



Abstract – Image and Liturgy: The Church of the Archangels

in Tanghili – The small Church of the Archangels in Tanghili (thirteenth century) in Svaneti stands on a hill and probably served as a pilgrimage chapel on the path between two valleys. This study considers the intersection between biblical narratives known and used from homiletic texts and their visual equivalents, in particular the liturgical experience that took place in the sacred space of Tanghili. The architecture is unique for the region, as well as irregular for its cruciform type. The entirety of the plastered interior was decorated, by two artists, with paintings that adapt to the architecture. The only saint portrayed in the program is St George. The apse shows the “Deesis – Vision” type, in which the Mandylion is integrated, and accordingly demonstrates a strong eschatological character. The Mandylion is also the focus of the Christological cycle depicted in the naos. The eight scenes on the vault and walls are positioned in such a way as to connect spatially as well as theologically. A close connection between image and liturgy results from the linking of the pictural program with texts intoned within the sacred space.

Keywords – homilies, liturgy, mural paintings, sacred space, Svaneti, Tanghili

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Image and Liturgy

The Church of the Archangels in Tanghili

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The extraordinary mural paintings executed in the small churches of Svaneti between the ninth and the seventeenth century have already been a topic of intensive discussion in the research literature, yielding a good thematic and stylistic overview of this corpus¹. The present study focuses on the intersection of biblical narrative and its visual equivalents, as well as on the

Svaneti], Tbilisi 1966; *Eadem*, *Živopisnaâ škola Svanetii* [Painting school of Svaneti], Tbilisi 1983; Tatiana Sheviakova, *Monumental'naâ živopis' rannego srednevekov'â Gruzii* [Monumental Painting of the Early Medieval Georgia], Tbilisi 1983; Natela Aladashvili, Aneli Volskaia, "Fasadnye rospisi Verhnej Svaneti" [Facade Paintings in Upper Svaneti], *Ars Georgica*, IX/A (1987), pp. 94–120; Marine Kenia, "General Concept of the Twelfth- and Fourteenth-Century Murals in Upper Svaneti (Georgia)", in *λαμπηδών, Recueil in memory of Doula Mouriki*, vol. 1, Athens 2003, pp. 383–394; Marine Kenia, *Upper Svaneti. Medieval Mural Painting*, Tbilisi 2010; *Eadem*, "Svanetis mokhat'uloba ta apsidaluris kemebi (IX–XIII sauk'uneebi)" [Apsidal Schemes of Svaneti Murals (9th – Early 13th Century)], *Sakartvelos sidzveleni* [Georgian Antiquities], XXI (2018), pp. 62–85; *Eadem*, "Q'ovladts'mida ghmrtis mshobeli da svanetis shua sauk'unovani mkhat'vroba" [All Holy Theotokos and Medieval Painting in Svaneti], *Sakartvelos sidzveleni* [Georgian Antiquities], XXII (2019), pp. 176–205.

¹ Selected literature on paintings in Svaneti: Tinatin Virsaladze, "Freskovaâ rospis' hudožnika Mikaela Maglakeli v Machvarishi" [Mural Painting of Michael Maglakeli in Matskhvarishi], *Ars Georgica*, IV (1955), pp. 169–231; Natela Aladashvili, Gaiane Alibegashvili, Aneli Volskaia, *Rospisi hudožnika Tevdore v Verhnej Svanetii* [Murals of the Painter Tevdore in Upper

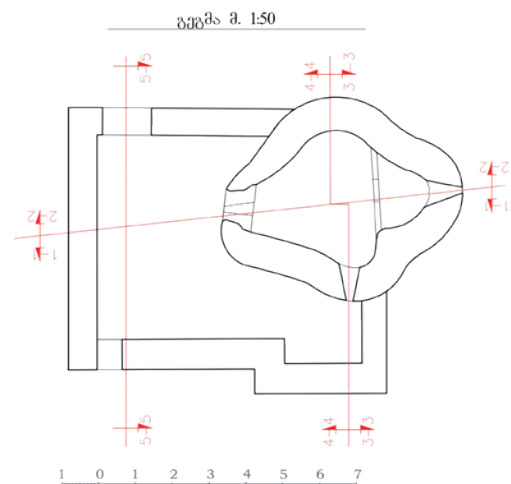


1/ The Church of the Archangels in Tanghili, exterior, 13th century

liturgical experience that took place in sacred space. In this context, the close connection between image and liturgy results from the linking of the image program with spaces that were functional during the ritual performance; and this connection concerns not only the selection of specific images but also the iconographic context of the images, their placement, and their readability on several levels. This complex system of visual relationships is well exemplified by the small church in Tanghili, which keeps the viewer in dialogue with certain images while also incorporating him as an active participant in the spatial context that was determined by contemporary theological discussions and local cult practices. The integration of the beheld image and the intoned liturgical text offers the recipient a further level of signification.

The Tanghili Church is isolated in the forest one and a half kilometres from Lakhusht'i, a district of the commune Lat'ali, and is located on a hill (1556 m), as is the case with many churches in Svaneti [Fig. 1]². The church is the centre of a topography deemed sacred by the people of Svaneti to this day. It has also long been seen as the church of the hunters³.

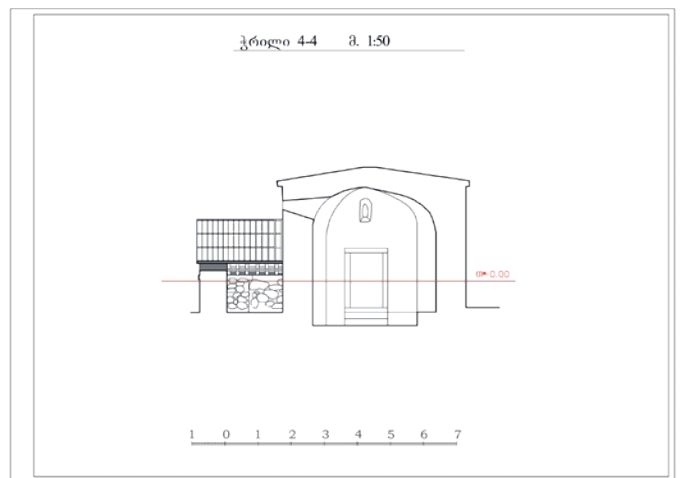
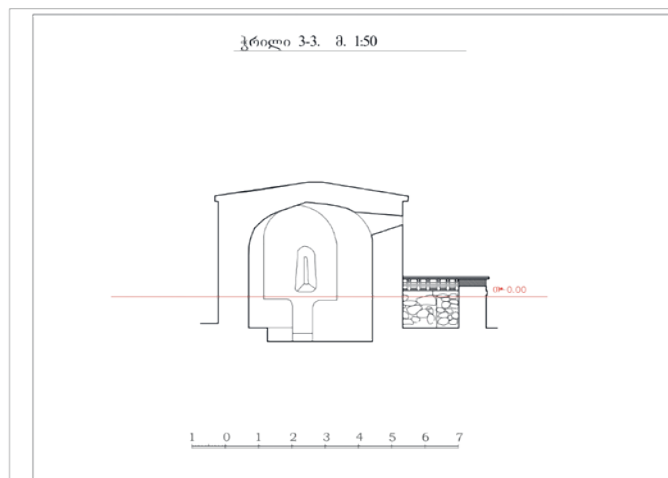
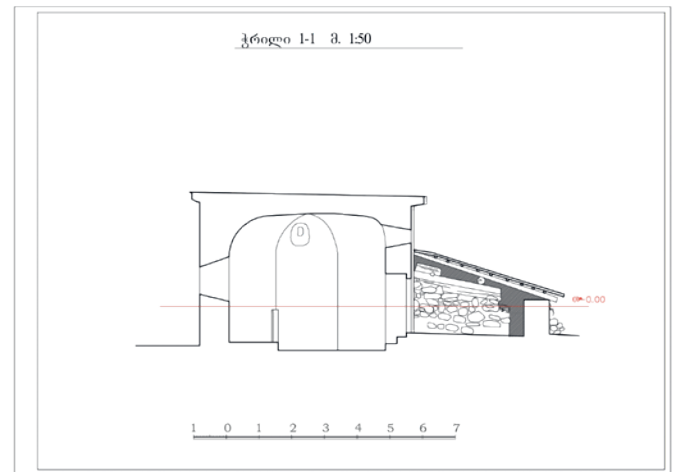
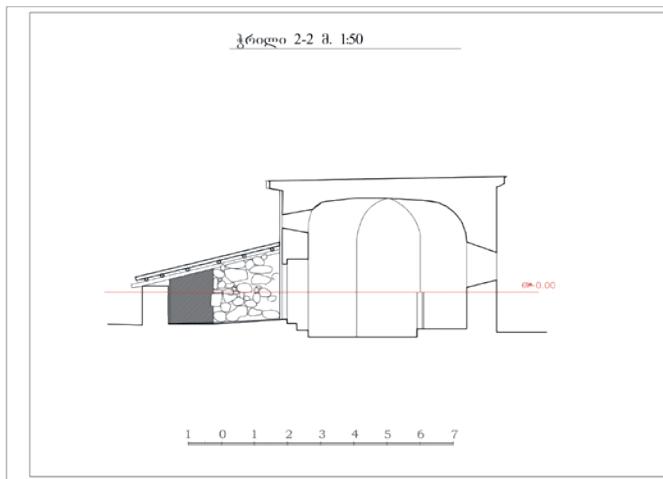
The church is called თანდილ თარნგბელ, with თარნგბელ meaning "archangel", to whom the church is dedicated. The word თანად means "mountain" in the Svan language and



metaphorically signifies a mountain that one must cross. In reality, the church is oriented on a liminal mountain pass en route to the neighbouring valley community of Ts'virmi and probably served as a pilgrimage chapel⁴.

