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**VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION OF SOME
CHURCHES IN ABKHAZIA (10th to 11th CENTURIES):
CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION IN THE VILLAGE
OF DRANDA**

EKATERINA ENDOLTSEVA

*Doctor of Sciences
Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS
kat345@yandex.ru*

NIKOLAI BYSTRITSKY

*Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS
nbystritskiy@yandex.ru*

DANIIL DRYGA

*Candidate of Technical Sciences
RUDN Engineering Academy
hopkuh@gmail.com*

LYUBOV KAZENNOVA

*Center for Historical and Archaeological Research of
the Crimea and the Mediterranean of
the Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS
kazennova.lyubov@mail.ru*

ALEXANDER KARNAUSHENKO

*Center for Historical and Archaeological Research of
the Crimea and the Mediterranean of
the Institute of Oriental Studies of the RAS
scad.luncher@gmail.com*

ELLA KARNAUSHENKO

*Sevastopol State University
yellika@gmail.com*

DUC 73; 73.03; 73.04

DOI: 10.54503/1829-4278.2024.2-14

Summary

The article discusses the results of a project for the virtual reconstruction of the architectural decoration and small forms of the church in Dranda, Republic of Abkhazia. The available fragments are currently preserved in three locations: the narthex of this church, the Abkhaz State Museum in Sukhumi, and the Ecclesiastical Archaeological Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Abkhazia. In addition, there are published phototypes of two slabs—now lost—with complex multi-figure compositions from the same church. The study and digitization of the existing fragments have brought forward a hypothesis about the original appearance of the altar barrier and the decoration of the western facade of the church in Dranda. The slab which may have adorned the western facade apparently reproduces a fragment of an abbreviated scene of the Last Judgment (Christ on the throne and four angels). Thanks to the stylistic and iconographic analogies, this scene is inscribed in the artistic context of the Christian art of the 10th to 11th centuries.

Keywords: reliefs, plastic, Last Judgment, architectural decoration, Dranda, sculpture

In 2023, thanks to the support of the Russian Science Foundation, it became possible to carry out work on the virtual reconstruction of three monuments (New Athos, the Upper and Lower Churches on Mount Anakopia, and the Church of the Assumption in Dranda¹) on the territory of Abkhazia, on the basis of some preserved fragments which can be dated to the 10th to 11th centuries. The results of the work on the reconstruction of the architectural decoration of the Upper and Lower Churches on Mount Anakopia have been partially published², and a large article on this topic is in print now³. In addition, a website has been created to present all the results of the work on three monuments, including their 3D models, and possible options for the virtual reconstruction of their architectural decoration (external decor and small forms)⁴.

1 **Ендольцева Е. Ю.**, *Архитектурная пластика Абхазии в период Абхазского царства (VIII—XI вв.)*, Москва: ИВ РАН, 2020, с. 32–187, 256–270.

2 **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Быстрицкий Н. И., Дрыга Д. О., Карнаушенко А. Д., Карнаушенко Э. Н., Казеннова Л. К.**, Нижняя церковь на горе Анакопия (г. Новый Афон, Республика Абхазия): опыт виртуальной реконструкции архитектурной декорации, *Byzantino Caucasica*, вып. 3, 2023, с. 65 – 89.

3 **Endoltseva E. Yu., Bystritsky N. I., Dryga D. O., Karnauschenko A. D., Karnauschenko E. N., Kazennova L. K.** Two Churches on Anacopia Mountain (Abkhazia): An Attempt of Virtual Reconstruction, *Anastasis. Research in Medieval Culture and Art*, vol. XI, N 1, May 2024, p. 120–145 https://anastasis-review.ro/wp-content/uploads/ARMCA-2024-XI-1-05_Ekaterina-Endoltseva.pdf

4 <https://arch.ivran.ru/>

This article is devoted to the Church of the Assumption in the village of Dranda (so far the results of the studies carried out on this church have been published only in brief abstracts⁵). We have particularly enlarged on some stone fragments of the church part of which are now kept in several places, while some of the most eloquent pieces have been lost⁶.

Most of the fragments available for research are located in the narthex of the church (fig. 1). Many of these pieces—about thirty in total number—can be hypothetically identified as fragments of the altar barrier of the church, while the function of some other fragments and their possible place in the decorative system of the church still remain unclear. Theoretically, they could have decorated the frames of the windows or doors on the western facade of the church. According to the rector of the church, Fr. Andrei Strutsky⁷, part of these reliefs “were discovered during the work to restore the original floor level inside the church. The work was accompanied by the dismantling of the altar, recently composed of fragments of the cathedral’s cladding and, possibly, its ancient altar barrier”⁸. After having been cleared of cement, the fragments were displayed in a makeshift display case in the narthex of the church.

Five more fragments from the Church of the Assumption, including some niche artifacts⁹, are kept in a private museum founded by Fr. Dorofey Dbar¹⁰,

5 **Ендольцева Е.Ю., Быстрицкий Н.И., Дрыга Д.О., Карнаушенко А.Д., Карнаушенко Э.Н., Казеннова Л.К.**, Алтарная преграда церкви Успения в селе Дранда (Республика Абхазия): опыт виртуальной реконструкции, *Достижения и перспективы изучения археологии Северного Кавказа в XX – первой четверти XXI века. Материалы Международной научной конференции по археологии Северного Кавказа «XXXIII Крупновские чтения», посвященной 120-летию со дня рождения Евгения Игнатьевича Крупнова*, Москва: ИА РАН, 2024, с. 302–305; **Endoltseva E. Yu.**, Theme of the Last Judgment Based on the Materials of Architectural Plasticity of the Church in Dranda, Republic of Abkhazia (X early XI centuries), *Historical, Cultural, Interethnic, Religious and Political Connections of Crimea with the Mediterranean Region and the Countries of the East: Materials of the VIII International Scientific Conference (Sevastopol, June 3–8, 2024)*, (in 2 tomes), t. 1, Moscow, 2024, p. 123–126.

