Turkish Studies Social Sciences

Volume 14 Issue 3, 2019, p. 769-790

DOI: 10.29228/TurkishStudies.22840

ISSN: 2667-5617

Skopje/MACEDONIA-Ankara/TURKEY

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Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Article Info / Makale Bilgisi

✍ *Received/Geliş:* 18.03.2019

✓ *Accepted/Kabul:* 10.06.2019

📅 *Report Dates/Rapor Tarihleri:* Referee 1 (08.04.2019)-Referee 2 (25.04.2019)- Referee 3 (01.04.2019)- Referee 4 (27.03.2019)- Referee 5 (16.04.2019)- Referee 6 (05.04.2019)

This article was checked by turnitin.

FACADE ARRANGEMENT TECHNIQUES IN GEORGIAN RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN ANATOLIA (THE CASE OF OSHKI MONASTERY CHURCH)

*Tahsin KORKUT**

ABSTRACT

In the region which is known as "Tao-Klarjeti" according to historical sources and generally covers Artvin, Erzurum, Ardahan and Kars provinces, it is observed that Iran (Persian-Sassanid), especially Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine), and then the Georgian Bagrationi Dynasty (8-14th century) established dominance and also made it visible in the field of architecture and art.

After the spread of Christianity to the region, the cultural texture in the region became evident and the monumental buildings built in Tao-Klarjeti during the Bagrationi period have reached the present day as an important cultural heritage. Although the availability of many monasteries and churches dating back to the Bagrationi period are known through various studies and publications, it seen that there are limited studies on the techniques and application methods of stone decorations that stand out in these buildings and come to the forefront with their original style.

In this article, stone decoration techniques and application methods of the period were examined in the case of Oshki Monastery Church which is one of the important structures that are located in Tao-Klarjeti and dated back to the Bagrationi period and have survived until today. Stone decoration samples that are on various facades of the church and differ in construction technique were examined, and it was attempted to classify the decorations in the building based on these samples.

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The stone decorations used in the ornamentation program of the Oshki Church consist of the most intense and rich examples of the Medieval Georgian architecture stone decoration tradition in the Tao-Klarjeti region in terms of form, technique and application areas. The monastery comes to the forefront in the Christianity art in Medieval Anatolia in terms of the church's dimensions, plan type, facade and pulley arrangement and architectural decorations.

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In the region which is known as "Tao-Klarjeti" according to historical sources and generally covers Artvin, Erzurum, Ardahan and Kars provinces, it is observed that Iran (Persian-Sassanid), especially Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine), and then the Georgian Bagrationi Dynasty (8-14th century) established dominance and also made it visible in the field of architecture and art.

After the spread of Christianity to the region, the cultural texture in the region became evident and the monumental buildings built in Tao-Klarjeti during the Bagrationi period have reached the present day as an important cultural heritage. Although the availability of many monasteries and churches dating back to the Bagrationi period are known through various studies and publications, it seen that there are limited studies on the techniques and application methods of stone decorations that stand out in these buildings and come to the forefront with their original style.

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It is understood that the masters of stone decoration begin to engrave after they first draw the motif various dyes to the place to be decorated. This is clearly noticed in the floral decoration which was left incomplete on the surface of the pillar in the southwest of the porch on the southern facade of the Oshki Church. It is seen that the decoration on the surface of this pillar continues as a purple strip upwardly and that the carving process was not completed. With this example, it is possible to say that the stone masters used a detailed plan for the decoration and that the decoration was applied from the bottom upwards. Low and high relief technique commonly appear in similar applications in many

monastery churches such as Ishan, Tbeti/Tibeti (Cevizli), Barhal/Parhali (Altıparmak) Dolishan/Doliskana (Hamamlı) and Haho/Haholi (Bağbaşı) in the Tao-Klarjeti region. In general, it was determined that the low relief technique was applied in decoration compositions with geometric and floral characteristics while the high relief technique was used in human and animal figures on the walls and facades of the buildings. It is understood that the low relief technique was locally used in figurative decorations in the indoor spaces of buildings and that high attention was paid to the fact that the figures had high relief in the external wall decoration programs. It is observed that artists generally made the large-scale figures other than small-sized figurative depictions by the high relief technique.