Unique architecture and adapted decoration

The small church (max. ca 5,50 × 4,60 m) is built entirely of stone, with a wall thickness of about 0,80 m. An external annex was built to the church at a later date. From the outside the church has an irregular, rounded shape, whereas inside it reveals an irregular cross shape [Fig. 1]. The corners of the tetraconchs are rounded, and the heights of the vault vary throughout [Fig. 2]⁵. The only architectural type employed in Svanetian church architecture is the single-nave type, domed architecture being completely unknown in the region⁶. The cruciform structure of the Tanghili Church is therefore unique, and its irregular shape is probably due explicitly to this usage of an architectural type otherwise unknown in the region. One must note that the tetraconch is attested in Georgian architecture from the fifth/sixth century to the tenth/eleventh century, at which point it fell out of use. This raises interesting questions about the transmission of knowledge: How and where did the architect of Tanghili learn of this type? Had he seen one of the earliest examples



- 2 Brigitta Schrade, *Peripherie im historischen Kontext: die Entwicklung Swanetiens zur Schatzkammer Georgiens von den Anfängen bis in das 17. Jahrhundert*, Tbilisi 2016, p. 79.
- 3 Ekvtime Taqaishvili, *Shromebi* [Works], vol. III, *Arkeologiuri eksp'editsia lechkhum-svanetshi 1910 ts'els* [Archaeological Expedition in Lechkhum-Svaneti in 1910], Buba Kudava ed., Tbilisi 2017, p. 351; Natela Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil v Verhnej Svanetii" [Paintings of the Tanghili Church in the Upper Svaneti], in *Kartuli sakhviti khelovnebis sak'itkhebi, tssa sametsniero shromebis k'rebuli* [Issues on Georgian Fine Arts, Volume of the Research Works of Tbilisi State Academy of Arts], Tbilisi 1983, pp. 17–37, sp. p. 19; Natela Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung in der Malerschule von Swaneti (Die Wandmalerei der Kirche Tanghil)", in *L'Arte Georgiana dal IX al XIV secolo. Atti del terzo Simposio internazionale sull'Arte Georgiana*, Maria S. Calò Mariani ed., Bari 1986, pp. 137–145, sp. p. 139. In older photos, a simple wooden stand appears above the templon, on which rest the antlers and horns of hunted animals. These hunting trophies are now kept in the exterior annex to the church. For the early photo, see Tania Velmans, "L'image de la

Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin", *Cahiers Archéologiques*, XXIX (1983), pp. 47–102, sp. p. 83, fig. 32. See also the contribution of Salome Meladze in this volume.

- 4 Schrade, *Peripherie* (n. 2), pp. 79–80.
- 5 For the architecture, see Taqaishvili, *Works* (n. 3), p. 351; Tania Velmans, "Les peintures de l'Église dite Tanghil en Géorgie", in Tania Velmans, *L'Art Médiéval de l'orient chrétien*, Paris 2001, pp. 159–173, sp. p. 159; Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), p. 19; Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), p. 137; Rusudan Kenia, Natela Aladashvili, *Zemo svaneti* [Upper Svaneti], Tbilisi 2000, pp. 82–83; Giorgi Patashuri, "Zemo svanetis saek'lesio khurotmodzghvrebis t'ip'ologia" [The Typology of Church Architecture in Upper Svaneti], in *Levan rcheulishvili 100, sametsniero k'onperentsiis masalebi* [Levan Rcheulishvili 100, Proceedings of the Conference], Tbilisi 2009, pp. 43–55, sp. pp. 48–49. I would like to thank Giorgi Patashuri for allowing the publication of his plans of Tanghili in this article [Fig. 2].
- 6 See the contribution of Irine Elizbarashvili and Irene Giviashvili in this volume.

2/ Sections of the church

somewhere in Georgia, or did he become familiar with the type by other means?

It is moreover significant that a cruciform plan was chosen for a landmark in such a liminal location on a mountain. This is consistent with a well-established ideology of the Cross as a sign of triumph and an indicator of faith⁸. The same intention is expressed in the name of the church: თანადღ.

One enters the space through a door on the western face, opposite the apse, which is dimly illuminated by a slit window in a conch [Fig. 3]. Directly above the door is a larger round window, and another round one appears in the southern conch [Fig. 4]. Accordingly, the church is endowed with sparse incoming light, although the situation is optimized by the placement of the windows. For example, on the northern face, which inherently receives little sunlight, there is no window.

The whole interior is plastered and decorated with paintings that adapt to the irregular architecture and date from different periods [Fig. 5]⁹. Based on stylistic analysis, a dating to the thirteenth century is assumed for the so-called folk paintings, thought to have been executed by two hands, one on the upper register and another on the lower¹⁰. An overpainting campaign, which particularly affected the apse, took place in the sixteenth century¹¹.

The eastern, slightly pointed niche is the apse, which is separated from the rest of the naos only by the approximately 70 cm high masonry wall of the templon, leaving a central passage-way [Fig. 3]¹². A thick painted band with a colorful zigzag pattern runs around the apse above the wall, separating the niche. The cubical altar is centred on the rear wall. The frontal busts of a beardless and a bearded saint have been preserved on the northern front of the templon¹³. In the lowest register, next to the altar, the paintings have been lost.

The wall of the naos presents, against a white backdrop, a sequence of five panels of unequal width yet adapted to the architectural specifications and each framed by a red line. In contrast, the decoration of the vault with the four successive Christological scenes looks like a carpet [Figs 4, 6]¹⁴. The scenes are characterized by

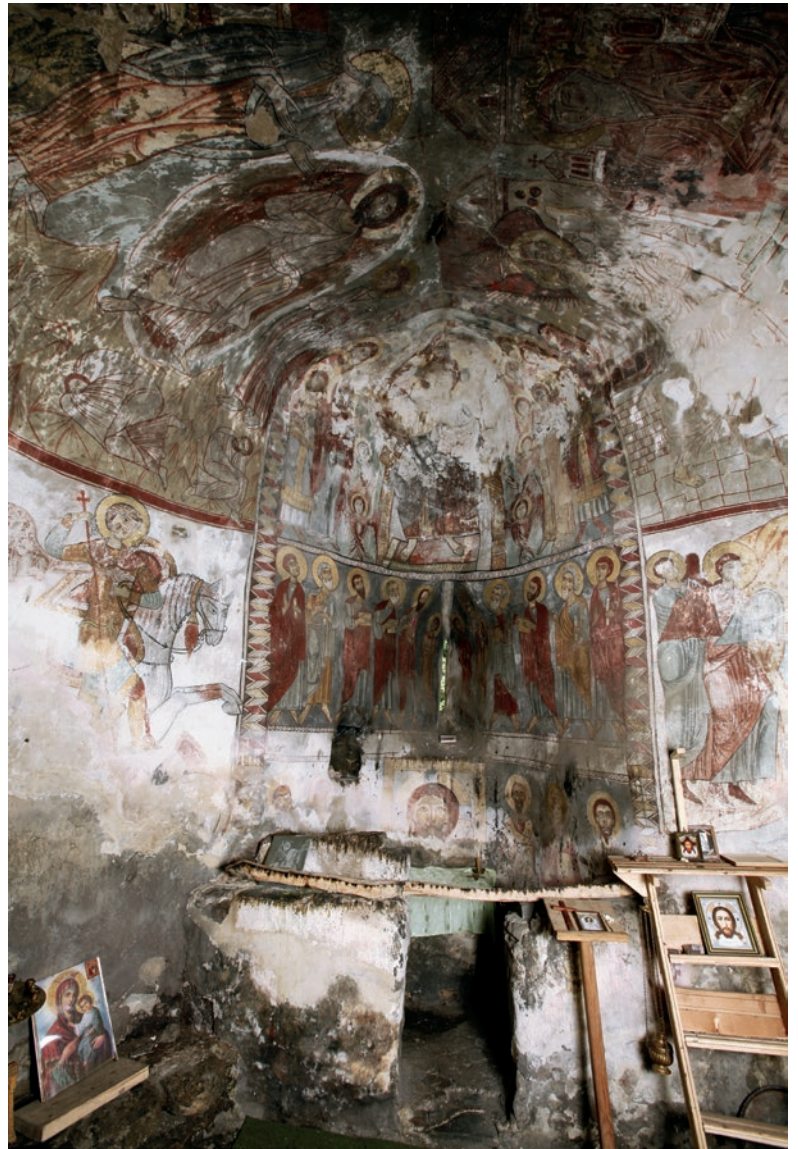
their rich background architecture. Different from the painter of the walls – whose hand shows a schematic, expressive, and clear style, with everything outlined in black on a white ground – the artist who painted the vault stands out for his detailed subtleties and enormous compositional complexity¹⁵. At the axis of the apse arch directly in front of the sanctuary, the mirroring of the two scenes of equal width (the Annunciation on the south and the Transfiguration on the north) implies a barrel arch [Figs 3, 6]. The two other scenes (the Nativity of Christ and the Presentation in the Temple) spread unequally over the rest of the vault. Outside the apse, the paintings in the lower register are damaged. Despite the clear axis formed by the entrance door and the apse, a believer finds himself fully surrounded in this small church by a dense Christological program, all the components of which are quite visible.

