[3] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 44.

[4] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 45; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (hereafter abbreviated *EH), IV.3.12 484d-485A, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 232.

divine. The legal hierarchy is the law given by Moses, the first leader according to the Law, which was fulfilled by Christ.[1] The analogy between Moses and Christ was well established in Christianity. Moses' entry into the divine darkness of Sinai was developed in Ps. Dionysius's *Mystic Theology*. Moses was stripped of all human knowledge, and the same thing occurred during the progression in the church. Leaving the outside world, a worshiper enters the church directed by his senses, yet as he approaches the altar, he must leave them behind and enter the realm of spirituality. Entering the sanctuary occurred only after one was stripped of every concept of knowing. It had to be "burned up" to enter fully into God.[2]

Ps. Dionysius considered the outside world as a shadow of reality, one that has tumbled and fallen. "Outside the doors" is an expression that Ps. Dionysius used in *EH*.[3]

His words "outside world," or 'outside the doors' concern the church. He not only explained the meaning of "outside" but placed the term in the context of the church and the clergy's work. The church allowed for participating in the One, which meant being and life, inside the church.[4] The alternative is the outside world and the possible sliding into multiplicity which results in non-being. The One and multiplicity here reflect Neoplatonic perceptions, yet no less important, he refers to Mark 5:13, "And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine. And the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea." These forces govern the loss of balance and the internal ordering of reason, irritability, and desire in the soul.[5] These are the ruling powers of the world. Behind all loss and division stands the devil.

Inside the church, one first was baptized. Entering Christianity's world through baptism was a means of forgiving personal sins, and achieving purity by being raised according to a Christian life. The baptism is Christ's divine birth. Death and burial signify the end of earthly struggles.[6] The fulfillment of baptism, the 'divine birth,' is the

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[1] *EH* V.1.2 501B, D, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 234.

[2] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 46; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Mystical Theology*, I. 997A-1001A, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 135-137.

[3] "There [outside the doors] followed the destructive rejection of what was really good, a trampling over the sacred law laid down in paradise for man. [….] Wandering far from the right path […] but its enemies who, out of their innate lack of pity, took the cruelest advantage of its weakness and dragged it down to the deplorable peril of destruction and dissolution of being." *EH*, III.3.11 440C-441A, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 220.

[4] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 209.

[5] Irritability is defined as "the excitatory ability that living organisms have to respond to changes in their environment. The term is used for both the physiological reaction to stimuli and for the pathological, abnormal or excessive sensitivity to stimuli. Irritability can be demonstrated in behavioral responses to both physiological and behavioral stimuli, including environmental, situational, sociological, and emotional stimuli." *Irritability*, „Merriam-Webster".

[6] *EH*, II.1 392B, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 2.

sacred re-birth and the resurrection to become a 'member of Christ.'[1] Human activity is not totally characterized by free choice. The One, benevolently rules with universal authority and the capacity for union with the divine. The union with the One cannot fulfill itself 'outside the doors.'[2]

Ps. Dionysius opened the *EH* by telling the story of an adult who had only recently been baptized. On the axis of hierarchy, from outside the doors leading to the altar, the neophyte was allowed to stand outside the church, and he progressed, explaining the mystery of the church at the end with the altar.[3] Three sacraments are at the center of the axis: the outside with the narthex/porch – the nave – the sanctuary. The baptism's sacrament was conducted outside the church edifice, and in later periods, at the narthex and baptistery. The Eucharist's sacraments, and the Holy Chrism, were meditated through the church and in the altar. According to Ps. Dionysius, this mystery is the whole purpose of the hierarchy, operated by the priesthood through Jesus' order."[4] The ecclesiastical hierarchy's mission is to direct the worshipers through material symbols on the road to exaltation and union with God. The exaltation journey starts behind closed doors – outside the doors, it advances with the baptism, and then the purification process. It follows by discovering the truth about the sacrament of the Eucharist. Culminating with the consecration of the Chrism, which means "participation in, contemplation of the divinity that embraces all, and whose Providence knows its definitive revelation in the person of Jesus."[5] The movement gradually advances through the porch, the nave towards the sanctuary, and the altar. Spiritually the movement leaves fear outside the doors in a state of non-being.

After baptism and rebirth, the newly converted individual is ready for his journey to the sacred area, climbing a spiritual ladder, participating in the Eucharist, leaving his senses behind to the final pivot stage. The final point of one's life is death and burial, so one moves once again to the outside of the church. The ductus axis from behind the door to the altar stands for the core credo of the faith.[6] In Ps. Dionysius's words, "let us behold the divine symbols which have to do with the divine birth and let no one who is uninitiated approach this spectacle."[7] The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy was designated to fulfill these tasks. Ps. Dionysius's provide ten steps of moving through the stages of the rites.[8]

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[1]   *EH,* VII.1.1 552D-553B, VII.1.3 556B, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 249-251.
[2]   Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 208.
[3]   Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 214.
[4]   *EH,* I.1 372B, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 196.
[5]   Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 214; *EH* I.3 373C, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 196-197.
[6]   On Ductus read, Crossley, *Ductus and Memoria*, pp. 214-249.
[7]   *EH*, II.1 392C, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 201.
[8]   Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 216, *EH*, II.2.2 393B-396B-D, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 200-203.

The process of personal Christianization was a long one that took several months. What is crucial to understand is his perception of temporal architecture as illustration and revelation, ignoring the passage of time and space.[1] The movement started from the 'outside doors' into the church. From the darkness into the truth, it is a long journey to strive for exaltation and union with the Providence.[2] Golitizin argues that for Ps. Dionysius, Providence refers to the "Trinity, specifically to the Second Person of the Three who has acquired a human face:"[3] Col 1:15 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."

Ps. Dionysius's philosophical theology opened up a path for scholars to re-evaluate the church's edifice and architectural structure and the clergy's role in fulfilling the Christian sacraments and the ecclesiastical tradition. For the world in his era, Ps. Dionysius's thoughts harnessed the church edifice's architectural structure, the liturgy, rite, and ecclesiastical ranks, combining them into a unified wholeness and perfection of the Church experiencing Christian faith.

Another important source that reflects the devotions and rites correlated with the entrance to the church can be found in the *Georgian Lectionary* (hereafter *GL*). It is reasonable to date its primary sources, as witnessed by the Jerusalem liturgy, to between the late fifth and the eighth centuries.[4] The *GL* reports and reflects upon developing the stational Jerusalem liturgy, conducted during the Holy Week and all year round.[5] The sources of the *Armenian Lectionary* confirm the origins of the Georgian version of the hagiopolite stational system prior to the eighth century (hagiopolite – "of the Holy City").[6] Baldovin claims that the origin of the stational system in Jerusalem is connected to ecclesiastical requirements, as well as to a process of historicizing the liturgy.[7] The *GL*'s importance lies in how it exposes to the reader the Jerusalem liturgical ritual between the fifth to eighth centuries and their adaptation by the Georgian community in the Holy Land.

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[1] According to Ps. Dionysius the baptism was in the nave, this was possibly at an early stage after Christianization. One should take into consideration baptism was conducted in later periods in the Baptistery and in the late Byzantine period in various places in a special place outside the church like in the Balkans. It was mostly due to the size of the congregation. See, Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens*, pp. 17, 26-27 n. 26, 189, 458.

[2] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 214; *EH* II.2.1 393A, II.2.2 393B, Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 201.