6 **Ендольцева Е. Ю.**, *Архитектурная пластика...*, с. 211–215, 256–270.

7 The authors are grateful to Fr. Andrey Strutsky for his assistance in conducting field studies of artifacts.

8 **Ендольцева Е. Ю.**, *Архитектурная пластика...*, с. 267–268.

9 https://anyha.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Binder1_%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B0_08.jpg; **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д.** (архимандрит), Архитектурная декорация и малые формы церкви в Дранде: новые данные, *Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета, История. Регионоведение, Международные отношения*, серия 4, 2018, т. 23, № 5, с. 196–209.

10 The authors are grateful to Fr. Dorofey Dbar for his help and cooperation.

the Ecclesiastical Archaeological Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Abkhazia, located in New Athos Monastery in the city of New Athos, Abkhazia¹¹. The museum was founded in 2002 at New Athos Diocesan Theological School¹².

The third part of the fragments (presumably, seven in number), is unfortunately unavailable currently. They were studied in the autumn of 2008¹³ (before reconstruction) in the Abkhasian State Museum in Sukhumi¹⁴. The curator of the museum, M. K. Inal-Ipa, kindly showed us the inventory cards of seven fragments belonging to the church in Dranda, but no dimensions were indicated on them, and there was only information about their origin (it was not possible to see the artifacts in person and measure them at that time). For this reason, in the 3D reconstruction of the altar barrier, these fragments have been used only conditionally: their dimensions have been restored by analogy with reliefs of the same type discovered in the other two places mentioned above.

Finally, the most complex compositions, marked by an abundance of figures, are two slab fragments which unfortunately have not survived. They are known only from the phototypes published by Countess P. S. Uvarova in 1894¹⁵. At that time, both the fragments were kept by A. N. Vvedensky, Governor of Sukhumi District, Kutais Province. One of them depicts Christ and the Mother of God under arches with triangular copestones (fig. 2), while the other shows Christ on the throne with two angels (fig. 3). The dimensions of the slabs are not indicated in the description of the phototypes which contains only some of Countess Uvarova's considerations regarding their possible dating.

The domed church of the village of Dranda is located 23 km from the city of Sukhumi in Gulripsh Region, Republic of Abkhazia. It is a unique architectural monument, but its history is rather poorly covered in documents, and even the date of its foundation is debatable.

The original dedication of the church remains unknown¹⁶; it received its current dedication in the name of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1871 after it had been restored “by the joint efforts of Bishop of Imereti St. Gabriel (Kikodze), who ruled the Abkhaz diocese, and the Society for the Restoration of Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus”¹⁷. The church served as the cathedral of Dranda Diocese throughout its existence from the second

11 <https://anyha.org/drandatwy-anyha-dekor-afragmentkua/>

12 <https://anyha.org/category/museum/>

13 **Ендольцева Е. Ю.**, *Архитектурная пластика...*, с. 211–215.

14 The authors are grateful to A. S. Agumaa and M. K. Inal-Ipa for this.

15 **Уварова П. С.**, *Христианские памятники Кавказа, МАК, IV. Москва, 1894, таб. XII, с. 30.*

16 **Виноградов А. Ю.**, *Дранда, Православная энциклопедия*, т. 16, Москва: 2007, с. 129.

17 *Ibid.*

half of the 10th century to the second half of the 17th century¹⁸. “Around 1630, the Italian traveler Giovanni da Luca mentions him as the church of the Holy Mother of God. In 1637 the temple was destroyed ”¹⁹ and was gradually abandoned. As S. Sablin wrote in 1846, the building had strong walls and vaults, although trees had grown on them²⁰.

The monument is unique in its current state of preservation; its vaulted ceiling dates back to the time of its construction. The shapes of the facades were slightly changed in 1883, when monks who had arrived from New Athos founded a monastery here. “The architectural appearance of the temple was changed: part of the arch of the vestibule and the wall separating the vestibule from the main part of the temple were dismantled, and choirs were built. ... The iconostasis was ordered and made in Moscow.” After restoration, the consecration of the church took place in 1886²¹. In 1928 the monastery closed; later a collective farm was established there, being afterwards replaced by a prison which still exists in the building next to the cathedral.

During the restoration carried out under the leadership of the restoration architect V. G. Tsintsadze in 1978, “numerous alterations from various times were removed, including the onion dome and the central western entrance. The sleeves of the cross received a 2-slope covering, although originally it was probably covered with mosquitoes. Church walls plastered, leaving several fragments of masonry for viewing”²². The unusual configuration of the western facade having two entrances was restored.

At the beginning of the 1990s, repairs were carried out in the narthex using modern standard bricks. Worship services resumed in 2002.

The church attracted the attention of many researchers. In 1833 it was visited by Dubois de Montpere²³. Its plan was first published by M. Brosse²⁴, and it was also mentioned by M. Seleznev²⁵ and D. Bakradze²⁶.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁹ **Da Luca G.**, Information about Abkhazia and Megrelia, *Tabagua I. Georgia in the Archives and Book Depositories of Europe*, t. 3, Tbilisi, 1987, p. 160–161 (in Georgian).

²⁰ **Саблин С.**, Древний генуэзский храм в укреплении Дранды, *Кавказ*, 1846, № 8 (25 февр.), с. 4.

²¹ **Виноградов А. Ю.**, Дранда..., с. 129.

²² Ibid.

²³ **De Monpéreux D.**, *Voyage autour du Caucase chez les Tcherkesses et les Abkhases en Colchide, en Géorgie, en Arménie et en Crimée*, Paris: Librairie de Gide, 1839, p. 318.