Keywords: Tao-Klarjeti, Church, Floral Decoration, Christian Architecture, Oshki

ANADOLU GÜRCÜ DİNİ MİMARİSİNDE CEPHE DÜZENLEME TEKNİKLERİ (OŞKI MANASTIR KİLİSESİ ÖRNEĞİ)

ÖZ

Tarihi kaynaklara göre “Tao-Klarceti” olarak bilinen ve genel olarak; Artvin, Erzurum, Ardahan ve Kars illerini kapsayan bölgede, başta Doğu Roma İmparatorluğu (Bizans) olmak üzere, İran (Pers-Sasani) ve daha sonra da Gürcü Bagratlı Hanedanlığı’nın (8-14. yy.) hâkimiyet kurduğu ve bunu mimari ve sanat alanında da görünür kıldıkları gözlenmektedir.

Hristiyanlığın bölgeye yayılmasından sonra, bölgede kültürel doku belirginleşmiş ve Bagratlılar döneminde Tao-Klarceti’de inşa edilen anıtsal yapılar, günümüze önemli bir kültürel miras olarak kalmıştır. Bagratlı dönemine tarihlenen birçok manastır ve kilise yapısının mevcut olduğu çeşitli araştırma ve yayınlarla bilinse de; bu yapılarda dikkat çeken ve özgün bir üslupla öne çıkan taş süslemelerin teknikleri ve uygulama yöntemleri konusunda sınırlı çalışmaların olduğu görülmektedir.

Bu makalemizde, Tao-Klarceti’de bulunup Bagratlı dönemine tarihlenen ve günümüze kadar sağlam gelebilmiş önemli yapılardan biri olan Oşki Manastır Kilisesi örneğinde dönemin taş bezeme teknikleri ve uygulama yöntemleri konusu incelenmiştir. Kilisenin çeşitli cephelerinde yer alan ve yapım tekniği olarak farklılık gösteren taş süsleme örnekleri incelenmiş ve bu örneklerden yola çıkarak yapıda kullanılan bezemeler sınıflandırılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Oşki Kilisesi’nin süsleme programında kullanılan taş bezemeler; biçim, teknik ve uygulama yerleri açısından Tao-Klarceti Bölgesi’ndeki Orta Çağ Gürcü dini mimarisi taş bezeme geleneğinin en yoğun ve zengin örneklerinden oluşmaktadır. Manastır, kilisesinin boyutları, plan tipi, cephe ve kasnak düzenlemesi ile mimari bezemeleri açısından Anadolu Orta Çağ Hristiyan sanatında ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tao Klarceti, Kilise, Bitkisel Bezeme, Hristiyan Mimarisi, Oşki

Introduction:

Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Monastery Church, which is the subject of our article and the plastic decorations of which were examined, is among the important works of the Medieval Georgian architecture. The monastery is located in the geographic region which is called as Tao-Klarjeti in the historical sources and covers the whole Artvin and Ardahan and some parts of Erzurum and Kars provinces. Since Oshki Monastery Church contains many of the decoration samples observed in the Medieval Georgian religious architecture, this church was examined in particular and an attempt to come to a general conclusion was made.

The Tao-Klarjeti remained under the rule of the Bagrationi Dynasty from the mid-8th century to the 14th century and found its most powerful expression in the artistic sense. The effective architectural understanding in the formation and development of the Medieval Georgian Art was formed within the framework of Christianity belief. The cultural texture became evident after the spread of Christianity to the region in the 4th century. The religious buildings built in Tao-Klarjeti during the Bagrationi period have been brought to the present day as an important cultural heritage (Aytekin, 2018: 18-25). Stone decoration samples that are on various facades of the church and differ in construction technique were examined, and it was attempted to classify the decorations in the building based on these samples (Map. 1).