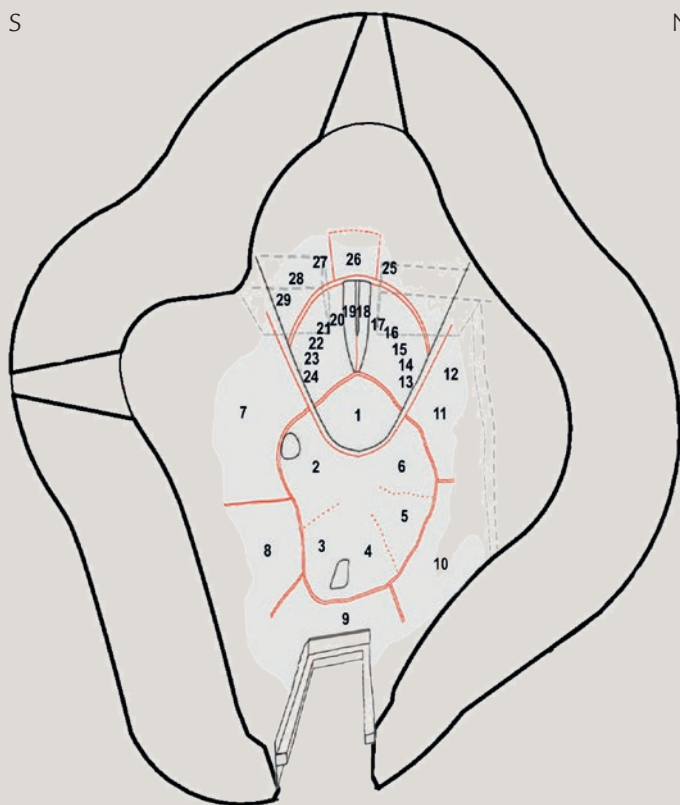
The role and status of St George

The program portrays only one saint, St George [Fig. 5] (11)¹⁶. He appears on the north end of the lower register, riding triumphantly towards the bema [Fig. 7]. To either side of his golden nimbus, an inscription reads: “გ~ჲ~”¹⁷. St George is one of the most popular saints in Georgia and especially in Svaneti¹⁸. In the Middle Ages the warrior-saint was seen as a protector in all military and daily activities, to the point that he was represented in nearly all churches, even those that were not dedicated to him – as is the case in Tanghili. With his left hand, George holds the reins, and with his right hand, a cruciform staff. He wears a diadem and is clad in armor, with his cloak, fixed around his chest, blowing behind him. His gaze is directed to the bema. As is common in the depictions of St George in Svaneti, his white horse has an ornate saddle and a sumptuous harness. Not only are all the reins encrusted with pearls, but a large gold collar, set with precious stones and bearing a sort of bell, adorns the animal’s neck. Four strings of pearls also surround its neck. The saint’s staff meets a man with a black beard bent in the lower right corner. It is Diocletian (12), easily identifiable by his red and yellow high crown¹⁹.

The politicized image of the warrior-protector defeating the Roman emperor emphasizes the former's triumphal victory²⁰. St George's feast day,

- 7 Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), pp. 19–20; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), p. 137, thinks that the architect brought this plan from Kartli and then, considering his skills, could not execute it properly.
- 8 Manuela Studer-Karlen, "The Pictorial Compositions on the cross Stelae in Georgia (Fifth–Ninth Centuries)", *Convivium*, IX/1 (2022), pp. 53–73.
- 9 The painting of Tanghil was restored and studied within the HORIZON program: Rolf Schrade, Brigitta Schrade, *Schatzkammer Swanetien: Das Restaurierungsprogramm von Stichting Horizon 1997–2006 in Georgien*, Mahlow 2009.
- 10 Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), pp. 20–21; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 137–145; Kenia, *Upper Svaneti* (n. 1), pp. 9–10, 166–173; Schrade, *Peripherie* (n. 2), p. 79. It is assumed that there was a local Svanetian school of painting, whose particularly intensive activity coincided with the period of the general flowering of Georgian monumental painting in the eleventh–thirteenth centuries.
- 11 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 159. The original themes were respected.
- 12 For the Fig. 3, I am indebted to Neli Chakvetadze. In this photograph, taken in 2008, the modern wooden construction does not yet exist, and the old wooden frame mentioned in footnote 3 is already missing.
- 13 Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), p. 82; *Eadem*, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 164. However, they cannot be angels – as suggested by Velmans – because of their lack of wings.
- 14 Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 140–141.
- 15 For stylistic analysis, see Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), pp. 27–29; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 137–145; Kenia, *Upper Svaneti* (n. 1), p. 10.
- 16 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), pp. 166–169; Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), pp. 20, 23; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 139–140, 146. In the text, the number in the brackets behind a scene refers to the numbers indicated on this drawing [Fig. 5]. I am very grateful to Giorgios Fousteris for the drawing of the plan with the distribution of the scenes.
- 17 All the inscriptions were added at the later phase, and the painter was certainly illiterate as he made many mistakes. I sincerely thank Natalia Chitishvili for her assistance with the inscriptions.
- 18 Brigitta Schrade, "Götter oder Heilige: heidnische und christliche Glaubensvorstellungen der Swanen", *Georgica*, IV (1999), pp. 32–38; Brigitta Schrade, "Byzantium and Its Eastern Barbarians: The Cult of Saints in Svanet'i", in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, Antony Eastmond ed., London 2001, pp. 169–197, sp. pp. 171–177; Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, "Cult and Image of St. George in Medieval Georgian Art", in *Cultural Interactions in Medieval Georgia*, Michele Bacci, Thomas Kaffenberger, Manuela Studer-Karlen eds, Wiesbaden 2018, pp. 143–168, sp. pp. 147–149. The cult of the warrior-saint perfectly suited the local ideology, as Svans were notorious soldiers.
- 19 The emperor is explicitly mentioned in George the Athonite's translation of the story of the martyrdom of St George: Michael P. Tarnishvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Georgischen Literatur*, Rome 1955, p. 170.
- 20 Schrade, "Byzantium and Its Eastern Barbarians" (n. 18), p. 177; Gedevanishvili, "Cult and Image" (n. 18), pp. 149–151. This type became especially popular from the tenth century onwards.





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|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Deesis Vision | 15. St Simeon |
| 2. Annunciation | 16. St Matthew |
| 3. Nativity of Christ | 17. St Paul |
| 4. Adoration of the Magi | 18. St Stefanos |
| 5. Presentation of Christ in the Temple | 19. St Germanos |
| 6. Transfiguration | 20. St Peter |
| 7. Baptism of Christ | 21. St Luke |
| 8. Crucifixion | 22. St Bartholomew |
| 9. Pentecost | 23. St Andrew |
| 10. Entry to Jerusalem | 24. St Thomas |
| 11. St George | 25. Church Father |
| 12. Diocletian | 26. Mandyliion |
| 13. St Philip | 27. St John Chrysostomos |
| 14. St John? | 28. Church Father |
| | 29. Church Father |

5/ Drawing with the distribution of the scenes

on November 10, is attested in the *Jerusalem Lectionary*²¹. As Gedevanishvili states, the Georgian hymnographer Michael Modrek'ili's liturgical text for the commemoration contains numerous allusions to both the Martyrdom of St George and the Crucifixion of Christ²². The textual interaction between these two stories helps elucidate the Tanghili program, where, despite the irregularity of the architectural space described above, St George is visually juxtaposed to the Crucifixion (8).

The sanctuary

The apse consists of three registers, the top one – the conch – is separated from the lower two at the same height as the wall zone and the vault by a white band with red ornamentation [Fig. 3]²³. Immediately above the altar, in a square of the same width as the altar table itself, is depicted the Mandyliion (26)²⁴. This location is attested in Georgian churches since the eighth century and remains very popular [Fig. 8]²⁵. Being located in the centre of the apse and between the templon walls,

the Mandyliion in Tanghili is visible to those entering [Fig. 3]. The expressive face of Christ is depicted frontally in a wide golden frame richly decorated in red grisaille. Christ is bearded and has long, dark hair, large eyes, and a long, straight nose. His cruciform nimbus extends to the frame and features its same ornamentation. Given that the veil is not shown, the representation is that of a chased icon, conveying a realistic rendering of the object, the Edessan icon itself²⁶. Placed above the altar, it gives the impression of a real icon standing on the altar table, an icon whose significance is clarified

21 Kakhaber Scherbakovi, "Ts'minda giorgis 10 noembris dghe-sast s'aulis sakhelts'odebisa da ist'oriisatvis" [On the Title and History of the Feast Day of St George on November 10], *Saghtismet'q'velo-sametsniro shromebi* [Theological-Scientific Works], VII (2016), pp. 398–484.