²⁴ **Brosset M.**, *Rapports sur un voyage archéologique dans la Georgie et dans l'Arménie, exécuté en 1847–1848. Rapport 4 – 12*, St. Petersburg, 1851, p. 11, pl. XXXI.

²⁵ **Селезнев М.**, *Руководство к познанию Кавказа*, кн. 1–2, Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Мор. кадет. корпуса, 1847, таб. IV, с. 171.

²⁶ **Бакрадзе Д. З.** Кавказ в древних памятниках христианства, *Записки Общества любителей кавказской археологии*, т. I (под ред. А. Берже), Тифлис: Тип. Гл. упр.

The date of the foundation of the church still causes heated debate among researchers. The most complete information on the history of studies held in the church (for 2002) is found in the book by L. G. Khrushkova,²⁷ and in the article by A. Yu. Vinogradov (for 2007)²⁸. Based on an analysis of architectural features and external forms, I. Tolstoy and N. P. Kondakov dated the church back to the 11th century²⁹, while A. M. Pavlinov believed that it had been built between the 8th and 10th centuries³⁰. G. N. Chubinashvili attributed the church to the so-called “Jvari type”, and therefore traced it back to the 8th century³¹, with L. D. Rcheulishvili³², R. Mepisashvili and V. Tsintsadze³³ agreeing with this assumption. E. Neubauer considers the church to be a Byzantine monument dating from the 8th century³⁴. A. Yu. Vinogradov regards it a monument of the 8th to 9th centuries³⁵.

Another group of researchers, including A. Alpago–Novello, V. Beridze, J. Lafontaine–Dozon³⁶, M. K. Khotelashvili, A. L. Yakobson³⁷, and V. A. Lekvinadze³⁸, dates the church in Dranda to the 6th century (before 548, when an episcopate was established in Abkhazia). L. G. Khrushkova offers her version of dating—7th century—based on an analysis of the domed amphorae and some historical circumstances³⁹. A. V. Sazanov, in his recent study, conducts a more accurate comparative analysis of the domed amphorae and comes to the conclusion that “the dating of the church is given by the intersection of the combination

наместн. Кавказского, 1875, с. 49.

27 **Хрушкова Л. Г.**, *Раннехристианские памятники Восточного Причерноморья (IV—VII века)*, Москва: «Наука», 2002, с. 260–263.

28 **Виноградов А. Ю.**, *Дранда...*, с. 129.

29 **Толстой И., Кондаков Н.**, *Христианские древности Крыма, Кавказа и Киева*, вып. 4, Санкт–Петербург: Тип. М–ва путей сообщения, 1891, с. 67, илл. 59–60.

30 **Павлинов А. М.**, *Дранда, МАК*, вып. 3, 1893, с. 8–13.

31 **Чубинашвили Г. Н.**, *Памятники типа Джвари*, Тбилиси: Издательство Акад. наук Груз. ССР, 1948, с. 62, 67, 99.

32 **Рчеулишвили Л. Д.**, *Некоторые аспекты грузинской архитектуры черноморского побережья, Средневековое искусство. Русь. Грузия*, Москва: «Наука», 1978, с. 27.

33 **Mepisashvili R., Zinzadse W.**, *Die Kunst des alten Georgien*, Leipzig: Liz. Ausgabe Atlantis Vlg., 1977, р. 64–65; **Меписашвили Р.**, *Дранда*, Тбилиси: Мецнереба, 1983, с. 515–535.

34 **Neubauer E.**, *Abchazische Architektur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Georgien und Byzanz (6. bis 11. Jh.)*, *Byzantinische Kunstexport*, Halle, 1978, S. 70–79.

35 **Виноградов А. Ю.**, *Дранда...*, с. 129.

36 **Alpago–Novello A., Beridze V., Lafontaine–Dosogne J.**, *Art and Architecture in Medieval Georgia*, Louvaine-la-Neuve, 1980, р. 489.

37 **Хотелашвили М. К., Якобсон А. Л.**, *Византийский храм в с. Дранда, Византийский временник*, т. 45, с. 192–206.

38 **Леквинадзе В. А.**, *О Драндском храме, Кавказ и Византия*, 1988, т. 6, с. 211.

39 **Хрушкова Л. Г.**, *Раннехристианские памятники...*, с. 207.

of cycles of the amphoras considered, falling in the middle – third quarter of the 6th century. Considering the lack of mention of the church in Procopius’s treatise “On Buildings,” completed in 560, and the transfer of Lazica to Byzantine rule as a result of a treaty with Persia in 563, its construction can be dated to the end of the third quarter of the 6th century, apparently to 570 – 580. Thus, the analysis of the amphora complex of the Dranda Church clearly showed that A. L. Yakobson was right. A later dating is impossible”⁴⁰.

One of the unique features of the church is its dome with sixteen skylights at the base. The masonry is almost entirely made of plinth with rare white stone inserts on the facades. A detailed description of the construction is given by L. G. Khrushkova⁴¹ and A. Yu. Vinogradov⁴².

As for the altar barrier of the church, in 1833 Dubois de Montpere saw a broken colonnade (of six white marble columns) “with perfectly preserved capitals” which separated the altar from the main space. Templon parts were connected with metal ties⁴³.

There is also some debate regarding the dating of the aforementioned two slabs depicting Christ and the Mother of God under arches of triangular ends, and Christ enthroned with two angels (published by Countess P. S. Uvarova). Praskovya Sergeevna herself believed that the limestone slab with the image of Christ on a throne with two angels can be attributed to early Christian times, while the first slab is of later origin⁴⁴. L. G. Khrushkova shared this opinion, attributing the slabs to the 5th and 10th centuries respectively⁴⁵.