[3] Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, p. 218.

[4] Baldovin, *Urban Character*, p. 73.

[5] *Georgian Lectionary*: *GL* is actually a typikon which was collected from a series of manuscripts by M. Tarchnishvili. In 1912 K. S. Kekelize first edited some of the pieced together series. The *GL* is a much more extensive calendar than the *AL* (*Armenian Lectionary*), and many manuscripts feature in the compilation. It is therefore hard to determine its date. Baldovin, *Urban Character*, pp. 72-79.

[6] Baldovin, *Urban Character*, p. 73.

[7] Baldovin, *Urban Character*, p. 93.

The *GL* assigned an Entrance psalm for every Eucharistic celebration. Jerusalem, the site of the Christian faith's birth and its most significant events, naturally served as a model for several sites in Rome, Constantinople, and the periphery. The Christian centers contained the liturgical calendar, the choice of readings, the shape of the Eucharistic Entrance rite, and most importantly, the whole model which other cities, towns and subsequent liturgies adopted. It is apparent that outdoor processions were used everywhere in the Christian world, even though they were reduced during the late Byzantine period; they originated, developed, and were shaped by Jerusalem's model. The *Lite* and the 'Entrance rite' represent the outdoor processions in public with the congregation's participation.[1] The Entrance rite and Eucharist – the Divine Liturgy, were among the most important services performed throughout the year.[2] The existence of processions, such as in the Jvari church, shed light on their importance and significance in public religious life.[3]

Through the *GL,* one can learn about the liturgy conducted at the church entrance or gate.[4] Scrutinizing through the year-round church liturgy of the *GL*, I found special occasions where the gates, entrance, doors were the site of a ritual procedure that took place during the day. The occurrences I found, are given in note.[5]

The *GL* mentions the church gates several times, reflecting on its role during the liturgical year. The *GL* replicates the practices during the fifth to eighth centuries, as they were upheld in Jerusalem by the Georgian community. On line 898, the *GL* states: "Wednesday after Pentecost. Appearance of the venerable cross at Mc'xet'a." This line demonstrates that the *GL* was meant to be followed in Georgia, thus it mentions the cross in Mc'xet'a being addressed for local Georgian worshipers.

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[1]   In 1261, Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos reign, another synthesis occurred. The process started earlier in the tenth-eleventh centuries, known as neo-Sabbatic synthesis. The synthesis was between the Stoudite typika and the neo-Sabatic usage. Through Mount Athos, the new usage spread to Constantinople. It is the Neo-Sabatic typikon that is in use today in the churches of the Byzantine tradition. One of the most significant changes involved was the Divine Liturgy. In early Christianity, during the first part of the service, the Liturgy of the Word started with the First Entrance. The people that did not participated in the procession waited outside the church in its atrium. When the procession arrived, they join to enter the church building to continue the rite. During the Middle Byzantine period, a gradual process on changes that brought from the eleventh century a decline of outside procession in urban cities. Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* pp. 15-16, 21-23, 55-56.

[2]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 4; Taft, *Divine Liturgies*, pp. 82-84.

[3]   On Jvari's processions, read here, p. 307.

[4]   Tarchnishvili, *Le grand lectionnaire*, pp. 204-205. The introduction (188/9) is in French, and the text of the lectionary (189/10, 204-205/13-14) is presented in Georgian with a facing-page Latin translation done by Tarchnischvili. An English translation by Kevin P. Edgecomb is available online: Edgecomb, *The Georgian Lectionary*.

[5]   Instances of the *GL* mentioning the door and gate rite are: Epiphany on lines 83 and 92; the Quadragesima – Forty Days of Lent on line 478; and the Holy Thursday, of the Holy Week on line 626.

OT and Jewish Literature Resonates
on Gate, Doors, Entrance

The *OT* tells the story of the gate, doors, and entrance in Exod. 25-31, referring to the model shown to Moses on Mt Sinai. The account of Exod. 35-40 delivers the realization of *Ohel-Moed* or *Mishkan* and the veils it contains according to the instructions given to the Israelites. The "veil" in the *OT* is mentioned several times using different terms, such as screen, curtains, hangings, and more, meaning an entrance and a gate.[1] It is essential to note that the Greek translation of the *OT*, the Septuaginta, used the word "katapetasma" 31 times, for the inner veil before the Holy of Holies.[2]

The three primary functions of the veil in the *OT* are as follows: 1. A place of divine revelation. 2. A place where sacrifices would be offered and atonement made. 3. A place where God's presence in the tent would signify his promise to dwell with Israel. The Scriptures use the terms *Mikdash* ((שדקמ, meaning sanctuary or temple (Exod. 25:8); *Mishkan* (וכשימ), meaning tabernacle (Exod. 26:1); and Tent of meeting (*Ohel-moed* -להא דעומ) (Exod. 27:21). In all the different descriptions of the tabernacle, various materials were said to be in use for the construction and hangings.[3]

Curtains of the Courtyard

> "For the entrance to the tent make a curtain
> of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted
> linen – the work of an embroiderer." Exodus 26:36.

The curtain located at the entrance to the tent – *Mishkan* or *Ohel Moed* – is discussed in Exod. 27:9-16 as being shown to Moses on the mountain. Exod. 27:16 "And for the gate of the court shall be a hanging of twenty cubits." The instructions to build the courtyard were given to the Israelites in Exod. 38:12. A similar curtain was hung at the entrance to the courtyard, this time it mentions a screen Exod. 38:18 "And the hanging for the gate of the court was needlework, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: and twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, answerable to the hangings of the court." The importance of the courtyard en-

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[1]   On the Veil in the *OT*, see Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* pp. 9-46. Regarding the term "veil," Gurtner provides comprehensive research addressing the *OT*, the *NT,* and historical sources to understand the term according to its various meanings and functions.

[2]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 33.

[3]   While these are beyond the scope of this article, Gurtner addressed them in detail. See Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* pp. 36-39.

trance, its valuable material, unique colors, and beauty are extracted from Exodus and as a direct order from God. The Courtyard curtains, as barriers separating the outside world from the incrementally holy parts of the Temple surrounding areas, appropriated the idea of the gate and doors in the church. The chapters cited above describe the materials and the locations on the south, north, and west sides of the courtyard. According to Grunter's diagram, the order for placing a curtain at the entrance to the courtyard is the first mention of a screen or a curtain leading to the Tabernacle.[1] The Septuagint traditionally refers to them as "katapetasma" in the same way they are addressed in the *Parochet*. The entrance receives the morning and evening burnt offerings, Exod. 29. Furthermore, it is the place of atonement rites. Verses 4, 11, 32, and Verse 42: "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee." Nevertheless, the precise function of the curtains is unclear. However, the location ordered Israelites to worship and designated those who were allowed to pass through a particular barrier to fulfill the requirements of the ritual of purity prayers and offerings. It means that gentiles and impure Jews were prevented from entering. Another assumption that can be drawn is that it was a place for communal ritual activity, in which the curtain was a passive element.

The *parochet*, in its exclusive functioning as the entrance to the Holy of Holies, contains six characteristic forms; only the *parochet* possesses all six and refers only to the inner veil.[2] The *parochet* differed significantly from other means of separation due to the workmanship involved in its creation, the presence of cherubim, and its function in Israel's cultic worship.[3] Curtains that were designated to the other part of the tabernacle mainly differed from the *parochet* in terms of the creativity with which they were crafted.[4] The *OT* includes a lengthy discussion of the veil. The core idea relevant to this study is the separation between levels of gradually increasing holiness between areas within the tabernacle and the courtyard, and between various groups of people entering the tabernacle. Ps. Dionysius followed this pattern, dividing the church edifice into three structural divisions and three spiritualistic liturgical roles.

Prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the Temple, Ezek. 40:1-42; verse 40 specifically relates to the north gate. Verse 20 refers to the inner courtyard's gate, the passage to the outside yard. In chapter 10:18-19, he dramatically visioned the east gate of the temple that Glory hovered above, means that the gate considered an area of holiness.

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[1] Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 204.
[2] Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 52.
[3] Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 52, n. 32.
[4] Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 56.

"Then the Glory of God left the Temple entrance and hovered over the cherubim. I watched as the cherubim spread their wings and left the ground, the wheels right with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Temple. The Glory of the God of Israel was above them."

The protective wall that serves to separate the holy from the profane is described in Ezekiel's temple, Ezek. 42:20.

The Second Temple built around 19-20 B.C. by Herod and was patterned after Solomon's.[1] The separation and divisions of sociological groups, religious areas, and liturgical functions continued on to the Herodian Temple. It was reflected in the Qumran scrolls, as a possible way of life of the group settled there and in the rabbinical hermeneutics. The Herodian Temple also contained veils, but it is unclear how many curtains there were and which one is the 'katapetasma' mentioned in the Septuaginta. Most of the curtains were inner veils.

The symbolic value of the veil evolved into a symbol of the heavenly firmament (Gen. 1:6.) and developed an ideology beyond and independently of its original intent.[2] Various texts of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism employed the sacred texts about the veil for their ideological usage. The Qumran documents include the *Temple Scroll*, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *Damascus Document*, and *Apocryphon of Moses*. They mainly refer to the inner curtains. These documents assume that they represented the ideal sanctuary or the heavenly Temple since the people of Qumran had been excluded from entering the Temple by the rabbinical leaders of Jerusalem. So, the idea of a symbolic veil and an ideal temple coincide and harmonize the understanding of the entrance as a kind of separation that fulfills the same function and idea of heavenly worship,[3] proving the importance of the veil and gate.

Another vital source found at Qumran, the *Apocryphon of Moses*, refers to the veil and influenced Christian perceptions. Moses' prayers are behind a curtain. On the other hand, the veil served to prohibit access not just to God himself but to the Ark of the Covenant that is 'hidden.'[4] The veil stands as an idea of separation in different cases, thus not the inner veil only. In Isa 40:22, we see the idea of God "stretching out heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in." The veil corresponds to the firmaments. Hofius dates the tradition to Philo and the time of the Hebrews, with rabbinic traditions around the second century.[5] Gurtner quotes Philo's assertion that the

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[1]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 73.
[2]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 80.
[3]   The Temple Scroll presumably speaks of a screen at the vestibule entrance, though it is poorly preserved. Gurtner, *The Biblical Veil*, pp. 57-79; Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* pp. 83-85.
[4]   Num 4:5 and Num Rab. 4:13; Lev 16:2.
[5]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, p. 91, cited Hofius, *Vorhang vor dem Thron*, p. 25.

inner veil should be named 'the veil' and the outer veil should be called 'the covering.'[1] He further stated that the rabbinic and, in the Hellenistic – Jewish texts, the curtain outlines the heavenly world as the area of highest holiness of the earthly world.[2]

The rabbinical corpus shows that the Temple was considered a gateway between heaven and earth, where beings lived and worshipped in a distinctly apocalyptic literary context. In this respect, the veil was understood to be the barrier between heaven and earth.[3] The barrier, however it be called in Hebrew – Pargode, Screen, Curtains, Veil – correlated between itself and the heavens for concealment. Behind the veil is a place of secrecy, where God is present in profoundly apocalyptic texts. It seems that the veil mentioned was the inner veil, though it marked other separations in the Temple that function as outer veils for concealing purposes. The idea explained in Exod 19:9. "The Lord said to Moses, I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you. Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said." The term "dense cloud" means something behind a barrier that prevents seeing but allows hearing, like a veil.[4] The veil was taken to function as a barrier in other places in the Temple, and the rabbinic texts added more layers to term.[5]

For Josephus Flavius and Philo of Alexandria, the veil served to obscure from the public view the mystery of the dwelling of God and to reserve it to the priesthood.[6] Philo's portrayal of the veil allegorically presents the curtains in a cosmic element. Though he did not mention the inner veil directly, he intended to describe it. On the other hand, the allegorical meaning and the symbolism that are integral to his description alluded to the symbolism of the entrance and the gate. The symbolism elevated separations within the temple and courtyard to a level of allegory and emblematic structure. Philo and Josephus understood the symbolism and allegory of the veil to resemble the separation of heaven and earth – that heaven is the dwelling place of God and Earth is where human beings reside, the identification of the veil as the heavenly ether. The veil was depicted as a tent spread over the world. In this way, all parts of the Temple stand for this symbolism.[7] The entrance and gate of the courtyard divided the inner world of the temple from the outside world.

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[1]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* pp. 73-77.
[2]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 92, cited Hofius, *Vorhang vor dem Thron,* p. 27.
[3]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 88, and nn. 95-96.
[4]   The verse expresses the idea of announcing from behind the veil for those who were prohibited access within the curtains. The idea is analogous to the Christian prohibition of the catechumens entering the church before being baptized.
[5]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 92. The Mishnah does not discuss the outer curtain, but we do read about the outer veil in other Qumran sources.
[6]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 93 and n. 119.
[7]   Isa 40:22 presents the idea of God 'stretching out heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in'.

From the corpus of materials in the Qumran texts and other Jewish sources, the Temple veil began to evolve an ideology of its own.[1] The Temple (and the veil within it) became a symbol of something beyond itself as early as the Greek translation of Ben Sira (Sir. 50:5).[2] The correlation between the inner and the outer veil and the allegorical symbolism of the entrance, gate, and doors were extracted from the *OT*. These were revealed in many occurrences.

Historical Architectural Evolution of the Porch in Georgia

Nato Gengiuri gave a historical evaluation of the porch in Georgian churches.[3] Gengiuri claims that the Georgian churches' entrances had a vital status throughout all stages of their development. Accordingly, several types of porches can be found in Georgia. No specific period preference was necessarily correlated with each of the types, though on the other hand, one can see that in each period, one style dominated. Three types of porches are dominant.[4]

    a. Porch – open by arched entrance as part of the ambulatory or the elongated façade.

    b. Portico/Porch – supported by four pillars, opened by arches on three sides, but when closed by walls, it was referred to as the 'porch.'

    c. Porch – of three-part stoa-porch or porch-chapel.[5]

       Type A. Porch – open by arched entrance as part of the ambulatory or elongated façade.

The early period after Christianization is primarily designated by churches' inclusion of an entrance in an elongated façade.[6] This structure can be found in Old Shuamta basilica (fifth c.), Bolnisi Sioni (478-493), Vazisubani church (sixth c.), and Oltisi (sixth-seventh c.), which features a single nave with an annex. The St. George church in Kvemo Bolnisi is known as a 'three-church basilica' (first half of sixth c.),[7] along with Kondamiani church (sixth c.) and Zegani church (sixth-seventh c.). In the churches

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[1]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil,* p. 96.