22 Gedevanishvili, "Cult and Image" (n. 18), p. 157. See Ioane Minchkh, *Noembris galobani ts'm. Giorgis* [Hymns of St George for November], Tbilisi 1991, pp. 52–55.

23 Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 139–140.

24 Tania Velmans, "L'Église de Khé, en Géorgie", in *Eadem, L'Art Médiéval de l'orient chrétien*, Paris 2001, pp. 115–130, sp. p. 121; *Eadem*, "Les peintures" (n. 5), pp. 160–161; Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, "The Representation of the Holy Face in Georgian Medieval Art", *Iconographica*, V (2006), pp. 11–30, sp. p. 19, figs 9, 11–12.

6/ Interior,
the vault of
the church

7/ St George,
interior, north
wall, 13th century

8/ Interior, apse,
Mandylion



- 25 Very significant in this context is the image of the Mandylion in the late eighth- or early ninth-century layer of the apse murals – arranged overall in a two-zone theophanic composition – in the church of Jvarp’at’iosani in Telovani. The Mandylion is labelled “the Holy Face of God”. Zaza Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha: The Abgar Cycle in the Alaverdi and Gelati Gospels”, in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, Herbert Kessler, Gerhard Wolf eds, Bologna 1998, pp. 70–92, sp. pp. 72–74, fig. 2; Zaza Skhirtladze, “Under the Sign of the Triumph of Holy Cross: Telovani Church Original Decoration and Iconographic Programme”, *Cahiers Archéologiques*, XLVII (1999), pp. 101–118; Zaza Skhirtladze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monumental Painting. Telovani Church of the Holy Cross*, Tbilisi 2008. For later parallel examples, see also Nicole Thierry, “Les peintures de la Cathédrale de Kobayr (Tachir)”, *Cahiers Archéologiques*, XXIX (1980/81), pp. 103–121, sp. p. 113, figs 2–3; Velmans, “L’Église de Khé” (n. 24), pp. 119–122; Skhirtladze, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), p. 105; Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), pp. 17–22, 30, note 87; *Eadem*, “Unpainted Image. Textual and Visual Tradition in Medieval Georgia”, in *Recent Studies on the Image of Edessa. Iconography, History and Theology*, Mark Guscini ed., Cambridge 2022, pp. 45–78, sp. pp. 53–54.
- 26 Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), pp. 19–20; *Eadem*, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), p. 59, fig. 11. For Gedevanishvili, the imitation of this media in painting is evident in the well-known repoussé technique in Georgia and especially in Svaneti. See Giorgi Chubinashvili, *Gruzinskoe čekannoje iskusstvo* [Georgian Metal Art], vols 1–11, Tbilisi 1959; Nino Chichinadze, “Precious Metal Revetments on Georgian Medieval Painted Icons: Some Observations on a Devotional Practice”, *Caucasus Journal of Social Sciences* (2008), 1/1, pp. 259–279. See also the contribution of Antony Eastmond in this volume.

by the rite that takes place here. Ecclesiastical tradition connected the cult of the acheiropoietic image to St Anthony of Mart'q'opeli, one of the so-called thirteen Assyrian Fathers, who brought the Keramion in the sixth century to Georgia²⁷. One of the oldest known representations of the Holy Face in Georgia is the Anchi icon (known as the Anchiskhat'i), the central portion of which was most likely executed in the sixth or seventh century²⁸. Commissioned by Queen Tamar from John the Bishop of Anchi, the *Chants of the Anchi Icon* (second half of the twelfth century) make clear that the icon "not made by human hands" had been brought by the Apostle Andrew from Hierapolis to T'ao-K'larjeti²⁹. Furthermore, the encaustic icon was embellished with a metal frame, made by Beka Op'izari³⁰. However, the inscription on the later eighteenth-century layer of the revetment gives a detailed statement of how the icon was carried from Edessa to Constantinople, and how it was thereafter, at the beginning of the eighth century, deposited in Anchi in order to save it from iconoclasm under the Byzantine emperor Leo III³¹. Other hagiographical and hymnographical works, such as the odes written by the patriarch Arsenios Bulmaisimisdze as well the chants of Saba Synkellos – both from the beginning of the thirteenth century, a few decades later than John of Anchi – emphasize the vivid importance of the Mandylion³². Despite the divergences among these references and the fact that neither legend is recorded before the tenth century, it is clear that the Anchi icon was identified with that of Edessa. The connection between the icon brought to Georgia by St Anthony of Mart'q'opi and the one deposited at Anch'i was established already in the tenth or eleventh century. Abgar's *Epistle* was translated into Georgian by St Euthymios and St George, both Athonite monks, and the feast of the Mandylion (August 16) was introduced to Georgian liturgical practice³³. The Mandylion story was added to the Alaverdi (1054) and the *Gelati Gospels* (mid-twelfth century) and was among the Gospel texts to be read in the liturgy³⁴.

The visual placement on the altar in Tanghili echoes the real liturgical practice of placing the Mandylion in the sanctuary, as is attested in these texts³⁵. The relic was transferred to the sanctuary

of the church on the first Sunday of Lent with a special procession led by the bishop and accompanied by chants emphasizing the soteriological symbolism of the Incarnation and the Passion³⁶. This symbolizes the arrival of the sacred host in the sanctuary, the Savior's icon being understood in connection with his sacrifice on the Cross³⁷. The representation of the metal icon at Tanghili and the setting above the altar, both of which tie in with the liturgical practice of placing the Mandylion in the sanctuary as attested in the texts, reveal this visual element's immediacy in terms of liturgical relevance, as well as its polysemantic symbolism of the liturgy's mystagogy. By placing the Mandylion above the altar, the theme of sacrifice is made extraordinarily multidimensional.

At each side of the Mandylion there are three frontal busts of saints [Fig. 3]. Each of the six haloed figures is individualized and can be identified based on his clothing as a patriarch. Each holds a closed book in his left hand and performs a gesture of blessing with his right hand. No inscriptions have survived, but the bust to the south of the altar can be assigned to John Chrysostom (27) based on its physiognomy. The figures of the Church Fathers standing frontally beside the Mandylion recall the liturgical implications of the Mandylion in connection with the phenomenon of the Incarnation³⁸. Between the first and second patriarch on the northern side, a prothesis niche was added later. This register ends towards the top with a wide white band with red patterning and framed by two thinner strips.

In the next zone, directly above the Mandylion and occupied by ten apostles and two deacons against a blue background, is a thin slit window. Directly next to it are the deacons, depicted in smaller scale, almost in the intrados, each looking up at the first apostle [Fig. 9]. The inscription of the deacon in the north identifies him as St Stefanos (წ~ჯ ლ~ტ~ფ~ნ) (18). He wears a white sticharion with red borders and a red orarion and wields an incense burner with his left hand and a round reliquary with his right. His counterpart is St Germanos (წ~ჯ ლ~ტ~ფ~ნ) (19), who has the same attributes but is dressed in a red sticharion with a red orarion. He looks at St Peter

($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{უ}^{\sim}\text{ქ}^{\sim}\text{ქ}$) (20), who is holding a scroll. Behind Peter according to the inscriptions, are St Luke ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ბ}^{\sim}\text{ო}^{\sim}\text{ყ}^{\sim}\text{ც}$) (21), St Bartholomew ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ბ}^{\sim}\text{ჰ}^{\sim}\text{ბ}^{\sim}\text{ა}$) (22), St Andrew ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ბ}^{\sim}\text{ე}^{\sim}\text{დ}^{\sim}\text{ჰ}^{\sim}\text{ც}$) (23) and St Thomas ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ტ}^{\sim}\text{ა}$) (24). The latter two each also hold a scroll, while the former two each present a closed book. All have a golden nimbus bordered by a red line, revealing a second, outer red line. On the northern side are St Paul ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{პ}^{\sim}\text{ო}^{\sim}\text{ლ}^{\sim}\text{ე}$) (17), St Matthew ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{მ}^{\sim}\text{თ}^{\sim}\text{ე}$) (16), St Simeon ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ს}^{\sim}\text{იმ}^{\sim}\text{ე}^{\sim}\text{ონ}$) (15), St John? ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ი}^{\sim}\text{ო}^{\sim}\text{ან}$) (14) and St Philip ($\text{წ}^{\sim}\text{ფ}^{\sim}\text{ილ}^{\sim}\text{პ}^{\sim}\text{ოს}$) (13)³⁹. Except for John (?) and Philip, each holds a closed book. The apostles all raise their gaze to the image in the uppermost zone, seeming to be eyewitnesses to the Epiphany of the Lord (1)⁴⁰. The zone ends at the top with a white border edged in black.