There are many domestic and foreign publications related to the church in terms of art history. However, detailed studies especially on the decoration and decoration methods and techniques of the church have remained limited. David Winfield's article entitled "Some Early Medieval Figure Sculpture From North-East Turkey" published in the Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes in London in 1968, Georgian American researcher Wachtang Djobadze's article entitled "The Georgian Churches of Tao-Klarjet'i: Construction Methods and Materials (IX to XI Century)" published in the Journal of Oriens Christianus in Germany in 1978, the book entitled "Oshki" written by Tamaz Dvali in Georgia in 2009, the paper entitled "Georgian Architecture in Erzurum" written by Fahriye Bayram in the proceedings book published in 2006 within the scope of the Symposium on Excavations and Art History Investigations during IX. Medieval and Turkish Period held in Erzurum, and the paper entitled "Two Ornamented Stone Stones found in the Church Of St. John The Baptist" written by Bülent İşler in the same book, and finally the book entitled "Oshki Monastery" published by Haldun Özkan in Erzurum in 2010 are among the important works published about the Oshki Church and its architectural structure.

Location and History of Oshki Church

Çamlıyamaç Monastery is located in the village square of Çamlıyamaç Village of Uzundere District of Erzurum Province, and church, dining hall, manuscripts chamber and three chapels have reached the present day (Photo.1).

With respect to the construction date of the church, there are three important Georgian inscriptions on the building. The first one is situated on the pediment of the door on the south cross side and the second epitaph is situated under the "Sanctuary presentation scene" on the south cross side. The third one is located on the surface of two decorated stones which are exhibited in Erzurum Museum today.¹ According to these epitaphs, it is stated that the church was built by Bagrat (d. 966) and David Kuropalates the Great (d.1001), sons of the King Adarnase III (d. 961) (Takaşvili, 1952: 106; Djobadze, 1992: 131-136; Bayram, 2006: 100; Kadiroğlu-İşler, 2010: 100; Dvali, 2009: 11, Özkan, 2010:17-18).

¹ Two monolithic stones that remained inside the wall along with the changes made during the period when the building would be used as a mosque were removed in an illegal excavation in the church in 2003. These works obtained are exhibited in Erzurum Museum today. See: İşler, B. 2006: "Öşk Vafizci Yahya Kilisesi'nde Ortaya Çıkarılan Süslemeli İki Taş" [Two Ornamented Stone Stones found in the Church Of St. John The Baptist], *IX. Ortaçağ ve Türk Dönemi Kazıları ve Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiriler* (21-23 Nisan 2005), Erzurum, s.269.

Takaishvili, who evaluated the epitaph on the southern entrance of the building, commented that the church was built by an architect named "Grigor from Oshki" in the years 958-966 and that its construction was initiated by the King Adarnase III, however, it was completed by his son, the King Magistros Bagrat who took his place after the death of the King Adarnase III (Takaşvili, 1952: 106; Gündoğdu-Bayhan et. al, 2010: 85). This dating of Takaishvili was also accepted by Winfield (Winfield, 1968: 38-39). However, Djobadze argues based on the second epitaph, which was found and published by him, that the construction of the church began on March 25, 963 and that the church was completed in 973 since it is indicated that the construction period lasted 10 years on the inscription next to the angel figurine on the pediment on the eastern front of the church (Djobadze, 1992: 125). This view of Djobadze was also accepted by subsequent researchers (Kadiroğlu-Leube, 1998: 97-98; İşler, 2006: 269).

When the region came under the control of the Byzantine Empire in 1022, the dome of the church was renewed by the Byzantine emperors Basileios II (955-1025) and his successor Constantine VIII (960-1028) (Djobadze, 1992: 125; Özkan, 2010:17-18). Some parts of the frescoes on the apsis, which were built by Patrician Gagik who was one of the important statesmen of Tao in 1036, have reached the present day (Bayram, 2006: 100). In the 11th and 12th centuries, in Çamlıyamaç Monastery, which was an important episcopal center of the region, religious hand-written works were reproduced and copied (Kadiroğlu-İşler, 2010:101). The monastery, which is known with this aspect, maintained its existence until the 15th century as a cultural center (Kadiroğlu-İşler, 2010: 101). At the end of the 19th century, the south cross side of the church was used as a mosque until 1980 (İşler, 2006: 269). It was registered as an ancient work in 1978 and the church was completely abandoned in 1985 when a new mosque was built for the village to the west of the church.²