[2]   Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, p. 74 quotes *Sirach*, 50:5. "How he was glorified as he spun around the shrine, as he exited from the house of the veil."

[3]   Gengiuri, *Georgian Churches Porches*, pp. 196-200.

[4]   The distinction between porch and portico is in accordance with the definition of the terms, here note 5.

[5]   Kaffenberger terms this type of porch as 'porch-chapel.' Kaffenberger, *Liminal Spaces*, p. 118.

[6]   Gengiuri, *Georgian Churches Porches*, p. 196.

[7]   The term 'three-church basilica' relates to a ground plan that merged together three types of churches: A longitudinal structure, a Latin cross with dome structure, and a centralized trichonch church. The combination creates a basilica which contains three aisles that are separated by walls between them. Loosley, *Architecture and Asceticism*, pp. 115-121; Silagadze and Dundua, *Three-Church Basilica Type*, pp. 79-80; Beridze, Alpago-Novello and Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Art and Architecture,* p. 308.

mentioned above, the entrances are included on the elongated façade and emphasized by an open arcade flank at the entrance, adding a sense of grandeur. The arches served as an architectural element to lend uniqueness to the entrance, which shared a single pitched roof with the annex or ambulatory. Eighth-ninth-century entrances consisted of the same structure, but the churches were mostly domed rather than being a basilica. Nekresi church is an example of this sub-type, and following it are the ninth-century Eredvi (906) village churches and Vardzia (eleventh c.), which were an exception to the rule.[1]

Eredvi church of St. George.

There is an early tenth-century Georgian church in the village of Eredvi in the Shida Kartli region (Fig. 1).[2] It was constructed by the architect Tevdore Taplaisdze, who laid the foundation of the church in 906, as relayed in a Georgian inscription on the building. The church was a three-nave basilica, which, despite later reconstructions, largely preserved its original architectural features until 2008. The basilica, of a three-nave design, is not a distinctive design for early medieval Georgian architecture and was defined by the art historian Giorgi Chubinashvili as "three-church" basilicas.[3] An ambulatory at St. George church at Eredvi envelopes the church from all four sides, including the eastern façade, a feature unusual for the contemporaneous churches of this type, which usually had an ambulatory running on three sides. The entrance to the church is from the south, and additionally, from the west.

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[1]   Kaffenberger does not distinguish this type as an ambulatory but as a porch-chaple. Kaffenberger, *Liminal Spaces*, p. 118.

[2]   During the August 2008 Russian hostilities, the curtain wall of the Eredvi church was partially damaged and on 2017, the largely ruined village Eredvi, deprived of its ethnic Georgian population, was completely demolished.

[3]   On "three-church" basilica, read here notes 7 (p. 304) and 2 (p. 311).

Fig. 1. St. George church at Eredvi.[*]
Courtesy of Rolf Schrade, in *Georgien. Wehrbauten und Kirchen*, **p. 179, fig. 269**
Type B. Porches supported by four pillars, opened by arches on three sides

This group can be found throughout all periods of Georgian Christian architecture. The porches in this group consist of four pillars, or two pilasters, and two pillars, creating open arches on three sides of the porch. This type appears on the south façade or south transept's façade, advancing the structural line of the façade, covered with a single umbrella dome. This type could have appeared as a closed porch advancing the entrance with a vault ceiling. However, we do not have a surviving variant of this type from the early stages of Christianity, only remnants in a ruined condition which do not reveal the whole structural appearance of the porch. The porches are decorated in a rich manner with reliefs and sometimes with wall paintings. The porch size varies from one church to the other, and they appear as a splendid organ of the edifice.

Being a relatively small space, one can hardly imagine what function the open porch served besides welcoming the congregants entering the church and as a shelter from harsh weather on their way to entering the house of God. However, it is deceiving to think that such a sophisticated society was not motivated by other ideas, theology, and philosophical perspectives rooted in their culture when they created such an intricate organ for their churches. The study investigates several churches that exemplify this type of porch.

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[*]   All images were taken by the author unless otherwise is mentioned.

Jvari Church

Today, the Jvari church (596-604) has no porch, yet one wall still exists, proving that a porch once preceded the south façade (Fig. 2).[1] The structure is unclear; yet the remnants today are evidence that the porch had a vault covering, creating a short vestibule leading to the entrance. It can only be hypothesized that the porch was decorated majestically, considering the Cross's relief in Clypeus borne by two angels in the tympanum seen today.

It is possible to hypothesize that the porch was open from south and east, and not closed from all sides, leaning on two pillars, as surviving portion of the structure aluding to open porch. Processions in front of the cross, mentioned in the Georgian Annals, testify to the liturgical function of the façade and its sculptures.[2]
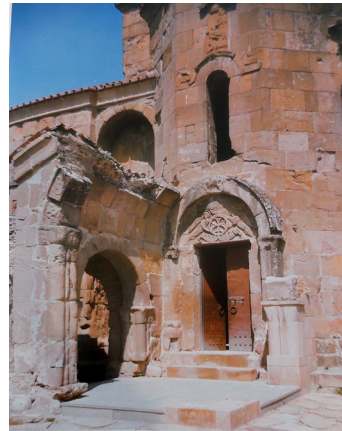

Fig. 2. Jvari from the East-south

Fig. 2a. Jvari Porch. Courtesy of Rolf Schrade, in *Georgien. Wehrbauten und Kirchen*, p. 137, Fig. 194

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[1]   On Jvari church: Eastmond, *Royal Imagery*, pp. 15-17; Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 385-391; Tchubinachvili, *Monuments architectoniques*; Djobadze, *Sculpture on Eastern Façade (I)*, pp. 122-135; Djobadze, *Sculpture on Eastern Façade (II)*, pp. 70-77.
[2]   The subject is futher disscussed, here on page 319-320.

Oshki Church (963)

Oshki church represents a unique architectural structure embedded with outstanding decorative elements.[1] It has two sub-types of porches on the south façade, rich in ornamental reliefs and messages. The church features two organs that can be seen as an entrance, even though they are dissimilar in their structure or function. The first is located in the church's southern transept as an entrance (Fig. 3) of the Porch – supported by the four pillars type.[2] It is constructed of a tri-arched open space advancing the south transept's façade. The second is an elongated space along the south façade, acting as a lateral chapel or narthex.[3] [I address it here as a narthex, to distinguish it from the church's main entrance – the porch].

Fig. 4. South Porch's Hemispheric Umbrella Dome

Fig. 3. Oshki's South Porch

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[1] For more on Oshki church facades decoration, read in Shneurson, *Veil of Sacredness*, forthcoming.

[2] Kaffenberger terms both as porches. My understanding is that one function as entrance while the other is more like a narthex or elongated lateral chapel that has a different function.

[3] Antony Eastmond considers the Oshki south lateral chapel as 'ambulatories around the naves,' yet, it is not around the church but a lateral north long chamber and south long chamber, that have no connection with each other. In my opinion, the south should be termed as a narthex or south chapel, which had a unique functionality.

Eastmond, *Art and Identity,* p. 34; On the Jvari church's porch (in ruin) see drawing of the church ground plan, Beridze, Alpago-Novello and Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 385-387, pl. 387, 423.