In the conch against a blue background, Christ is surrounded by a mandorla and sits on a throne with a suppedaneum. On the book held by Christ is written [Fig. 9]:

ამ ზეცაჲს // ს [მე] ცხ
 ბრუნს სო // ტ ყრუად
 ფხრეტ ჯო // ზღა [...] ლ
 ბრუნს ყრ // წყნეტ [...]
 ჰოჰბეღი // [...]

I am the I // s [me] will no
 ight of the w // t ent
 orld. who // ers [...] d
 ever foll // arkness [...]
 ow // [...].

The remnants of the inscriptions suggest John 8, 12. This text is the most common for the book held by Christ especially in the eschatological context⁴¹. The ornamentation of the throne is similar to that of both the border and the halo of the Mandylion.

27 Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), p. 70; Skhirtladze, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), pp. 105–106; Gedevanishvili, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), p. 47. For the text, see *dzveli kartuli agiografiuli lit'erat'uris dzegebi* [Old Georgian Hagiographic Works], vol. IV, edited and commented by Enriko Gabidzashvili, Tbilisi 1968, pp. 218–225. The tile with the imprint of Christ's face, left from the cloth, was preserved at Mart'q'opi Monastery, founded by St Anthony, but was lost during the invasion of Tamerlane in the late fourteenth century.

28 It was brought in 1664 from T'ao-K'larjeti to Tbilisi and is now kept at the State Museum of Georgian Art in Tbilisi. Gedevanishvili, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 48–49, fig. 2.

- 29 Irma Karaulashvili, “Anchiskhat'i: k'eramidioni hierap'olisidan tu mandilioni edesidan?” [The Icon of Anchi: Keramion from Hierapolis or Mandylion from Edessa?], *Mravaltavi, pilologiur-ist'oriuli dziebani* [Mravaltavi, Philological and Historical Research], XX (2003), pp. 170–178.
- 30 Shalva Amiranashvili, *Beka Op'izari*, Tbilisi 1964; Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), pp. 74–75; *Idem*, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), pp. 106–107, fig. 22; Chichinadze, “Precious Metal Revetments” (n. 26), pp. 261–262; Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), pp. 11–12, fig. 1. The chasing was elaborated several times and connected with various inscriptions dating from the twelfth, fourteenth, sixteenth, and eighteenth centuries. About 1308–1334 the wings and rounded top have been added at the expense of the Jaqeli princes of Samtskhe.
- 31 Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), pp. 71–72; *Idem*, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), p. 107; Gedevanishvili, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 47–49. For the inscription, see Karaulashvili, “Anchiskhat'i” (n. 29), pp. 170–178.
- 32 Skhirtladze, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), p. 107; Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), pp. 11–12; *Eadem*, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 47–49, 54. For the text, see Zaza Aleksidze, “Mandilion da k'eramioni dzvel kartul mts'erlobashi” [The Mandylion and Keramion in the Old Georgian Literature], *Caucasus Christianus*, II (2011), pp. 45–56. The story of Arsenios was influenced by the text of *Narratio di imagine Edessena*, traditionally attributed to Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Karaulashvili, “Anchiskhat'i” (n. 29), pp. 171–172; Aleksidze, “Mandilion da k'eramioni” (n. 32), pp. 55–56. For the *Narratio*, see Mark Guscini, *The Image of Edessa*, Leiden 2009, pp. 7–69.
- 33 Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), pp. 69, 72, 75–77; Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), pp. 12–13; *Eadem*, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 52–53. For the text, see Guscini, *The Image* (n. 32), pp. 62–63; Enriko Gabidzashvili, *Dzveli kartuli mts'erlobis natargmni dzegebi, lit'urgik'a, himnografia* [Translated Works of Ancient Georgian Literature, Liturgy, Hymnography], vol. V, Tbilisi 2011, p. 393. The date in the *Synaxarion* is according to the manuscript Ivron 797: Guscini, *The Image* (n. 32), p. 115. For the two translations, see Tarnishvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Georgischen Literatur* (n. 19), pp. 133, 163.
- 34 Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), pp. 76, 80–88; Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), p. 11; *Eadem*, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 50–52. The three redactions of the text are preserved in numerous Georgian manuscripts from the eleventh to the seventeenth century.
- 35 Velmans, “L'Église de Khé” (n. 24), p. 121; Skhirtladze, “Canonizing the Apocrypha” (n. 25), p. 74; *Idem*, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), p. 108.
- 36 Guscini, *The Image* (n. 32), pp. 62–65. For the polysemantic symbolism of the rite, especially in the eschatological context of the apse program, see Gedevanishvili, “Unpainted Image” (n. 25), pp. 53–55.
- 37 Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), p. 19.
- 38 Skhirtladze, “Under the Sign” (n. 25), p. 108.
- 39 Velmans, “Les peintures” (n. 5), p. 160.
- 40 Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), p. 19, fig. 12.
- 41 On the icons with Christ holding an open scroll with the quotation from John, see Miodrag Marković, “The Virgin of Tenderness from Syracuse. Presentation and Iconographical Analysis of the Icon with Special Reference to the Belt with Straps of the Christ-Child”, in *Erforschen – Erkennen – Weitergeben*, Heide Buschhausen, Jadranka Prolović eds, Lothmar 2021, pp. 247–292, sp. pp. 255–257.

To the left of the throne is a seraph with six wings (ს~ჟ~ღ). Its equivalent on the other side also has six wings, but they are covered with eyes. This multi-winged being is inscribed as “cherubim” († ჟ~ღ). Directly next to the two multi-winged beings, on either side, stand the Theotokos (Θ~Θ ო~ღ) and John the Baptist, each turning towards Christ with raised hands. At either edge of the composition are two archangels standing frontally with a loros, globe, and lance, their wings reaching beyond the frame of the painting. The angel on the left is Michael (მ~ქ~თ~ბ), and his counterpart is Gabriel (გ~ბ~რ~ი~ელ). Other heads or halos of angels can be seen, some of which date from the earlier phase of decoration.

The Deesis is the most popular theme for the apses of Georgian churches from the ninth century onwards, and within this general type there are various schemes⁴². Tanghili belongs to the so-called “Deesis – Vision” type, which consists of the enthroned Christ, the intercessors, the archangels, the many-winged angelic beings, as well as the angelic choir⁴³. Apart from Georgia, this rarer iconography was also known in Cappadocia⁴⁴. The theme combines elements of the Deesis with others from the visions of Ezekiel (Ez. 1, 4–28; 9, 1–10, 22) and Isaiah (Is. 6, 1–13). The angels correspond with the passage from Daniel (Dan. 7, 10) that is repeated in Matthew (Matt. 25, 31) and Revelation (Rev. 5, 11)⁴⁵. In the liturgy, the simultaneous evocation of various visions of the glory of God is perhaps best exemplified in the preface to the Sanctus⁴⁶, as well as in the triumphal hymn of the Trisagion during the Anaphora and the Cherubikon⁴⁷. During the Anaphora, the words of the seraphic hymn heard by Isaiah in his vision of the Lord in the temple (Is. 6, 2–3) introduce the consecration of the bread and wine by the deacons. This eucharistic hymn is a prayer of intercession at the time of the Second Coming. The believer is invited into the cosmic hymn of glorification and adoration through the prayers of the Trisagion⁴⁸. After the translating activities of the Athonite monks St Euthymios and St George Mtats’mindeli, these texts became very well known in Georgia. The *Synaxarion* and the *Lectionary of St George*, which are preserved in several manuscripts as well as the *Vita Euthymii* preserve detailed descriptions of liturgical life on

Athos based on Studite usage with the rite of the Great Church⁴⁹.

According to the *Historia Ecclesiastica* attributed to Germanos of Constantinople (d. 733), while celebrating the Anaphora the priest stands before the altar as before the throne of God, amid the two cherubim, contemplates the great, inexpressible, unfathomable mystery of Christ, and spiritually sees the heavenly court⁵⁰. The liturgy of the earth is in imitation of the liturgy of heaven⁵¹. The strength of the image – but also its ambiguity – lies precisely in its versatility and synoptic value; in this, too, it can be compared to the liturgical celebration, which is at once a commemoration of the past, an anticipation of the Second Coming, and a present reality⁵². The synthetic character of the image, fully integrated into the eucharistic mystery, responds to the polyvalence of the liturgical rite. By associating the Mandyllion with the Deesis, one recalls the dogma of the Incarnation, the condition of salvation and redemption⁵³. By placing the Holy Face above the altar, reference is made to the rites and prayers that characterized the cult of the relic in Edessa. In this context, the Mandyllion presents a distinct eschatological situation: it is the soteriological symbol of the Incarnation and Passion, containing the significance of the confrontation between the faithful and Christ at the end of time⁵⁴. This is also the focus of the Christological cycle depicted in the naos.