Architectural Features of Oshki Church

The church, which is located on a four-step subbasement, has a free cross plan arrangement with an external dimension of 29.70x43.80 m and a mixed plan type arrangement with internally closed Greek cross, basilica and triconchos (three-leaf clover) plan (Takaşvili, 1952: 106). The columns on the east of the naos with square layout plan were covered with dodecagon domes, and those in the west were covered with a dome with high pulleys, rising above four cross-plan free supports and passed with pendentives (Plan 1).

The central location of the building was extended with cross sides in four directions. The cross sides with equal dimensions in the east, north and south end with semicircular planned exedras. The naos section and the sides of the cross that constitute the main prayer place of the church are arranged as single storey. The pastoforion cells on the sides of the apsis, the spaces on both sides of the north and south exedras, and the section on the north of the west cross side are two-storey.

From the north-south direction of the west cross side of the structure, it is moved to the rectangular bema. The east cross side that limits bema from the east and does not overflow outside is internally half-round and externally three-sided, and an embrasure window was placed on each facade. There are rectangular pastoforion cells on each side of the apsis. An embrasure window was opened on the eastern direction of these cells that end with a semi-circular niche. It is possible to enter into the building through the doors on the southern and western fronts of the west cross side, which is longer than the other cross sides, and on the north and south cross sides.

Other facades outside the western facade of the church exhibit an architectural layout where similar features are repeated. There is a place similar to narthex with a rectangular plan in the north-south direction of a different period to the west of the west cross side, and a rectangular and arcaded

² It was registered as an immovable cultural asset by the decision dated 09.09.1978 and no. 1297 of the High Council of Real Estate Antiquities and Monuments (HCREAM).

space in the east-west direction of the south of this cross side (İşler, 2010: 400). This portico is divided into two sections with four supports.

The main walls of the structure were built by the infill wall technique. The outer surface of main walls, carrier system and cover were built with smooth cut stone, and the internal surface of main walls was built with pitch-faced stone and cut stones. The wall filler was attached with mortar and reinforced with rubble stone material.

Stone Decoration Techniques in the Medieval Period

One of the important factors that determine the quality of the decoration is its material and technique. It is seen that Bagrationi Georgians, who were engaged in a large construction activity in Tao-Klarjeti region, also used stones especially in religious architecture and decoration. Stone was an indispensable building material as a permanent, sound and durable material to ensure the security of monasteries and monumental churches built in the mountainous areas of the region against external attacks. In the Djobadze's article entitled "The Georgian Churches of Tao-Klarjet'i: Construction Methods and Materials IX to XI Century" (Djobadze, 1978:114-134).³ it is stated that the stones were generally provided from the region and that the quarries were another important factor.⁴

It is understood that these stones used in architecture were obtained from the surrounding volcanic rocks and that they were mainly composed of trachy-dacite, dacite, andesite and tuff stones, based on the sources of the researchers who studied these issues (Helvacı-Erkül, 2001: 35-41; Yıldız, 2003: 435-448).

It is observed that the exterior surfaces of these stones used on the facades and interior walls of the buildings were polished and smoothed, and that favorable surfaces were formed for decorations. One of the important data showing the stages of material extraction and processing from the quarries during the Medieval Period is the frieze reliefs on the triangular pediment of the west facade of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Korogo (Georgia). Here, there are several scenes that respectively show the construction phases of a church on the surface of the cornice of the pediment. In the composition, it is seen that the stones were first removed from the quarry by workers and transported in blocks and then the stones were started to be processed. The composition was completed after all these works by presenting the structure to Jesus in the lap of the Virgin Mary (Photo. 2) (Khoshtaria- Natsvlishvili-Tumanishvili, 2012: 100-103).