1. The South Transept's Porch

The porch (Fig. 3), advancing the south transept's arm, functions as the main entrance to the church. It features a long inscription on the entrance tympanum written in red pigment, providing details on how, when, and by whom the edifice was built and to whom it is dedicated. The porch's structure is square, consisting of one bay with three sides of open arches, a pitched roof hovering above a scalloped hemispheric 'saucer dome,' or the 'umbrella dome.' The hemispheric umbrella dome consists of three narrow rows of blocks, alternating in their colors, white and red, resulting in wide-armed red and white crosses (Fig. 4). The porch's structure rests on the two south pillars and the two west pilasters located on the façade, which creates the church's entrance. The pillars (fig. 5) and pilasters are decorated with vegetal and geometric forms of reliefs. Djobadze's conclusion drawn from his investigation of the porch is that Georgian artisans sustained the porches and the narthex's structure and decoration throughout the centuries, particularly in porches with one bay. However, he asserted that there were no direct prototypes for the porch in Oshki, which is novel. Examples from the first half of the eleventh century are Nikortsminda (1010-14), Kumurdo (964), Katzkhi (1010-14), Manglisi (fourth c., and rebuilt in 1014-27), Samtavro (eleventh c.).[1]

Fig. 6. Oshki's South Narthex.

Fig. 5. Sculpted South Porch's Pillars

[1]   Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries,* pp. 103-104; Nikortsminda, here p. 49; Katzkhi, here pp. 48-49; and Manglisi, here pp. 44, 46-48.

The size of the Oshki porch is small. This fact alone limits the possibility of it functioning as anything more than an entrance to the church. On the other hand, its decoration is rich and subtly artistic. The striking element is the umbrella dome with unique red and white crosses on the ceiling (Fig. 4). Such an exceptional architectural organ needs to be re-evaluated in-depth. It should be understood on the basis of theological and philosophical perspectives, discussed further on in the study, and the cult of the cross's existence in Georgia from the early-stages following Christianization.

2. The South Chapel structure – Narthex

What Markus Bogisch referred to as the south open chapel or side chambers, or what Djobadze termed a porch, raised many questions and varied interpretations in Oshki (Fig. 6).[1] The richness of various decorative elements testifies to additional functions and dedications of the narthex. In a previous article, I argued that the stylites' panels on the sculpted pillar and the west façade were crucial and resulted from the stylites' status in Georgia and the political message the rulers extracted from their popularity and spiritual values.[2] The unique liturgy and rites conducted around the pillar of Simeon Stylite the Elder and the Younger could have been one, yet crucial, reason for developing the necessity of the narthex and the open arcade for processions in front of the south façade. Moreover, the possible option of the role of the narthex was to accept new participants to the Christian faith, who were not allowed to enter the church before being baptized. Another possibility is that the narthex' chambers were devoted to relics of saints, but this is only a hypothetical argument, which at this stage, is derived from a comparison with Iviron cathedral in Athos (hereafter).

The open chapel or side chambers (after Djobadze) are barrel-vaulted with an ornamented flat umbrella dome in each of the four narthexes bays.[3] Each bay is square and of a similar dimension; they open to the south with arcades and rest on four columns. All of them are decorated with different geometric and vegetal reliefs that feature various carvings, geometric interlaces, plant motifs, and crosses. In Djobadze's opinion, part of the pattern is reminiscent of Byzantine textile designs.[4] Each of the four bays has a flat umbrella dome that is rich in decorative elements such as carved ribs and conoid webs, and it rests on semicircular lunettes and pendentives, transforming the square bays into an octagon with four pendentives. The use of a semi-S relief motif and the tendency to reject natural forms in favor of abstract geometric characteristics

[1]   Bogisch, *Some Remarks*, p. 190; Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries*, p. 101.
[2]   Shneurson, *An Imperializing Column*, pp. 34-38.
[3]   Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries,* p. 102, Plan C.
[4]   Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries,* pp. 103-104.
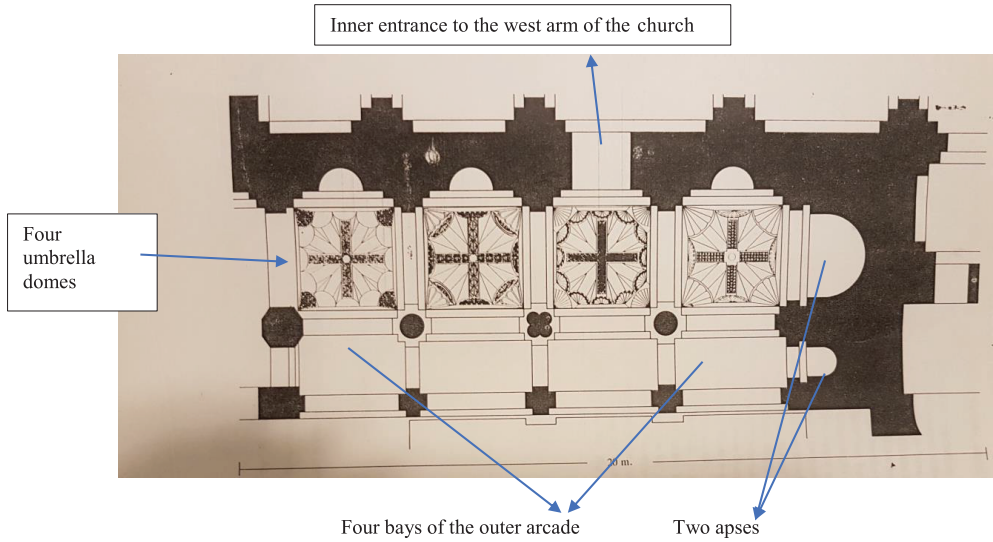
is apparent. Djobadze finds in many of the shapes and forms connections to Syrian churches and primarily to St. Simeon Stylite's church reliefs in Syria.[1] The bays also have a niche on the north wall of the bays (this wall runs west to east, and it is the south wall of the western arm of the church), and the east bay culminates with a deep apse decorated with paintings. An arcade, built parallel to the bays, which runs west to east and is constructed of four columns, ends with small apses to the east. (pl. 1 + Figs. 6,7). The structure that is 'like' a second arcade, running parallel to the inner one, enlarges and widens the bays with an additional side aisle and creates a whole unique organ of the south façade. According to Kaffenberger, the open narthex's structure was derived from the 'three church basilica, like Kvemo Bolnisi.'[2]

Fig. 7. Oshki Narthex' Inner Arcade

[1]   Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries,* p. 103.
[2]   The term relates to a ground plan that merged together three types of churches: A longitudinal struc-
ture, a Latin cross with a dome structure, and a centralized trichonch church. This combination creates a
basilica which contains three aisles that are separated by walls between them. Loosley, *Architecture and
Asceticism*, pp. 115–121; Silagadze and Dundua, *Three-Church Basilica Type*, pp. 79-80; Eastmond, *Royal
Imagery*, p. 228; Beridze, Alpago-Novello and Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Art and Architecture,* p. 308.

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Inner entrance to the west arm of the church

Four umbrella domes

Four bays of the outer arcade

Two apses

Pl. 1. South narthex with double arcades.
After Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries*, Plan C., p. 102.

Djobadze finds a stylistic connection between the various decorative columns of the south side of the arcade with antique or Early Christian models, such as the Justinianic columns in Diyarbakir, the St. Simeon monastery west to Antioch on the Orontes, and more. Djobadze proposed that Syrian architecture inspired sixth-century Constantinople architecture and influenced Georgian architecture.[1] Sassanian architecture could have served as models for the Georgians, as well, due to the eastern trade routes that passed through Georgia. However, Georgia developed and transformed the shapes and forms radically and created its own means of expression.[2]

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[1] Djobadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries,* p. 103.
[2] Bogisch, *Some Remarks*, pp. 188, 191; Shneurson, *Veil of Sacredness*, forthcoming.