The Christological cycle

In addition to the image of St George, a Christological cycle with eight scenes – not laid out chronologically – is present in the naos⁵⁵. This begins on the vault just to the south, with the depiction of the Annunciation (2) adjoining the conch [Figs 4, 10]. In the upper centre of the field between two depicted buildings is the inscription: “ΕΙΣΗΛΘΗ Τ~Ο~Υ~Σ~Τ~Η~Ν~Α~Ν~Ν~Υ~Ν~Τ~Ι~Α~Ν~”: Annunciation. This scene visualizes the moment of the Incarnation of the Word. The Theotokos is seated with a speaking gesture on a quite ornate throne and turns towards the angel, who approaches her, with a wide lunge, from the left; the angel raises its right hand and holds a lily staff in its left. Between the legs of the two figures is a round window, which has

been integrated into the painting by tracing the masonry around it in red paint. Directly above it is a stepped podium on which stands a column supporting an arch. This seems to support the dome in the centre, right next to the head of the Theotokos, furnished with a high tambor and crowned with a cross [Fig. 10]. This architecture is smaller or deeper in pictorial space, compared to the façades that rise behind the two figures. Each basilica has a gable roof and several windows and doors. Many sermons adopted a dramatic emphasis on the dialogue between Gabriel and the Virgin from as early as the fifth century⁵⁶. The preacher led the celebrants to consider the full theological implications of the feast that inaugurates human salvation through the Incarnation of the Word of God⁵⁷. The texts that visualized this introductory image of the cycle come at the beginning of the liturgy and, at the same time, explain the focal points of the rite.

The painter's aspiration to adapt the compositions as much as possible to the architectural conditions is evidenced by the scene of the Nativity (3), which is conceived in a three-dimensional space in response to the curved surface and which integrates again perfectly a real window [Fig. 10]. The centre of the composition is occupied by the Theotokos, who lies on a mattress with her right arm propped up and holds a cloth in her left hand⁵⁸. The mother's face is marked by sadness: she is already aware of the fate of her son, as is pointed out in the homilies⁵⁹. On the one hand, the image



9/ Deesis,
interior, apse

- 42 Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), pp. 75–88; Kenia, "Svanetis mokhat'uloba ta apsidaluris kemebi" (n. 1), pp. 62–85. For the apse compositions of early Georgian painting programs, see Zaza Skhirtladze, "Early Medieval Georgian Monumental Painting: Establishment of the System of Church Decoration", *Oriens Christianus*, VIII (1997), pp. 169–206.
- 43 For parallels, see Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), pp. 75–88; Kenia, "Svanetis mokhat'uloba ta apsidaluris kemebi" (n. 1), pp. 66, 68–77.
- 44 Nicole Thierry, "À propos des peintures d'Ayvali köy (Cappadoce). Les programmes absidaux à trois registres avec Déisis, en Cappadoce et en Géorgie", *Zograf*, v (1974), pp. 5–22; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords*, Paris 1991; *Eadem*, *La Cappadoce médiévale*, Paris 2002, pp. 93–128.
- 45 Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), pp. 76–77; *Eadem*, "L'Église de Khé" (n. 24), p. 116; *Eadem*, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 160.
- 46 Warren Woodfin, "A Majestas Domini in Middle-Byzantine Constantinople", *Cahiers Archéologiques*, LI (2003), pp. 45–53, sp. p. 47. For the text, see Frank E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, vol. 1, *Eastern Liturgies*, Oxford 1896, p. 385.

- 47 Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), p. 77; Feuillen Mercenier, *La Prière des Églises de Rite byzantin*, vol. II, *Les Fêtes*, Chevetogne 1947, pp. 244, 251.
- 48 Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines* (n. 44), pp. 335–338.
- 49 Robert F. Taft, "Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Rite", *DOP*, XLII (1988), pp. 179–194, sp. pp. 183–186. *Didi svnaksari, ts' Giorgi mtats' mindeli* [Great Synaxarion, St George the Hagiorite], Manana Dolakidze, Dali Chitunashvili eds, Tbilisi 2018.
- 50 René Bornert, *Les Commentaires byzantins de la Divine Liturgie du VIII^e au X^e siècle*, Paris 1966, pp. 128–180, sp. pp. 175–178.
- 51 Vasileios Marinis, "On Earth as It Is in Heaven? Reinterpreting the Heavenly Liturgy in Byzantine Art", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, CXIV (2021), pp. 255–268.
- 52 Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines* (n. 44), p. 340.
- 53 Due to the liturgical implications of the Mandylion, the image appears mostly in conjunction with the scene of the Deesis or the Majestas Domini in the apse program. Aladashvili, "Rospi's' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), p. 21; Gedevanishvili, "Unpainted Image" (n. 25), p. 53.
- 54 Velmans, "L'image de la Déisis" (n. 3), p. 83; Gedevanishvili, "Unpainted Image" (n. 25), pp. 54–55.
- 55 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), pp. 164–167; Kenia, *Upper Svaneti* (n. 1), pp. 166–173. Three stars can be seen on the vault between the scenes and cannot be precisely assigned, except in connection with the Nativity image.
- 56 Mary B. Cunningham, "The Reception of Romanos in Middle Byzantine Homiletics and Hymnography", *DOP*, LXII (2008), pp. 251–260.
- 57 Mary B. Cunningham, "The Interpretation of the New Testament in Byzantine Preaching", in *The New Testament in Byzantium*, Derek Krueger, Robert S. Nelson eds, Washington 2016, pp. 191–204, sp. pp. 201–202.
- 58 Lidov identifies the cloth occasionally tied in the left hand of the Theotokos or to her belt as a liturgical cloth, an *encheirion*, since such cloths were used at Holy Communion. The cloth symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ, foretold by Simeon and already known by the Theotokos. Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy. Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Church*, Moscow 2009, pp. 113–151.
- 59 Cunningham, "The Interpretation of the New Testament" (n. 57), p. 200.

is a precise moment in the history of salvation; on the other hand, it is an image of the liturgical act in which every memory of the birth automatically implies the death of Christ. Behind her, the Christ Child lies in a manger, with a donkey and an ox watching over him. Three angels look out from behind the mountains.

Above the head of the Theotokos, an inscription reads: “ἮΟΛΤῈ ἡ ἑορτή”: Nativity of Christ. To the right of the Virgin is the real window opening already mentioned, which has been integrated into the picture so as to give the appearance of the real cave in which Christ was born. The dual importance of the cave is expressed in a text by Germanos in his *Historia mystagogica*: “In a cave You appeared in the world, in a cave You disappear from the world”⁶⁰. He compares the prothesis to the cave of the Nativity and the main apse to the cave of the Holy Sepulchre. This ambiguity or simultaneity between nativity and death determines the content of the liturgical symbolism in Tanghili. Under the reclining Theotokos, Joseph on a throne turns away from the events taking place behind his back and so witnesses the virgin birth. There, two midwives prepare the first bath of Christ, and a shepherd with raised arms together with a goat and a sheep are depicted directly beside and below the cave (window). To the right of this, the Three Magi travel to the birth, one behind the other. All of them wear boots, cloaks, and Phrygian caps, but each is a different age as indicated by their physiognomy. The gifts of the two first Magi are visible: each holds a paten in which three hosts can be seen. These iconographic details again specify the significance of the Nativity, namely its connection to the sacrifice of Christ, as well as the liturgical relevance of the visualization of the Christological cycle⁶¹. The orientation of the magi towards the apse also underlines the intention to establish a parallel between their gifts and the eucharistic procession of the bread and wine.

Without separation, the next image follows: the Presentation in the Temple (5), which takes up much less space and is squeezed in between the Nativity and the Transfiguration [Fig. 11]. Placing the Presentation adjacent to the Nativity is logical because together they form one of the most common pairs of scenes heralding the Incarnation

of Christ and the salvation of mankind. The background architecture consists of two lateral basilicas and a larger ciborium in the centre. Mary and Joseph enter the temple from the left. Behind the closed doors, Simeon can be seen nestling the Christ Child against his upper body. The focus of Simeon’s prophetic words is the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ (Lk. 2,34–35). The presentation of the child parallels the sacrificial death of Christ; already as a child, Christ is confronted with his later destiny⁶². A homily on the Presentation in the Temple was probably written by George of Nikomedeia (ninth century), known for his emotional tone⁶³. His message of sacrifice and offering goes beyond the narrative of the ceremonial presentation of Christ. He equates the presentation with the Incarnation and understands it as a prediction of the Passion⁶⁴.

In Tanghili, behind Simeon with the child stands a woman who holds an open scroll, bearing the following inscription:

წჱ ႱႱႱႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ ႱႱႱႱႱ

“Saint Prophet Iulita says this: God will come, Halleluiah” [Fig. 12].