Stone Decoration Applications in Oshki Monastery Church

The stone decorations used in the ornamentation program of the church were mostly concentrated on the window pediments on the arcades of the exterior facades of the building, arch surfaces, kavsara of niche, dome pulley, and the body, head and bases of interior columns and pillars.

The decorations in the building are composed of simple geometric compositions with nested circles, knitting, knot and cross motifs, stylized floral curved branches, various animal figures with palmet, rumi, stylized lotus motif, hunting scenes and various angel figures. These floral decorations used were generally formed as a composition in which the motifs are arranged side by side and repeating each other.

³ In the relevant article, the epitaph situated on the pediment of the door on the South cross side of the Church was reexamined and translated by Djobadze. 64000 liters of wine, 2013 kg iron, 3325 kg grain were consumed, constantly working 70 masters, 80 workers, stone carrying 30 oxes, and 30 animals (horse, mule and donkey) used to carry the load were indicated in the epitaph dated 963-973 which contains information on the construction of the church.

⁴ Furthermore, in this article, it is also stated that the manuscripts entitled "The Life of Priest Grigol Handzta" should be examined with respect to the construction phases of a typical monastery in this region and other important features. See: for Turkish translation of information about monasteries in Grigol Handzta Manuscripts See: Bayram, F., 2005: *Artvin'deki Gürcü Manastırlarının Mimarisi [Architecture of the Georgian monasteries in Artvin]*, İstanbul, p. 138-145.

Three different techniques used in decorations in Oshki Church were determined. These are carving, relief and fine scraping (Graffiti-Scratching) techniques.⁵

In the decorations made with carving technique, the compositions were made by carving the motifs. The stylized floral decoration composition on the arch surface of the window in the niche of the south cross side of the Oshki Church was made by carving technique. Here, there are rumi motifs placed between curved branches. This technique stands out as the only rare example within the scope of the decoration program in the building. This example is situated in the window decoration on the niche in the west of the south cross side axis of the church. The surface of the arch that surrounds the upper part of this window has an arrangement of floral decorations composed of rumi motifs placed between curved branches. The decoration was made by scraping the stone using the graffiti technique. The ground of the composition was dyed with purple madder, so its visual effect was increased (Photo. 3) (Yazar, 2018:388).

It was determined that the relief technique has two different applications, low relief and high relief. In low relief technique, the ground is carved and the motifs are slightly raised from the surface. It is remarkable that this technique was used especially in geometric and floral compositions in the church. For instance, the geometric and floral decorations on the front of the dome pulley of the Oshki Church were made by applying the low-relief technique (Photo.4), (Djobadze, 1978:114-134).

In the high relief technique, in a similar application with a low relief technique, the motifs are arranged to squeeze extremely and to give the appearance of sculpture. It was determined that this technique was mostly used in founder and angel figures on facades and in some hunting scenes. The figures in the Presentation and Deesis scenes on the southern facade of the church and the Gabriel and Michael figures on this front were made by the high relief technique and exhibit an imposing stance like a statue. One of the important scenes in which the high relief technique was applied in the Oshki Church is the composition completed with "Invocation Scene" which is approximately 3 m above the ground level in the lower axis of the arcade south front of the diaconicon and composed of five figures in the original, but only three of which survived to the present day. This composition includes five figures each of which is 1.46 m high and approximately 0.70 m wide. Each of these figures was depicted by relieving up to 20-25 cm from the ground on a single piece of stone. (Photo.5). In this scene on the south front of the diaconicon, there are depictions consisting of Bagrad brothers holding the model of church in their hands, Jesus in the middle, Virgin Mary praying turned towards him just to the left, and St. John The Baptist on the right of Jesus. From the depictions of Bagrad brothers holding the model of the church in their hands in this Deesis composition, it is understood from the inscription next to them that the one to the left of the composition is Magistros David by his title on the date of the construction of the church and the one on the right of the composition is his brother Prince Bagrat.⁶ The ceremonial outfits of both fathers were processed with rich decorations, and it is understood from the curved decoration on fabrics that they were made of the heavy and expensive fabric of the period. David's clothes have knotted medallions with stylized palmette motifs (İşler, 2011: 302). The figures in this Deesis composition look forward in a way to see those facing them like cult sculptures. The light movements of the figures in the relief are facing the depiction of Jesus given on the front in the center. While the legs of these figures are given from profile, their body and heads are depicted in the form of turned by 45°, showing that the master applied the body's extensions at the right ratio and in different positions. The model of the domed church is depicted in three dimensions, thus, opacity and limitation