A. Yu. Vinogradov believes—and we can agree with him—that “the style of the reliefs is the same (on the 1st slab the figures look heavier due to the seated figure of Christ): the elaboration of the folds, the type of head and halo of Christ, the ornamentation with the characteristic keeled ending. The reliefs were probably made by a local master based on Byzantine models and can be dated back to the 9th–11th centuries”⁴⁶.

In 2018, thanks to Fr. Dorotheus Dbar, another fragment of this altar barrier (the base of the column is round in plan) was published with a unique scene, namely “Jonah in the belly of the whale”, showing a rare iconographic version (fig. 4)⁴⁷.

40 Сазанов А. В., Драндский храм (Абхазия) и его датировка, *Исторические, культурные, межнациональные, религиозные и политические связи Крыма со Средиземноморским регионом и странами Востока: Материалы VIII Международной научной конференции* (Севастополь, 3 – 8 июня 2024 г.), т. 2, Москва, 2024, с. 92 – 102.

41 Хрушкова Л. Г., *Раннехристианские памятники...*, с. 260–265.

42 Виноградов А. Ю., Дранда..., с. 128–129.

43 De Monpéreux D., *Voyage autour du Caucase...*, p. 318.

44 Уварова П. С., *Христианские памятники...*, с. 30.

45 Хрушкова Л. Г., *Раннехристианские памятники...*, с. 270–273.

46 Виноградов А. Ю., Дранда..., с. 131.

47 Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д. (архимандрит), *Архитектурная декорация...*, с. 196–209.

In the summer of 2023, large-scale work was carried out to create a virtual reconstruction of the altar barrier; in the meantime, several hypotheses were formulated about the nature of the architectural decoration of the western facade and the shape of the altar barrier⁴⁸.

The scientific work on the virtual reconstruction of the monument under study was carried out through the following stages:

- Research into, and digitization of, the interior of the church, and the fragments of architectural decoration stored in its narthex;
- Creation of 3D models, an analysis and attribution of fragments (stones) kept in the funds of the Ecclesiastical Archaeological Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Abkhazia;
- Creation and verification of a 3D model of the altar barrier, and partly, of the western facade.

At the first stage, a ground-based photogrammetric survey was carried out at the site. In order to accurately maintain the scale, we obtained control measurements of the main structural elements: the length and width of the structure, especially of its altar part, were verified. During the shooting process, marked tablets were used, which made it possible to automate the process of scaling a three-dimensional model.

At the second stage, the resulting groups of photogrammetric 3D models were divided into individual stones. Each stone was analyzed and classified according to its purpose: decoration of the western facade, fragments of the altar barrier. Thus, a complete catalog of all the decorated stones was compiled, and a number of hypotheses were put forward about their location in the reconstructed altar barrier and in the western facade of the church building.

All the materials processed and used for the 3D reconstruction were made public in a website created on the basis of the results of the work described above. Three-dimensional models of the stones and drawings of the restored structures (the altar barrier, and part of the western façade, with very hypothetical assumptions about the nature of its decoration) were presented, with an indication of the location of each fragment in a hypothetical three-dimensional model. Besides the small forms and the external decoration of the western facade⁴⁹, the website also displays the dimensions of the lost slabs known only from the phototypes published by Countess P. S. Uvarova.

When reconstructing the altar barrier, the following observations and considerations were taken into account.

Among the fragments of reliefs examined in the narthex of the Church

⁴⁸ We extend our gratitude to G. A. Sangulia, Head of the State Department for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Abkhazia, for his assistance.

⁴⁹ https://arch.ivran.ru/dranda_temple, <https://arch.ivran.ru/>.

of the Assumption, there was one⁵⁰ that can hypothetically be identified as a fragment of an angel's wing from the slab depicting Christ enthroned with two angels (fig. 3)⁵¹. If this observation is correct, it makes it possible to reconstruct the size of the entire limestone slab which is not indicated in the description of P. S. Uvarova. When reconstructing the composition, one should also take into account that the slab published by Countess Uvarova is a fragment of the scene. In this case, only its right part has been preserved (two angels at the throne of Christ). Based on the available analogies, it can be assumed that the scene was symmetrical relative to the semantic center—the figure of Christ sitting on the throne. Thus, it clearly contained similar figures of two angels on the left side. This circumstance should be taken into account when reconstructing the dimensions of the scene presented on the existing fragment of the slab.

In addition, during archaeological research carried out within the restoration of the church floor level *in situ*, fragments of the base of the altar screen were discovered⁵². These pieces made it possible to determine the line of the altar barrier (in the central apse) and, accordingly, its width (based on the dimensions of the central apse). In the surviving fragment, published by L. G. Khrushkova, a lower decorative belt is visible, composed of arched motifs and braces with floral patterns. This ornament has numerous analogies among the fragments preserved in all the three aforementioned locations⁵³. Thus, their place in the ensemble of the reconstructed altar barrier (base, including corner fragments) can be determined with a high degree of probability.

In addition, some of the fragments are folded into semicircles of a certain diameter. Some are decorated with a characteristic ornament (a combination of rollers and semicircular petal elements) which is repeated in the frame of the arches⁵⁴ on the slab with the image of Christ and the Mother of God (fig. 5–7)⁵⁵. This observation suggests that the upper part of the barrier was designed in the form of an arcade. This decision was also due to constructive necessity: if the slab with the Mother of God and Christ was part of the ensemble of the altar barrier—which is very likely since the character and details of its decor echo the found fragments, differing only in size. It could be only the

50 **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д. (архимандрит)**, Архитектурная декорация..., с. 268, № 8.

51 *Ibid.* P. 258. №1.

52 **Хрушкова Л. Г.**, *Раннехристианские памятники...*, таб. LXII. 1.

53 **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д. (архимандрит)**, Архитектурная декорация..., с. 213 – 214, № 17 – 19, с. 260, 261, № 3, 4, с. 262, № 6, с. 268–269, № 9 – 10.