Fig. 8. Pillar with Symeon Stylite the Elder

The first western column of the open arcade presents a unique decorative system, topped with a panel of Simeon the Stylite the Elder (Fig. 8). It alludes to Syriac influences on Georgian architecture and the popularity of the stylite in Georgia for many centuries.[1] The stylite panel's existence is yet an additional element that is crucial in understanding and interpreting the whole essence of the south façade.

Oshki and Iviron Monastery in Athos

Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos was dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God, and was constructed during the years 980-983. The monastery had a tremendous impact on the further development of theology, philosophy, everyday religious practice, and Georgian monasticism and culture. The prominent figures that lived and acted in Iviron had massive influence on the Orthodox Church of Georgia.[2] The Georgian monks in Athos had been one of only a few groups permitted to pray in their own language, were granted their own church name Iviron, and had prominent status within the

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[1] On the Stylites in Oshki, read in Shneurson, *An Imperializing Column*, forthcoming.

[2] Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos*, p. 11. The translation of the life of John and Euthymios are in chapter 2 of the book, titled "The Life of our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymios, and the Story of their Worthy Citizenship as Described by the Poor Hieromonk George the Hagiorite," pp. 53-97.

Athos community. John and his son Euthymios, and George, his cousin, were originally from the Tao-Klarjeti region.[1] The Oshki church was built around 963, in the same period as the Iviron church. One should bear in mind the characteristic events of the Byzantine literary tradition of Macedonian (876-1056) and Komnenian (1081-1185) periods that impacted the empire and its periphery.[2] The connections between Oshki and Iviron are apparent and probably were caused from mutual collaboration and interests. Both, Oshki and Iviron shared the same spiritual ideas that had a tremendous impact on the architecture of the edifices and on the figures acted at that period. However, Iviron provided the theological and spiritual authority.

Iviron monastery in Athos was rebuilt on the Monastery of Clement site and was given to the Georgian community in Athos. The first abbot of Iviron was John (980-1005), followed by his son St. Euthymios the Iberian (1005-1019; died in 1028), and the third in the chain was George, Euthymios's cousin (1019-1029).[3] The church's

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[1]   Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks*, p. 13.

[2]   The Macedonian Renaissance usually refers to a classicist revival that took place mainly during the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056). Macedonian Renaissance indicates the revival of Greek science in Byzantium during the ninth century, following the iconoclastic period. Two scholars were prominent during this revival: John the Grammarian and Leo the Mathematician (Nikolaidēs, *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy*). After the end of iconoclasm, there was a 'renaissance' of science in which a library was created. A renewed interest in Aristotelian logic led to the reading of philosophical texts and natural philosophy and, soon afterward, the revival of art and science and translation of Greek science texts into Arabic. John the Grammarian contributed to this renaissance, as did Leo the Mathematician. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 913-959, also contributed to the institutionalization of nonreligious education, which allowed it to advance even further (Nikolaidēs, *Science and Eastern Orthodoxy,* p. 59.). They copied the ancient manuscripts, and in astronomy, they contributed a table of thirty bright stars which dated back to 854. Patriarch Photius (c. 810-893) and Arethas, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (approximately 860 to 932/944), were among the chief leaders of the radical literary development of the period. The latter played a significant role in the tradition of classical and Christian authors. He copied MSS (and occasionally added scholia himself). At least eight of them have survived; they those that were written by include Euclides, Plato (24 dialogues), Aristotle, Lucian, Aelius Aristides, Christian apologetics, Clemens of Alexandria, Justin, as so forth. Georgian figures relevant to the Macedonian Renaissance are considered by the acts of Maria of Alania and Anna Komnene (Treadgold, *The Macedonian Renaissance*, pp. 75-98; Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, pp. 79-147; Garland, *Mary 'of Alania', Anna Komnene, and the Revival of Aristotelianism in Byzantium*, pp. 123-163). Mary of Alania, a native of Georgia, was the center of a circle of literati in Constantinople during the early years of the reign of Alexios I. The court of her first husband, Michael VII Doukas (1050-1090), had seen the revival of interest in philosophy and natural science, with renewed study of both Plato and Aristotle, as well as works composed for the emperor and court on philosophical and scientific topics by scholars such as Psellos, John Italos, and Symeon Seth. Following this interest in natural science, including meteorology, in the 1070s, Maria continued such studies at her own court at the Mangana Palace, where she commissioned works on theology and natural science. She was the tutor to her son Constantine Doukas (1074-1095) and Anna Komnene (1083-1153) was the sister of Constantine Doukas. She gained her interest in intellectual pursuits from Mary, with whom she lived for several years as a girl. Mary's interests played a part in shaping Anna. However, Anna focused primarily on literature and philosophy rather than theology and natural science. Anna was to play a key role in the revival of Aristotelian scholarship as patron of a circle of scholars working on commentaries. In the history of Byzantium. The Macedonian Renaissance was a period of the blossoming of Byzantine culture, science, and art. It also known as the era of Byzantine encyclopedism since of the attempts to systematically organize and codify knowledge.

[3]   Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens,* p. 62; Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos*, p. 11.

original core construction was a cross in a square nave with a three-bayed, two-storied narthex. Around 1005-1028, it was appended with the north chapel, and more changes occurred during that period. A second narthex or exonarthex was added towards the middle of the eleventh century. The exonarthex changed later, around 1513, with the addition of an upper floor – the monastery underwent further changes and additions through the centuries. The *phialē* (outer structure with baldachino designed mainly for baptism) dates to 1744. Iviron's narthex is the original architectural form, but its paintings are of a later period, thus reflecting the architecture developed in Tao-Klarjeti. The Iviron's narthex is divided into three spaces. The central bay is square and covered with a blind dome, while the other two are smaller and covered with double barrel vaults (groin-vault).[1] The initial role of the narthex's two lateral bays was to provide additional access from outside. It was altered to connect the main church utilizing two other doors with the two parekklesia, and later, further modifications were made to these doors. These parts of the narthex served as a burial place for St. Euthymios' relics and other monastery founders.[2]

Historical Architectural and Functional Development of the Narthex

The narthex was an elongated, rectangular space which served as an entrance vestibule, a liminal zone between the outside world and the inside 'paradisiacal vision' of the sanctuary. The narthex hosted liturgical rituals after the ninth century, becoming a functionally diverse space in a Byzantine church.[3]

In the Early Christian period, the narthex served as preparation for the First Entrance rite, consisting of a procession of clergy members and lay people from the atrium into the naos and the bema. In the Middle Byzantine period, the patriarch or bishop waited at the First Entrance, seated in the narthex, and from there, he recited the interior prayer.[4] Along with the patriarch, the subdeacon was also seated in the narthex.[5] Further, the narthex was a place for penitents, menstruating women, and the catechumens, though it was used for a multitude of daily services. From the typikon of monaste-