⁵ The work of art made by creating some hollow parts and some parts by forming figures through relief on relief, stone metal, clay wood or plaster surface. For further information, see: Sözen M., - U. Tanyeli, 2014: *Sanat Kavram ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, "Kabartma" Mad., İstanbul, p. 152; Turani, A., 1993: *Sanat Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul, Kabarma Mad. S. 62; Eroğlu, Ö., 2013: *Plastik Sanatlar Sözlüğü*, Rölyef Mad. İstanbul, p.119.

⁶ According to the inscriptions found just above the depictions; On the southern axis of this niche is the Duke of Duke Bagrat (961) and the northern axis is David Magistros (1001).

were eliminated in this relief, and it was made feel that managers really held the model of the church in their hands in their depictions.

Another important example in which the high relief technique was applied in Oshki is the hunting scene formed by an eagle sitting on a base just above the crown arch on the south cross side of the church and grasped cattle with its talons. The head of the eagle on the scene has not survived until today, however as far as we learned from previous studies, it is understood that it has a glance arranged by giving a sense of reality in a way to look in the eyes of those against it by dropping its head. The eagle is given with wings open, bigger than its prey in three dimensions. This eagle depiction, especially in this example, is a symbol of the coat of arm of the dynasty and represents the power of royalty, and the necklace on the neck reinforces this situation (Photo.6, 7), (Aladashvili, 1977: 111-112).

The last important example in which the high relief technique was applied in the Oshki Church is the scene depicting two angel figures standing side by side in forward looking position on the pediment part of the arcade, on the upper side of the above-mentioned hunting scene. Which angels these figures were was defined in purple colored Georgian writings at the foot levels. The figure in the east direction symbolizes Gabriel while the figure in the west direction symbolizes Michael. The angels are depicted in full-length and on the front, and apart from their heads, both figures have relatively well survived until today. The angels depicted in high relief technique with open wings are located at the top due to their location. Gabriel holds a scepter which gradually gets thinner in his left hand. The angel is depicted in loose clothes and holds a flower, which has preserved its purple color to the present, in the palm of his right hand. The wrist parts of the dress were highlighted with consecutive rectangles and only the heel part of the feet remained solid. Michael, who is smaller in size than Gabriel, holds a scepter with two hooks on the base and also holds a small sphere where the circles are intensely combined between thumb and forefinger in his left hand. It is seen that that the looped dress he wears does not fit her body shape. On the dress, there are sharp and broken folds in the middle of the dress decorated with abstract linear motifs ending with the helical termination of concentric circles. The anatomical structure of angels was proportionally depicted, the feet were depicted crosswise, and the importance of three-dimensionality was emphasized by directing towards deeper. There is a sensible diversity in the height ratios of these reliefs. Their separate parts such as wings, volume of the main body, folds of clothes, fluffy and plump hands gradually show different heights (Photo.8). The angel figures on the south front of the west cross side of the church were also made by the high relief technique in terms of style and processing, similar to the angel figures described above. It is also remarkable that the Saint Simeon figure located at the top of the twin window on the south front of the Oshki Church was made by the high relief technique in orans posture. Here is the figure of Saint Simeon sitting on a stylized floral motif on the axis of the upper cornice of the window pediment and a bust on with bottom and top three-step head and base. Saint Simeon is given a religious outfit and the contours of the cloak on his shoulder are visible. It can be noticed that the Saint placed a hat in koukoulion style on the head of haloe, and a large part of his face is destroyed, but bushy beard is noticeable. There are two equal arms crosses on his chest (Photo. 9).