54 https://arch.ivran.ru/dranda_temple.

55 **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д. (архимандрит)**, Архитектурная декорация..., с. 259, № 2; с. 269, № 10.

crowning element of the composition, based on the shape of its completion. In this case, the stability of the structure could be ensured only through a system of arches⁵⁶. Interestingly, a closer examination has revealed that some decorative elements of the slab are reflected in the surviving fragments. In addition to the characteristic decoration of the arches, noteworthy is the base of the pilaster which separates the figures of Christ and the Mother of God. It is made in the form of an arched motif, similar to the one decorating the fragments from the base of the barrier (fig. 8). The capital of this pilaster is adorned with the same motif as the braces (fig. 9).

Another important detail is a smooth rectangular groove made by shortening the pilaster in the lower left corner of the slab with Christ and the Mother of God (fig. 2). This groove suggests that it was necessary to secure the slab to the dial. This assumption is indirectly confirmed by the nature of the decor in the lower decorative row of this slab (a belt of arches identical to the one that runs along the lower row of the barrier).

Thus, the nature of the decor of the slab with the image of Christ and the Mother of God suggests that its composition represents a model of the entire barrier in miniature.

This assumption is further confirmed by some other fragments. For example, the square groove which is located on the lower side of the round base of the column with the image of the scene “Jonah in the belly of the whale” (fig. 4)⁵⁷ coincides in size with a square fragment decorated with a floral ornament on the front side and an element of an arched motif on the side (fig. 10)⁵⁸. A small groove for securing the structure supports the assumption that these two fragments could be attached to each other in the frame of the royal doors.

A number of fragments represent variations of the motif of double semi-columns (with and without constriction) (fig. 11)⁵⁹. The same motif is repeated on the fragments of the base of the barrier⁶⁰. One gets the feeling that the entire composition of the altar barrier is made up of decorative modules repeated in its various parts. In this case, the fragments of the base of the barrier with the motif of double semi-columns hint at the place where larger elements of this decor could be placed. They probably decorated the pilasters separating the slabs of the altar barrier. Two fragments resemble umbons in the nature of their decor and size (fig. 12). Reliefs that were not available during the research carried out in the summer of 2023 (from the funds of the

56 We are grateful to the architect O. E. Klimov for his help and advice.

57 **Ендольцева Е. Ю., Дбар Д. (архимандрит),** Архитектурная декорация..., с. 262 – 267.

58 Ibid. p. 268. № 9.

59 Ibid. p. 261. № 5. p. 269. № 11.

60 Ibid. p. 213. № 17. p. 214. № 19. p. 215. № 21. p. 261. № 4.

Abkhaz State Museum) were also taken⁶¹ into account in the general scheme for the reconstruction of the barrier. All of them have analogies among fragments originating from the other two locations.

If the position of the slab with the image of Christ and the Mother of God is correct in the general reconstruction of the barrier, its dimensions can be hypothetically determined.

The proposed version of the reconstruction of the altar barrier (fig. 13–15) has a number of unique features and characteristics; nevertheless, in details as well as in its general compositional solutions (arcade), it has a number of analogies among monuments dating from the late 10th century and the first half of the 11th century.

Among analogies originating from nearby locations, we could mention three slabs from Olginskoye⁶², a relief fragment from the village of Poltavskoye⁶³, and a slab piece from a supposed altar barrier from the collections of the Abkhaz State Museum (depicting the scene “Joseph’s Dream”)⁶⁴.

Some elements (the presence of arches and round decorative details on the columns) of the proposed reconstruction of the altar barrier find parallels in the altar barriers of the 11th century from the territory of Georgia (Shiomgvime)⁶⁵.

The reconstructed composition of the altar barrier from Dranda resembles, in its specific details (the crowning element above the royal doors and the arched structure), a Byzantine altar barrier (not preserved nowadays) from the 11th–century monastery of Monte Cassino. Unfortunately, one can only guess its shape thanks to the carved top of a wooden altar barrier of the 12th century in the Italian church of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta in Abruzzo⁶⁶.

The laconicism of the decorative details of the altar barrier of the church in Dranda, and at the same time, its complicated composition allow us to consider it a structure built between the 10th and 11th centuries. It was probably installed in the church when it became the cathedral of the Diocese of Dranda.

As for the second slab with the image of Christ on the throne and two angels, if the reconstruction of the altar barrier is correct, this scene does not fit into its structure and design in any way (fig. 3).

61 Ibid. p. 211 – 215.

62 Ibid. p. 245 – 248.

63 Ibid. p. 249 – 250. № 13.

64 Ibid. p. 217 – 223. № 24.

65 **Шмерлинг Р. О.**, *Малые формы в архитектуре средневековой Грузии*, Тбилиси: Изд. АН Груз. ССР, 1962, таб. 39.

66 **Лидов А. М.**, *Иконостас: итоги и перспективы исследования, Иконостас. Присхождение. Развитие. Символика* (ред-сост. А. М. Лидов), Москва: Прогресс-Традиция, 2000, илл. 4.

As noted above, a stylistic analysis of the images on both the slabs allows us to trace their architectural decoration back to the 10th to very early 11th centuries.

As for the iconography of the scene presented on the second slab, the presence of two angels on the surviving fragment is noteworthy. It is clear that the scene was symmetrical regarding the central figure, Christ on the throne. Thus, it is possible to reconstruct the image of Christ surrounded by four angels. This set of characters suggests that an abbreviated version of the Last Judgment scene with Christ in glory seated on the throne was depicted here. While trying to find out what part of the church might have been decorated with this slab, we should take into account the following: firstly, judging from the phototypes published by Countess P. S. Uvarova, the slab with Christ and angels was made in a rougher and more schematic manner than the one with Christ and the Mother of God, which we interpret as the crowning part of the altar barrier. Secondly, the carvings on the second slab look more weathered and damaged by external influence. These two observations suggest that this slab may have been part of the outer facing of the church. According to V. Tsintsadze, who carried out restoration in the church in the late Soviet period (1979), traces of white stone carvings were preserved only on the western facade of the church⁶⁷. The proportions of this facade and the hypothetical dimensions of the slab suggest that it could have been located above one of the entrance doors on the western side of the church. If these assumptions are correct, the reconstructed plot of the scene, an abbreviated version of the Last Judgment, is perfectly combined with considerations about the place of the slab in the decorative system of the church (western facade).