Thus, St Iulita – though not a prophetess – takes the place of the prophetess Hannah⁶⁵. Since the eleventh century, the feast day of Iulita, together with her son K’virik’e, has been July 15⁶⁶. Instead of the traditional passage taken from the Gospel (Lk. 2, 35), the inscription foretells the Lord’s coming. Gedevanishvili is certainly right to perceive the text as a “response” to the image of the Mandylion above the altar⁶⁷. The substitution of St Iulita could have been motivated by the intention to emphasize the association with the Passion of Christ and, therefore, to establish an analogy between the pain of the Virgin with regard to the sacrifice of Christ and the pain of St Iulita with regard to the martyrdom of her son K’virik’e⁶⁸. The liturgical value of the scene is confirmed by its representation in an eleventh-century liturgical scroll. It illustrates the prayer of the faithful that immediately precedes the *Cherubikos Hymnos* sung during the transfer of the gifts to the altar, showing that Christ presented in the temple is the true offering sacrificed during

the eucharistic celebration⁶⁹. Consequently, the commemoration of the local saints St Iulita and her son K'virik'e is integrated into the hymn. The interpretation of the New Testament within the different texts is of utmost importance in the liturgy, which finds its direct visual equivalence in the images depicted in the sacred space.

- 60 S. Germani Patriarchae Constantinopolitani, Ἱστορία Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ καὶ μυστικὴ θεωρία, PG 98, col. 388. For the text, see Bornert, *Les Commentaires* (n. 50), pp. 135–142; Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453. Sources and Documents*, Toronto 1972, pp. 141–143. For the interpretation, see Robert F. Taft, “The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm”, *DOP*, xxxiv/xxxv (1980/81), pp. 45–75; Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton 1994, p. 104.
- 61 In fact, such details directly referring to the eucharistic are very rare. A parallel, albeit in the scene of the Crucifixion, occurs in Svaneti in the church of Christ in Murkhmeli (eleventh or twelfth century). The Theotokos holds a jar to catch the blood coming from Christ's side wound. See Ekaterine Privalova, “Murq'melis “matskhvaris” mokhat'uloba ushgulshi” [Painting of the Matskhvari Church of Murq'meli in Ushguli], *Dzeglis megobari* [Friend of the Monument], xxix (1972), pp. 31–39; Nicole Thierry, “Notes d'un second voyage en Haute-Svanétie (Géorgie)”, *Bedi Kartlisa*, xxxvii (1980), pp. 51–112, sp. p. 83; Aladashvili, “Rospis' cercvi Tangil” (n. 3), p. 25.
- 62 Henry Maguire, “The Iconography of Symeon with the Christ Child in Byzantine Art”, *DOP*, xxxiv/xxxv (1980/81), pp. 261–269. Maguire also explains how in the relevant sermons the statements are exaggerated in order to allow the meaning to be optimally apprehended: Maguire, *Art and Eloquence* (n. 60), pp. 84–90.
- 63 George of Nikomedeia, *Homilia in occursum Domini*, PG 28, col. 973–1000. Maguire, “The Iconography of Symeon” (n. 62), p. 261; Maguire, *Art and Eloquence* (n. 60), p. 86; Cunningham, “The Interpretation of the New Testament” (n. 57), p. 200.
- 64 The dramatic dialogues in the homilies of George of Nikomedeia could have been used to teach Chalcedonian Christology. On the “exegetical drama”, see Judit Kecskeméti, “Doctrine et drame dans la predication grecque”, in *Euphrosyne*, xxi (1992), pp. 26–68.
- 65 Velmans, “Les peintures” (n. 5), p. 170; Aladashvili, “Rospis' cercvi Tangil” (n. 3), pp. 25–26; *Eadem*, “Volkstümliche Strömung” (n. 3), p. 142.
- 66 The date is indicated in the *Synaxarion* translated by St Euthymios: Hippolyte Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi adiectis synaxariis electis opera et studio*, Bruxelles 1902, col. 821; Tarchnishvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Georgischen Literatur* (n. 19), p. 150. For the vita of the two martyrs, see Gabriela Kaster, “Julitta und Cyricus von Tarsus”, *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, vii (1974), pp. 241–245; Schrader, “Byzantium and Its Eastern Barbarians” (n. 18), pp. 278, 280–281. Mother and Son are also often depicted in Cappadocia, even occasionally being included in the bema area as privileged intercessors: Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines* (n. 44), pp. 52, 345; *Eadem*, *La Cappadoce médiévale* (n. 44), pp. 127, 147, 158–159, 338, 341, 384. July 15 is from the old (Julian) calendar. Today, the feast is celebrated on July 28.
- 67 Gedevanishvili, “The Representation of the Holy Face” (n. 24), p. 20.



10/ The Annunciation and the Nativity of Christ, interior, vault, 13th century

11/ The Presentation in the Temple and the Transfiguration, interior, vault, 13th century

68 *Ibidem*, pp. 20–21.

69 Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Ms. Stavrou 109. André Grabar, “Un rouleau liturgique constantinopolitain et ses peintures”, *DOP*, vii (1954), pp. 163–199; Victoria Kepetzi, “Tradition iconographique et création dans une scène de communion”, *JÖB*, xxxii (1982), pp. 443–451; Ioannis Spatharakis, “Representations of the Great Entrance in Crete”, in *Studies in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination and Iconography*, *Idem* ed., London 1996, pp. 293–335, sp. pp. 302–303, fig. 15; Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce médiévale* (n. 44), pp. 194–195; Vasileios Marinis, “Liturgical Scrolls”, in *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*, Vasiliki Tsamakda ed., Leiden 2017, pp. 310–318.

A detail from the Lindisfarne Gospels, showing a hand holding a scroll. The scroll contains text in Old English script, which is a form of Anglo-Saxon runic script. The text is arranged in a single column and is written in a dark ink on a light-colored background. The hand holding the scroll is depicted in a stylized manner, with a thumb and index finger visible. The background of the entire page is a complex, interlaced knotwork design in various colors, including red, blue, and green, set against a gold leaf background.

This photograph captures the interior of a cave, showcasing its walls adorned with ancient frescoes. The artwork is executed in earthy tones of red, ochre, and white. On the left, a large figure in a red robe, possibly Christ, is depicted holding a book. To the right, a group of smaller figures, some with halos, are shown in various poses. The cave's natural rock formations are integrated into the artwork, with some figures appearing to emerge from or be part of the cave's structure. A dark, rectangular opening in the lower right corner provides a view into the cave's interior, which appears to be a simple, unadorned space. The overall scene suggests a significant religious or historical site, likely a place of pilgrimage or a site of early Christian art.



Christ, clothed in a colobium, stands in the water and turns to John the Baptist, who lays his hand on Christ's head. Behind Christ stand two angels. The scene is set precisely in the single side apse [Figs 2, 5]. It is not known where the baptismal rite took place in the Svaneti churches, but the composition in this particular niche suggests that the real scenery of baptism unfolded in front – and was mirrored by – this imagery. Due to the solitude of the church, however, the rite of the blessing of water (*Hagiasmos*), related to that of baptism, is more likely to be considered⁷⁶.

70 Cunningham, "The Interpretation of the New Testament" (n. 57), p. 195. The Athonite monks St Euthymios and St George Mtats' mindeli each translated numerous exegetical, dogmatical, and liturgical works: Tarchnishvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen Georgischen Literatur* (n. 19), pp. 135–152, 164–170.

71 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 167. This contrast has the effect of emphasizing the white color, within the dim light of the room and especially with additional candlelight, thereby amplifying the cosmic scene.

72 Tbilisi, Institute of Manuscripts, Cod. A–85, fol. 276r. Skhirtladze, "Canonizing the Apocrypha" (n. 25), pp. 74–75.

73 Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, Crestwood 2005, pp. 66–75. On the exegetical texts of the Transfiguration,

emphasizing this point, see Cunningham, "The Interpretation of the New Testament" (n. 57), pp. 193–196.

74 This is very important for the theological disagreements between the Chalcedonian Georgian Church and the Non-Chalcedonian Armenian Church; see Antony Eastmond, "Messages, Meanings and Metamorphoses: The Icon of the Transfiguration of Zarzma", in *Images of the Byzantine World: Vision, Message, and Meanings*, Angeliki Lymberopoulou ed., Farnham 2011, pp. 57–82, sp. pp. 64–66. In this context, the text of John of Damascus (ca 675–749) "Homily on the Transfiguration of the Lord" interpreting the Theophany in clearly Chalcedonian terms is significant; see Sermo in Transfigurationem Domini, PG 96, col. 545–576. John A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, New York 1986, pp. 202–205; Andreas Andreopoulos, "The Mosaic of the Transfiguration in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai: A Discussion of its Origins", *Byzantion*, LXXII/1 (2002), pp. 9–41, sp. pp. 14–18; Cunningham, "The Interpretation of the New Testament" (n. 57), pp. 193–196.

75 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 169; Aladashvili, "Rospi's' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), p. 24; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 141–142. Because of their common signification, Baptism and the Transfiguration are often also topographically associated in sacred space.

76 The correlation between Baptism and the Blessing of Water is present, for example, in the texts of Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, which were read during the Hagiasmos; see Jelena Bogdanovic, *The Framing of Sacred Spaces: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church*, Oxford 2017, pp. 386–387. For this rite, a cube would have been set up in this place. On the parallel examples in Cappadocia, see Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce médiévale* (n. 44), pp. 202–203.