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[1] Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos,* p. 63.
[2] Kaffenberger also suggests that the Oshki's narthex could have been used for burial but this is a hypothetical assumption. Kaffenberger, *Liminal Spaces,* p. 130; Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens,* p. 64 and n. 127. The upper floor of the narthex designated for the Katechoumeneion worshipers, a group which was not allowed to enter the nave before being baptized. The upper floor was added at a later period and thus not relevant to the churches in the Georgian mainland.
[3] Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 64.
[4] Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* pp. 21, 68-69; Taft, *The Pontifical Liturgy,* pp. 105-111; Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies,* pp. 64-65.
[5] Taft, *Skeuophylakion of Hagia Sophia,* I, pp. 1-35 and II, pp. 53-87; Taft, *Divine Liturgies,* chapters VII, VIII; Taft, *History of the Liturgy of the Hours,* pp. 130-158.

ries and cathedral practice, one can notice that some of the rituals were performed in the narthex and the exonarthex, mostly following the Mount Athos practice.[1] In cases where a service began in the narthex and moved progressively toward the sanctuary, it reflected the ancient processional character of the Byzantine rite, and symbolized the move from the earthly narthex to the heavenly sanctuary. According to the typikon of the Great Church in Athos, the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday took place in the narthex. It is interesting that in some katholika such as Hosios Loukas and Nea Moni in Chios, the mosaic of Christ Washing the Feet is found in the narthex. Evidence can be found in other parts of the Byzantine world, such as in Mount Athos and Cyprus, which demonstrates the common practice of this rite.[2] The images that appeared in the narthex complemented a series of depictions inspired by the Passion cycle, as in Hosios Lukas.[3] It thus created a mimetic relationship between the rite and its prototype. The celebration of the rite was not restricted to the narthex.

During the Middle and Late Byzantine periods in Constantinople, the narthex and exonarthex served as burial places, a common practice in Asia Minor, Greece, and the Balkans. An early example of women's burial can be found in the seventh-century sarcophagus containing the bodies of Constantina, Emperor Maurice's wife, and their children, placed on the left side of the monastic narthex church of St. Manas. It reflects a burial outside the liturgical center of the church, but is situated within the building.[4] There are more examples that attest to this customary practice.[5] Marinis claims that the idea of lateral spaces, such as outer aisles, along with porches or chapels, existed in most Middle Byzantine churches of Constantinople.[6] The role of such sections is not clear, but they added to the monumentality of a façade while offering shelter for people attending outdoor services and processions.[7] Narthex programs had multivalent

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[1]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, pp. 69-70.

[2]   In Constantinopolitan euchologion dated to 1027, the service entitled "Another service and order of the 'Blessing of the Water' or 'Lesser Blessing of the Water'" took place in some churches in the narthex or close to other sections with a basin; this mainly happened in Serbia and Macedonia. Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* pp. 71-72.

[3]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 73.

[4]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 75. Marinis brings the following as example: Nikephoros, founder of the monastery *tou* Medikiou in Bithynia, was buried in 813 in the church of the Archangel Michael, in the left side of the narthex.

[5]   See Pseudo Dionysius on the funerary character of the narthex. Galadza, *The Evolution of Funerals*, pp. 225-226.

[6]   The use of the porch and chapel gave access to upper-level parts of the church, but all evidence of this has been lost. Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, p. 89 and n. 72.

[7]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 90.

religious and political messages.[1] Both the narthex and the exonarthex were dominated, in their outer decoration, by the same prominent design of the exterior church façades, giving them an integral appearance of the original church.[2]

Oshki and Iviron: Political and Cultural Ties

Four significant manuscripts regarding the foundation of Iviron originated from Oshki, Otkhta Ekklesia, and Khakhuli churches, located in the Tao region.[3] The ties between Iviron Cathedral, Tao region, Oshki, and the families of the region, were long-lasting and deep.[4] Nevertheless, on the other hand, Iviron played a significant role in Mount Athos' development during that period.

The Georgian manuscripts in Iviron reflect the characteristic events of the Byzantine literary tradition of the Macedonian – Komnenian period, namely the Macedonian Renaissance. This period was characterized by new redactions of manuscripts which generated codices with diverse educational tendencies of the marginalized art-decorative system. "This vital reform of Christian writing and manuscripts tradition has been inherited by the Iviron Monastery from the Tao-Klarjeti scriptoriums."[5] Accordingly, texts, combined with educational trends, were shaped in decorative schemes of manuscripts made in Tao-Klarjeti centers. So too were the preparations for the launch of the Georgian Laura on Mount Athos and Iviron's library. The manuscripts copied in the Oshki Monastery were made especially for the Georgian Laura Iviron's library on Athos. From this perspective, it was a straightforward way to turn the Oshki church into an architectonic, decorative jewel of the area and period. The initiator of these changes was John (Iovane) the Iberian, who settled, as a monk, at Athos. The book translation project started before the foundation of Iviron monastery in 975, by Euthymios, John's son and the second abbot of Iviron. For the task of translating books into the Georgian language and editorial work, Euthymios recruited a group of talented bookmen, transforming Iviron's library into an outstanding center of Georgian culture, studying, education, and theology. During the abbacy of Euthymios they followed the early Jerusalemite translations. The Macedonian literary reform was completed a bit

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[1]   Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual,* p. 66, n. 10. The author provides the following readings: Nelson, *Chora and the Great Church*; Nelson, *Taxation with Representation*; Nelson, *Heavenly Allies*; Osterhout, *Kariye Camii*, p. 22; Osterhout, *The Virgin of the Chora*.

[2]   Stanković, *At the Threshold of the Heavens,* p. 65.

[3]   The manuscripts are: The Oshki Bible; "The Flower of the Paradise" ["Samotkhe"], The paradise polykephalio; The Life of John Chrysostom; The Treasure/Gandzi in Moscow Synodal Library. Kalandadze, *Patrological Collection*; Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos,* pp. 28, 32, 34.

[4]   Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos,* pp. 29-31, 33.

[5]   Chkhikvadze (et al.), *The Georgian Manuscript Book*, pp. 188-189.

later by George the Hagiorite (1009-1065) and Ephrem Mtsire (1027-1103), who was a Hellenophile, creating a link with the translation of works into Georgian. Both George and Ephrem made interpretations of ancient texts, liturgical calendars, and commentaries with their work's scientific approach. The literary center's goal was to provide a convincing answer in their quest for the Georgian Church's autocephaly.[1] To achieve that goal, the Iviron center leaders copied a complete collection of *OT* texts in the Monastery of Oshki in 978 and transferred the manuscripts to the Iviron collection. The most critical aspect of the Oshki collection was its archaic recension characteristics, including early Byzantine redactions adopted from Tao-Klarjeti, which are of particular interest. The immense work done during the end of the tenth century and throughout the eleventh, at and by the Tao-Klarjeti, and Iviron communities, gave to the world written evidence of knowledge on Byzantium and the Orient, otherwise unknown. More than that, this historical chapter shed light on Georgian society in Tao-Klarjeti and Oshki church's leading role in it. Examining Oshki church in general, and the outstanding porch and open chapel-narthex in particular, it seems obvious how they reflect this society's formative transformation during that period, expressed through architecture and art.