Researchers have always shown great interest in the theme of the Last Judgment in the medieval art of the Christian world. Among recent events in the professional environment, one can point to the colloquium “Resurrection of the Flesh. Between Orthodoxy and Heresy,” which took place at the University of Friborg, Switzerland, on 23 October 2020⁶⁸. Also, there have been some publications by colleagues from Georgia. Irma Mamasaklisi⁶⁹, following Nina Yamanidze⁷⁰, mentions a number of early images of the Last Judgment

67 **Tsintsadze V.**, Dranda, Georgian Society for the Protection of Cultural Monuments. Friends of Cultural Monuments, 1979, Sat. 50.

68 https://www.academia.edu/44192252/R%C3%A9surrection_charnelle_entre_orthodoxie_et_h%C3%A9r%C3%A9sie.

69 **Mamasaklisi I.**, The Last Judgement in Medieval Georgian Art (Tenth – Thirteenth Centuries), *Georgia as a Bridge between Cultures. Dynamics of Artistic Exchange* (ed. by N. Chitishvile, Th. Kaffenberger, M. Studer-Karlen), *Convivium Supplementum*, 2021-1, 2021, p. 168–187.

70 **Iamanidzé N.**, Le thème du Jugement dernier dans l’art religieux de la Géorgie : les témoignages archéologiques les plus anciens, *Cahiers archéologique*, 2016, p. 59–70.

portrayed in medieval Georgian art, including the architectural decoration of churches: “The figure of a trumpeting angel is represented on the plaque above the window of the south projecting apse of the Holy Cross Church in Mtskheta. A chancel barrier plaque at Skhieri (tenth century) shows frontally the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. Plaque’s decor itself is of interest: the cross embellished with interlaced ornaments represents one of the images of the Second Coming with its symbolic concept. ... The eastern facade of Joisubani (tenth century) combines a number of episodes from the Last Judgment. ... A scene of the Glorification of the Cross directly connected to the Second Coming is seen in the reliefs a Nikorts’minda Church, where even an inscription attests to this. On the southern facade, Christ is ascended by two angel while figures shown below hold trumpets. Between those there is a blessing hand. An inscription accompanying the relief once again clarifies what the scene represents: “This [is] the Secon Coming of Jesus Christ”. ... Among the sculpted images at Svet’itskhoveli Cathedral, there is a relief depicting the Lord’s Second Coming. This scene adorns the eastern facade, yet it has only partially survived, and today there remain the figures”⁷¹.

The iconographic type presented on the slab from Dranda can be placed in the iconographic and stylistic context of the monumental art of the 10th to early 11th centuries. Regarding iconographic analogies from geographically closer areas, we should first of all mention the image of Christ on the throne surrounded by four angels on the tympanum of the southern facade of the church in Nikortsminda (early 11th century, Racha, Georgia) (fig. 16). Here the figures are not presented in one row, as in Dranda, but they are grouped in the form of a square: four angels located at the four corners of an imaginary compositional square surround the figure of Christ)⁷².

There are also a number of images where four angels surround a cross which replaces the figure of Christ on the throne. This version of the composition is found above the southern portal of the church in Nikortsminda⁷³, and above the southern portal of the cathedral in Khakhuli (10th century, historical province of Tao, Turkey)⁷⁴. The same composition is found in the interior of the circumambulation of the church in Katskhi (early 11th century, Imereti, Georgia)⁷⁵. In this case, the center of the composition is a round light lunette.

The closest among analogies, both geographically and stylistically, is the

71 **Mamasakhlisi I.**, *The Last Judgement ...*, p. 169–174.

72 **Dadiani T., Khundadze T., Kvachatadze E.**, *Medieval Georgian Sculpture*, Tbilisi: Cezanne, 2017, p. 207. Il. 424.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 206. Il. 422.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 170. Il. 347.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 210. Il. 435.

image of blessing Christ from the church in Martvili (10th century, Mingrelia, Georgia)⁷⁶. Here the scene is similarly presented on the western facade. The figure and folds of the vestment are made in an expressive manner, with rough parallel notches which to some extent resemble the slab from Dranda (judging from the phototype). In addition, the surface of the image is somewhat weathered, which is natural given the location of the slab.

To summarize, the reconstructed scene of an abbreviated version of the Last Judgment from Dranda can be inscribed in the artistic context of its era. However, its place and significance in the system of the architectural decoration of the church can be recreated only hypothetically. This theme requires further elaboration as additional data are discovered.