Apart from these depictions with high relief, there are also two monolithic stones in which the high relief technique was used and which are originally located in the church, but are exhibited in Erzurum Museum nowadays. The portraits of two brothers who made the church built appear on the surface of these two monolithic stones that were uncovered as a result of an illegal excavation inside the church and are now in Erzurum Museum today. There are figures made by the high relief technique, placed one under the other in a blind arch design on the front sides of these monolithic stones, and there are inscriptions on the front and back sides of stones. While Virgin Mary and Jesus on the top and the King David at the bottom are depicted on one of these stones, St. John The Baptist on the top and Bagrat at the bottom are depicted with their hands open and praying on the other stone (Photo, 10, 11), (İşler, 2011: 302).

In the Fine Scraping (Graffiti-Scratching) technique, the motif to be made is applied on the surface of the stone in the form of fine scraping. Here, the type of instruments to be used in the application is selected by considering the formal movements of the patterns. It is understood that tools such as chisels, fine-toothed adze and drill were used in shaping these reliefs. The unique example for this technique is the decoration on the surface of the window pediment on the niche in the south cross side of the church. The surface of this window pediment is decorated with a palmette placed on the center of the curved branches and rumi motifs on the sides. A bird figure was placed at the springer levels of the arch there and the ground of the decoration was dyed with purple madder, so its visual effect was increased (Photo.12).

Evaluation and Conclusion

The stone decorations used in the ornamentation program of the Oshki Church consist of the most intense and rich examples of the Medieval Georgian architecture stone decoration tradition in the Tao-Klarjeti region in terms of form, technique and application areas. The monastery comes to the forefront in the Christianity art in Medieval Anatolia in terms of the church's dimensions, plan type, facade and pulley arrangement and architectural decorations. Based on these features, it is possible to evaluate the Oshki Monastery Church within the examples of the golden age of Georgian architecture (Kadiroğlu-İşler, 2010: 100).

It is understood that the masters of stone decoration begin to engrave after they first draw the motif various dyes to the place to be decorated. This is clearly noticed in the floral decoration which was left incomplete on the surface of the pillar in the southwest of the porch on the southern facade of the Oshki Church. It is seen that the decoration on the surface of this pillar continues as a purple strip upwardly and that the carving process was not completed. With this example, it is possible to say that the stone masters used a detailed plan for the decoration and that the decoration was applied from the bottom upwards (Photo 13).

Low and high relief technique commonly appear in similar applications in many monastery churches such as Ishan, Tbeti/Tibeti(Cevizli), Barhal/Parhali (Altıparmak) Dolishan/Doliskana (Hamamlı) and Haho/Haholi (Bağbaşı) in the Tao-Klarjeti region (Aytekin, 1999: 15-89) In general, it was determined that the low relief technique was applied in decoration compositions with geometric and floral characteristics while the high relief technique was used in human and animal figures on the walls and facades of the buildings (Photo 14). It is understood that the low relief technique was locally used in figurative decorations in the indoor spaces of buildings and that high attention was paid to the fact that the figures had high relief in the external wall decoration programs. It is observed that artists generally made the large-scale figures other than small-sized figurative depictions by the high relief technique. Considering the samples of figurative figures of ram figures, which started from the early stages of Georgian art, they are seen as sculptures engraved in the size of a ram (Buğrul, 2017: 1-14).

The figures in the "scene of the blessing of the church model" engraved on two monolithic stones that were formerly situated on the southern front of Opiza (Bağcılar) Monastery Church (5-6 century) located Bağcılar Village of Central District of Artvin Province, which is one of the earliest churches in the region, were depicted with simple coarse lines in the low relief technique (İşler, 2011:300), (Photo 15). Similarly, the figures of Gabriel and Michael on the southern front of Doliskana Church (937-954) located in Hamamlı Village of the Central District of Artvin Province, which can also be considered as the early dated building compared to its contemporaries, were roughly depicted by the low relief technique (Photo 16), (Korkut, 2018: 85). However, in parallel with the economic and artistic development of the region in later periods, the technique was improved in the decorations in the Oshki Church, and three dimensional high relief sculptures in sculptural forms were presented. The figures of Gabriel and Michael on the southern front of the Oshki Church were made of stone materials which were rare in Anatolian Christian art, and these types of applications the examples of which are very rare

even in the Byzantine Christian art, which is one of the most powerful art circles of the period, remind marble sculptures with abundant examples in ancient Greek art. It is possible to describe them as the examples of highly qualified high relief applied on the material. Another important point in angel figures is that the motifs in the clothes of the figures and the curved details of these clothes that are hanging downwards were carefully crafted with fine workmanship. This also shows the point of the period reached in terms of the sense of art.