The manuscripts were commissioned by leading members of the Chordvaneli family, who became the kteteors and benefactors of Iviron. Most of the information that comes from the colophons of these manuscripts' points to consistency with what Iviron's Synodikon and other documents contained, published in the *Actes d'Iviron*.[2]

The ties between Iviron monastery and dominant families in the Tao region were heightened due to John the Iberian's will. His legacy demanded that the abbots be chosen from the Chordvaneli family circle, which was the case until 1029.[3] Up until then, the Byzantine ruler approved the nomination according to the will. From 1030 onwards, the Byzantine's involvement grew, and broader considerations navigated the region's political life. However, the strong ties between Iviron and Tao region still exist.[4] The project of translating books to the Georgian language has continued, while the role of cultivating the spiritual and political aspirations of the Georgians has endured.[5]

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[1] Chkhikvadze (et al.), *The Georgian Manuscript Book*, p. 190.
[2] Lefort, Oikonomidès and Papachryssanthou, *Actes d'Iviron: I*, vol.1, pp. 20, 39; Lefort, Oikonomidès and Papachryssanthou, *Actes d'Iviron: II*, vol. 1, pp. 2-31. This book provides the translation of the history of Iviron in that period, with the copy of the monks Greek written source.
[3] Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos*, p. 34.
[4] Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos*, p. 35.
[5] Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos*, pp. 37-38.

Symbolism, Rituals, and Functions of the Porch and the Narthex

The ground plan of churches was designed theologically and interpreted according to the hierarchy of holiness. The horizontal axis features three divisions which are repeated in various ways. The bema on this axis was considered the most sacred part, and the narthex was the least holy.[1] The edifice is divided into three sections, the atrium and/or narthex, the naos, and the sanctuary. Theologically, Trinitarian signifiers divided the church into three sociological groups, including the clergy, the perfectly faithful, and the repentant. The sociological division of groups may symbolize the divine church as "on earth, on heavens, and those beyond heavens."[2] Accordingly, it means that the narthex is the earth, the naos is the heavens, and the most holy bema is beyond the heavens.

According to Ps. Dionysius, the outside world was a dark and misguided area, while the porch was considered the purified site that welcomed worshipers to enter the body of the church. The participants in the nave, while fully engaged or "perfectly faithful," according to other theologians, were still at the first stage of knowledge.[3] Then, there were the monks at the gates of the sanctuary, those who had already reached a higher level, towards the "pure attendance upon God," the clergy, within the enclosure.[4] Ps. Dionysius refers to the three parts of the church, the entrance doors, the nave, and the sanctuary doors with the enclosed area of the altar. He addressed these areas and the hierarchical groups in each one, from the lowest level to the highest of all.[5]

In accordance with Neoplatonic vocabulary, Ps. Dionysius claimed that the bishop occupies the place of Christ when standing before the altar as the icon of God.[6] From that standpoint, God's sacramental energies streamed into creation by the angelic hierarchy to the lowest level on earth in the church, toward those not yet purified. Golitzin asserts, "Finally, it disperses and disappears from view in the night of ignorance and sin outside the doors."[7] The bishop's passage through the church is a realization of the activity of Providence that he typifies. The strict division between the darkness outside the church's porch and the gradually expanded pureness inside the nave follows the Neoplatonic perception of dividing the world into two parts, the earthly world versus the ideal world. The narthex played a significant role in the Divine Liturgy during

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[1] *EH* V.1.6 508AB, Pseudo-Dionysius**,** *Complete Works*, pp. 237-238.
[2] Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, p. 66 and n. 12. Marinis brings Symeon of Thessalonike words.
[3] Golitzin, *Et introibo*, p. 158.
[4] Golitzin, *Et introibo*, p. 159; *EH* V.1.6 505D-508B, Pseudo-Dionysius**,** *Complete Works*, pp. 237-238.
[5] *EH*, V.1.3 373C, Pseudo-Dionysius**,** *Complete Works*, p. 196.
[6] *EH*, V.1.3 373C, V.1.5 505B, V.1.7 508C and 509A, Pseudo-Dionysius**,** *Complete Works*, pp. 196, 237, 239-240.
[7] Golitzin, *Et introibo*, p. 160.

the first part of the service. It served as a preparations area for the First Entrance rite which included the procession of the clergy and people from the atrium to the naos and the bema during the early period of Christianity. During the Middle Byzantine period the liturgy was very gradually transferred inside the church in Constantinople and urban places with growing populations. The patriarch or bishop waited for the First Entrance seated in the narthex, and some of the minor orders took place in the narthex as well.[1] Others that used the narthex were penitents and other categories that did not fully participate in the liturgy inside the church.

On the horizontal axis of holiness, the porch welcomes the participants and pre-pares them for their next step into the house of God. In Oshki's porch, they hovered under the umbrella roof with the porch's decorative cross (Fig. 4), creating a distinctive sacred place and initiating the applicants who climbed the ladder of spiritualism toward their journey of exultation inside the nave. The narthex played a vital role on the axis of holiness in Oshki due to the Porch's small size. It also served the repentant sinners' needs as an area they were allowed to enter, proving that the narthex was less holy than the rest of the church. In the twelfth century, Dionysius of Alexandria testified that women could stand in the narthex because it is "not the church," meaning it is not the same as the rest of the church.[2] In Oshki, the participants were filled with energy and eagerness of spiritual exultation due to the distinctive structure of the narthex, the unprecedented umbrella roof, the paintings, the reliefs, and the existence of the apses in the narthex structure.

Not much is known about the rite conducted in and around the Oshki church. The church's architectural structure, the porch and narthex, and reliefs on the façades attest to ritual and liturgy being conducted along the west – south façades. The elabo-rate south façade with the narthex and the south porch not only conjures up memories of beauty and decoration, but also had a participatory role in processions and rites, messages, and declarations of the rulers of the church. Moreover, they manifest the central role in outdoor rites and the probable function during the Holy Week rituals, yet not solely.

Written evidence regarding the cross and related rituals can be found in both Juanšer's chronicle from the ninth century and Sumbat Davit'is-dze's chronicle from about the eleventh century. The chronicles give a short report on the construction of the Jvari church (c. 597) and the cross's veneration[3]

"Decreed a gathering every Friday. All bishops and priests of that place and re-

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[1] Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, p. 68.
[2] Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, p. 67.
[3] Rapp, *Sumbat Davit'is-dze*, pp. 354, 381; Juanšer, *Vaxt'ang Gorgasali*, pp. 236-237.

gion gathered with the Catholicos in front of the Venerable Cross; they celebrate Friday like Good Friday. There are gatherings in the (church of the) Catholicosate every Thursday, and they celebrate (at) the holy Sion as on Holy Thursday with the mystery of the body and blood of Christ. At Mc'xet'a there is a gathering every Tuesday at the Episcopal (Church)."[1]

From this brief evidence, it is apparent that outdoor processions were conducted in Jvari since the early stages of construction of the church. The chronicle's description of the processions is limited, but the model of Jerusalem is prominent. The second element from the above citation points to the Holy Week liturgy around the church and under the cross decorating the porch. Jvari and Oshki churches demonstrate the spread of rituals throughout the country.

The first part of this investigation culminates with a discussion of the liturgy during the Middle Byzantine period. It marks the gradual changes that the church underwent in Constantinople and the periphery. In Georgia, the country evidently faced geopolitical changes and development, which brought about dramatic cultural, literary, and theological modifications. The ties of Tao-Klarjeti region with Iviron flourished and, spreading a new approach to the monastic movement. The project of translating books to the Georgian language continued. The next part of the article continues to explore other porches from the eleventh-twelfth centuries. In this way, it reveals the new waves of theology and monasticism across borders that refined the spiritual and political aspirations of the Georgians.

The second part of the article will be
published in the next issue of the journal

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[1] Juanšer, *Vaxt'ang Gorgasali*, p. 236; Rapp, *Medieval Georgian Historiography*, p. 381.

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