76 Ibid., p. 178, ll. 370.

**ВИРТУАЛЬНАЯ РЕКОНСТРУКЦИЯ АРХИТЕКТУРНОГО
УБРАНСТВА НЕКОТОРЫХ ЦЕРКВЕЙ АБХАЗИИ (X–XI ВВ.):
ЦЕРКОВЬ УСПЕНИЯ БОГОРОДИЦЫ В СЕЛЕ ДРАНДА**

ЕКАТЕРИНА ЕНДОЛЬЦЕВА

*доктор искусствоведения
Институт востоковедения РАН*

НИКОЛАЙ БЫСТРИЦКИЙ
Институт востоковедения РАН

ДАНИИЛ ДРЫГА

*канд. технич. наук
Инженерная академия РУДН*

ЛЮБОВЬ КАЗЕННОВА

*Центр историко–археологических исследований Крыма и
Средиземноморья Института востоковедения РАН*

АЛЕКСАНДР КАРНАУШЕНКО

*Центр историко–археологических исследований Крыма и
Средиземноморья Института востоковедения РАН*

ЭЛЛА КАРНАУШЕНКО

Севостопольский государственный университет

Аннотация

В статье излагаются результаты работы по проекту виртуальной реконструкции архитектурной декорации и малых форм церкви в Дранде (Республика Абхазия). Имеющиеся фрагменты в настоящее время распределены по трем коллекциям: в нартексе самой церкви, в Абхазском Государственном музее в г. Сухум и в Музее Священной Митрополии Абхазии (г. Новый Афон). Кроме того, известны фототипии двух утраченных ныне плит со сложными многофигурными композициями. Исследование фрагментов с использованием новейших цифровых технологий позволяет выдвинуть гипотезу о первоначальном виде алтарной преграды и о характере украшения церкви в Дранде. Плита, которая, возможно, украшала западный фасад, по всей вероятности, является фрагментом сокращенной сцены Страшного суда (Христос на троне и четыре ангела). Благодаря стилистическим и иконографическим аналогиям эта сцена вписывается в контекст христианского искусства рубежа X и XI вв.

Ключевые слова: рельеф, пластика, Страшный суд, архитектурная декорация, Дранда, скульптура

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Figure Captions

1. Fragments in the narthex of the Church of the Assumption in the village of Dranda. Photo by Endoltseva E.
2. Reconstruction of the dimensions of the slab with the image of Christ and the Mother of God. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
3. Reconstruction of the dimensions of the slab with the image of Christ and two angels. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
4. Column base depicting the scene “Jonah in the Belly of the Whale.” Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
5. Fragment of the arch of the royal gates from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
6. Fragment of the arch of the royal gates from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
7. Fragment of the arch of the royal gates from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
8. Fragment of the base of the altar barrier from the collection of the Ecclesiastical and Archaeological Museum of the Holy Metropolis of Abkhazia. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
9. Fragment of the base of the altar barrier from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Karnaushenko E. N., Karnaushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
10. Fragment of the capital of the pilaster separating the slabs of the altar

- barrier from the narthex of the temple in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Kar-naushenko E. N., Kar-naushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
11. Fragment of a relief with a motif of double semi-columns from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Kar-naushenko E. N., Kar-naushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
 12. Fragment of an ambon from the narthex of the church in the village of Dranda. Dryga D. O., Kar-naushenko E. N., Kar-naushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
 13. Sketch of the altar barrier from the church in the village of Dranda. Klimov O. E.
 14. Reconstruction of the altar barrier from the church in the village of Dranda with dimensions. Klimov O. E., Endoltseva E. Yu., Kar-naushenko E. N., Kar-naushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
 15. Reconstruction of the altar barrier from the church in the village of Dranda. Klimov O. E., Endoltseva E. Yu., Dryga D. O., Kar-naushenko E. N., Kar-naushenko A. D., Kazennova L. K.
 16. Tympanum of the southern facade of the church in Nikortsminda (early 11th century, Racha, Georgia). Photo by Endoltseva E.

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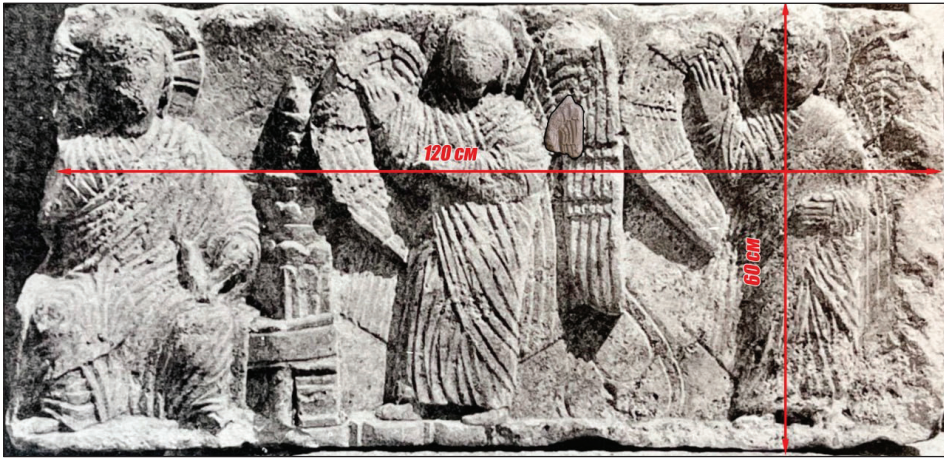
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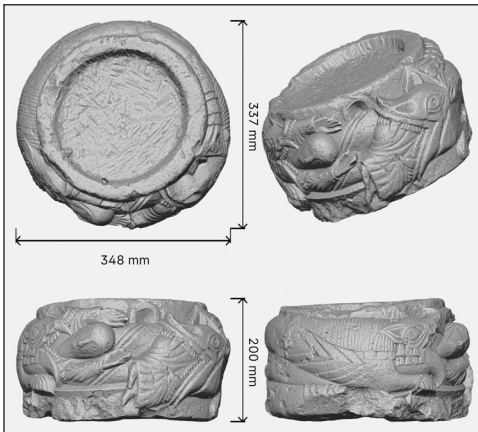
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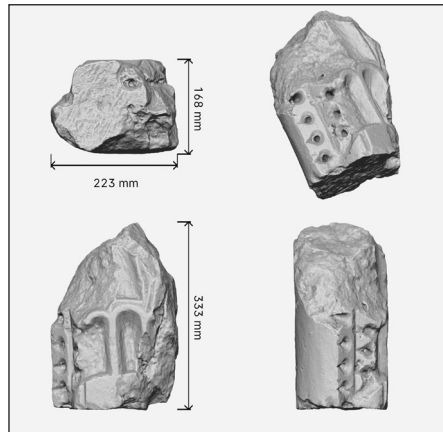
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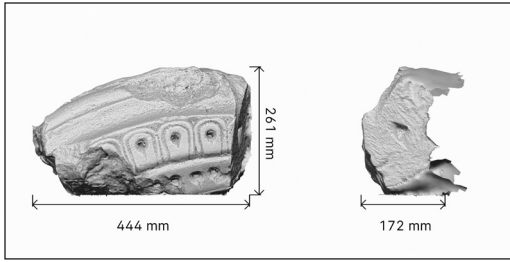