In the monasteries and churches belonging to Medieval Armenian architecture in Kars Ani constituting the neighbor art frame, the low relief technique was applied in floral and geometric decorations, and the high relief technique was applied in figurative decorations on facades. For instance, high relief technique was used in eagle figures placed at the level of the arch springer of the niche located on the sides of the door on the south front of Ani Cathedral while low relief technique was used in geometric and floral compositions in the building. Similar applications can also be found in Tigran Honents Church and Geghard Monastery (Photo 17,18, 19). This situation is not different in the religious architecture in Georgia. It is seen that there are two angel figures carrying the Maltese Cross within the medallion in the scene of "File: Ascension of the Cross" on the pediment of the south door of the Jvari Monastery in Mtskheta (586/7-605/6) in Georgia. The figures are given on the front and were made by the high relief technique. The angel figures are positioned with the appropriate body ratios and curved wings within the boundaries of the pediment. Here, this scene located at the entrance of the church with the comfortable and realistic depictions of the angels, in which the folds on the clothes of figures are highlighted with smooth lines and the feathers on the wings of angels are specified in detail, arouse great impact on visitors (Photo. 20). It can be considered that this was due to the fact that the artists of that period usually needed to emphasize the figures in the themed-scenes by adding depth and dimension. Because a depiction made with simple linear lines and a figure with added dimension in the form of a high relief do not have the same effect.

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Map, Plans and Photos

Map 1: State of Georgia during the years 830-1020 (Andrew Andersen)

Plan 1: Oshk Vank / Oshki (Çamlıyamaç) Monastery Church (W. Djobadze)

Photo 1: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, general view from the southern front.

Photo 2: West front of the Church of Virgin Mary, the scene detail in the cornice (Korogho/ Georgia). (D. Khostaria, N. Natsvlishvili, D. Tumanishvili)

Photo 3: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, niche window to the east of the axis.

Photo 4: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, window arch of the niche to the west of the main axis.

Photo 5: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, southern front of the east cross side, “Deesis Scene” (E. Takaşvili).

Photo 6: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, figures of Michael and Gabriel in the arcade on the main axis.

Photo 7: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, animal struggle on the main axis.

Photo 8: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, figures of Michael and Gabriel on the main axis, detail.

Photo 9: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, western façade, St. Simeon figure.

Photo 10: Two steles from Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, at the top; Mary and Child Jesus and at the bottom; King David figure (Drawing: B. İşler).

Photo 11: Two steles from Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, at the top Jesus and at the bottom St John.

Photo 12: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, window arch of the niche to the west of the main axis.

Photo 13: Oshki/Oshk Vank (Çamlıyamaç) Church, south cross side, kiborion, column corner to the west of the axis.

Photo 14: Haho/Hahuli (Bağbaşı) Church, twin windows on the south front, hunting scene.

Photo 15: Opiza (Bağcılar) Church, “Scene of blessing of the church model” (B. İşler).

Photo 16: Dolishana/Doliskana (Hamamlı) Monastery Church, south cross side window detail.

Photo 17: Kars / Ani Cathedral south facade.

Photo 18: Kars / Ani, Tigran Honents Church, side of the dome.

Photo 19: Armenia-Geghard Monastery, side of the dome.
(Access:[<http://www.wikiwand.com/ru/>]).

Photo 20: Georgia, Holy Cross in Mtskheta-Cvari monastery, Tympanum of the south entrance, (T. Daiani, T. Khundadze, E. Kvachatadze, 2017).