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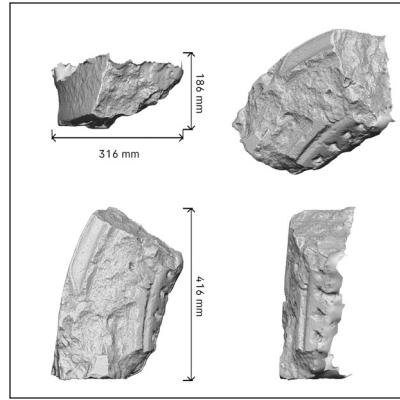


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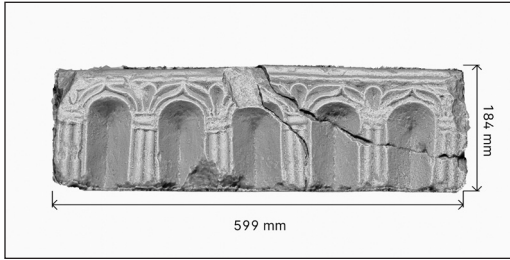
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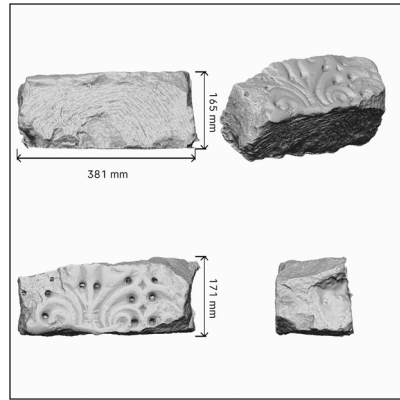
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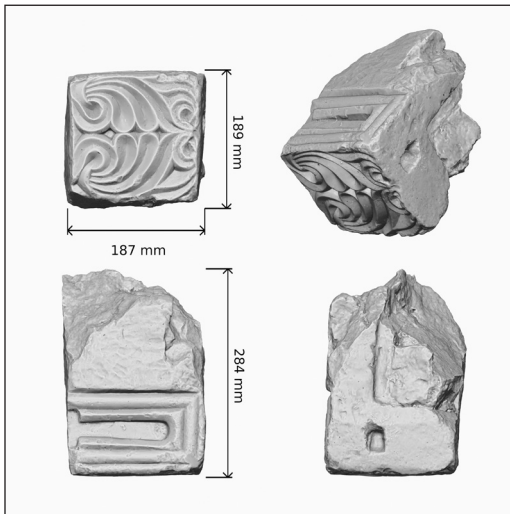
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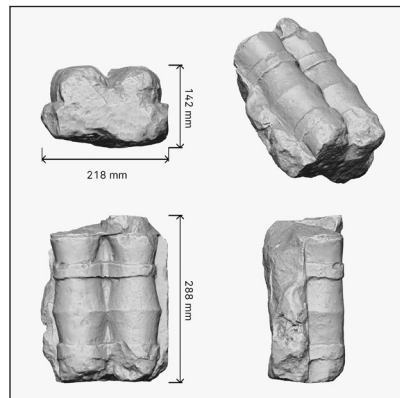
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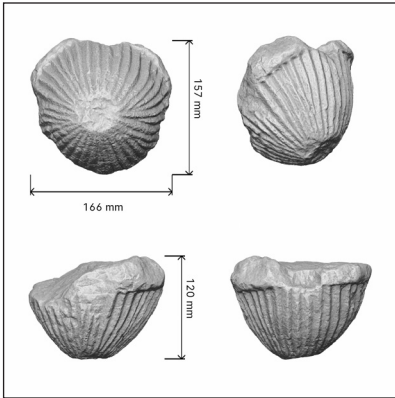
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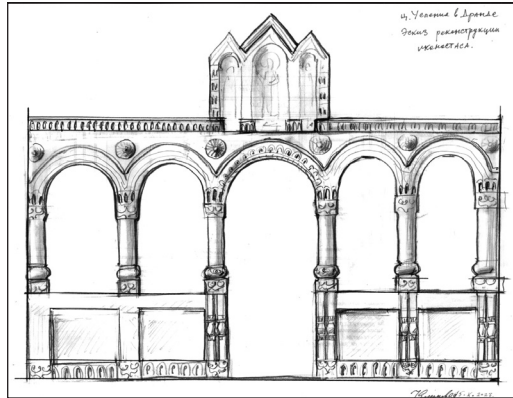
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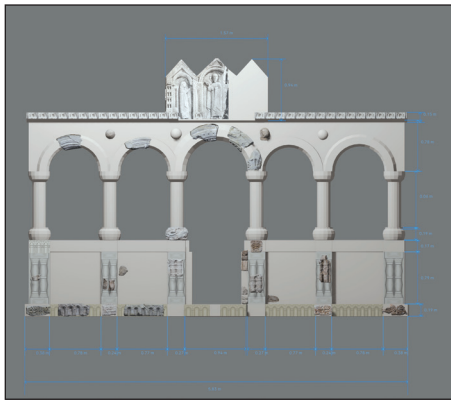
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