The frontal and symmetrical Crucifixion image (8) has an inscription on both sides above the crossarm: “ἌΓΙΟΙ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΡΟΤΕΡΟΙΣ”: Crucifixion of Christ⁷⁸. Two half-length angels look out from behind the crossarms. The Theotokos and John flank the Cross. John holds his right hand to his cheek while Christ hangs on the Cross, his body straight and his head slumped to one side [Fig. 4]. Above the Crucifixion, the scene of the Nativity is depicted in the vault. The visual juxtaposition of the two compositions reflects a common theme in the literature, namely connecting the birth and the death, and is encountered in Cappadocian churches as early as the tenth century⁷⁹. But it is Simeon’s prophecy during the Presentation of Christ that visualizes the tension between the Incarnation and the Passion and is fulfilled in the scene of the Crucifixion⁸⁰.

The Pentecost (9) depiction is arranged around the door [Fig. 13]. The scene always evokes the mystery of the Church, which is an extension of the mystery of the Word made flesh, as well as the universality of salvation history, as the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles also concerns the faithful who enter the church and are likewise invested with the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Pentecost often represented near the entrance⁸¹. Twelve apostles are seated in a semicircle, each with scroll or a book, each foot placed on a single suppedaneum⁸². From heaven, each one receives a tongue of fire. In the middle, Peter and Paul are discussing with each other. Between them, an inscription reads: “ἉΓΙΟΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ ἉΓΙΟΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ”. Pentecost. The most astonishing aspect is the absence of the nations, as the main door is located in their usual position, at the centre of the group of apostles. This means that all those who enter through the door are automatically incorporated into the nations, into those who now understand the apostles. The setting of the composition encourages again an interplay with the real-world usage of the space.

The next scene is the Entry into Jerusalem (10), the lower and right parts of which are badly damaged [Fig. 13]⁸³. The elaborate city architecture of Jerusalem can be seen at the top right; the high tambors in particular can be seen as characteristic of Georgian – but not Svan – architecture. In front of this, two children are climbing a leafy tree. Further to the left, Christ's upper body is visible (†~ႦႪ), but the donkey is no longer preserved. Christ rides towards the right and thus also towards the sanctuary, like St George in the panel in front of him. Christ is followed by the apostles, with Peter and Paul in front; the heads behind them are not fully apparent. The inscription “ႠႣႫႣႪႮႪႮ ႮႪႪႮ ႮႪႪႮ” (Entry into Jerusalem) directly above them, referring to the iconography, at the same time draws a parallel between the cult of the Cross in Georgia and that in the Holy Land. Indeed, above the inscription is an image of a cross erected on a hill, with a church at the foot of the hill. Since the town architecture towards which Christ rides already evokes Jerusalem, this composition cannot be a reference to the same town⁸⁴. On the contrary, it refers to the topography of Mtskheta, where the *loci sancti* of the Jvari and Svet’itskhoveli churches echo Golgotha⁸⁵. This rendering of specific regional topography, paralleled with Jerusalem via the juxtaposition of the city architecture and the inscription, lead us to assume a concrete allusion to the cult of the Mtskheta Cross, which was known in Svaneti. The feast in honor of the Mtskheta Cross, celebrated throughout Georgia as one of the main events of the liturgical year, was inspired by the feasts in honor of the crosses in Jerusalem⁸⁶. The date of the feast of the Mtskheta Cross is contained within the name itself: “ႠႣႪႪႪႪႪႪ ႪႪႪႪ ႪႪႪႪ ႪႪႪႪ”, which means ‘the third Sunday after Easter’⁸⁷. At Tanghili, this could be one reason why the introductory scene to the Passion cycle appears after the Crucifixion. Since Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Easter, there is also a chronology to the feasts that are connected with the scenes depicted in the wall zone. Showing Christ riding triumphantly in the same direction as St George, the Entry into Jerusalem is placed just behind the latter saint, and the scene of Pentecost is composed around the door, facing the apse. The setting

reveals an active and animated interplay on several levels among the images, the texts, and thus the liturgy that took place here.

Liturgy and performance

In addition to visualizing the life of Christ, the selected episodes from the biblical story refer to liturgical interactions that are summarized by the Mandylion in the apse, opposite to the entrance. They are placed in such a way as to interact spatially as well as theologically. The internal juxtapositions of selected scenes created a theologically condensed formulation of doctrine around the Incarnation, the Passion, and mankind's resulting salvation – a visual formulation that related directly to the liturgical performance in the sacred space⁸⁸. From the perspective of the worshipper, polyvalent interactions among the images adapt and come into focus in the framework of the liturgy performed in the sacred space.

To fully understand the function of the sacred space, one must consider the objects that were operative therein. When the Church of the Archangels in Tanghili was dissolved, the icons that belonged to it were transferred to the Savior's Church in Lakhust'i⁸⁹. Aside from the chased icons and silver-clad processional crosses, a large

- 77 Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image*, Princeton 1986, pp. 173–177; Nektarios Zarras, "Narrating the Sacred Story: New Testament Cycles in Middle and Late Byzantine Church Decoration", in *The New Testament in Byzantium* (n. 57), pp. 239–275, sp. pp. 243–246. Zarras mentions the text of John of Damascus (eighth century) explaining the typological correlation, namely that baptism symbolized the burial of the Original Sin and led those who were baptized to redemption: John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, PG 94, col. 1120B–1121A.
- 78 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 170; Aladashvili, "Rospis' cerkvi Tangil" (n. 3), p. 25; *Eadem*, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), p. 143.
- 79 For examples, see Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines* (n. 44), pp. 85–87, 122–125, 132–135, 182–184, 211–215. For the interpretation of this arrangement: Zarras, "Narrating the Sacred Story" (n. 77), pp. 240–243. Zarras mentions the homily on the Crucifixion by Proklos of Constantinople (ca 390–446), which draws exactly the same correlation. Jan Harm Barkhuizen, *Homilies on the Life of Christ*, Brisbane 2001, p. 162, I.1–I.3.
- 80 For the sermon ascribed to John Chrysostom, recently attributed to Proklos of Constantinople or Severianos of Gabala (ca 380–425) and presenting the dialogue between Mary and Simeon, see De occursu D. N. Jesu Christi, PG 50, col. 811. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence* (n. 60), pp. 98–99; Zarras, "Narrating the Sacred Story" (n. 77), p. 246.
- 81 Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce médiévale* (n. 44), pp. 258–259.

- 82 Velmans, "Les peintures" (n. 5), pp. 166–167.
- 83 *Eadem*, "Les peintures" (n. 5), pp. 164–165; Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), p. 141.
- 84 The Mtskheta Cross and the church on the hill were interpreted as indications of Golgotha: Tania Velmans, "Observations sur l'Emplacement et l'Iconographie de l'Entrée à Jérusalem dans quelques Églises de Svanétie (Géorgie)", in *Eadem*, *L'Art Médiéval de l'Orient chrétien*, Paris 2001, pp. 141–148, sp. pp. 143–144; *Eadem*, "Les peintures" (n. 5), p. 166; Aladashvili, "Volkstümliche Strömung" (n. 3), pp. 141–142; Mariam Didebulidze, "Representation of Architecture in Medieval Georgian Murals", *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences*, XIII/3 (2019), pp. 149–155, sp. p. 152; *Eadem*, "Arkit'ekt'uris rep'rezent'atsia shua sauk'uneebis kartul sakhviti khelovnebash" [Perception and Representation of Architecture in Medieval Georgian Fine Arts], in *Arkit'ekt'uris rep'rezent'atsia shua sauk'uneebis sakartveloshi* [Representation of Architecture in Medieval Georgia], Mariam Didebulidze, David Khoshtaria eds, Tbilisi 2022, pp. 9–196, sp. p. 117. Normally, the Holy Sepulchre is depicted as one of the most important landmarks of the walled city of Jerusalem. But another hypothesis could also be that the artist may have had in mind the site of Golgotha, which is highlighted *extra muros* in the Gospels.
- 85 Brigitta Schrade, "Ad Crucem: Zum Jerusalemer Ursprung der georgischen Voraltaarkreuze anhand früher Beispiele aus Swanetien", in *Krist'ianobis 20 sauk'une sakartveloshi* [Twenty Centuries of Christianity in Georgia], Rismag Gordeziani ed., Tbilisi 2004, pp. 308–326, sp. p. 314, fig. 4; Brigitta Schrade, "Byzantine Ideology in Georgian Iconography: Iconographic Programmes of Georgian Pre-Altar Crosses", in *Cultural Interactions in Medieval Georgia*, Michele Bacci, Thomas Kaffenberger, Manuela Studer-Karlen eds, Wiesbaden 2018, pp. 115–142, sp. pp. 122–123; Studer-Karlen, "The Pictorial Compositions" (n. 8), pp. 57–58. Jvari and Svet'itskhoveli churches reproduce the phenomenon of a dual use of the cross, that is, outside as well as inside the church. For the topographical correlations between Jerusalem and Mtskheta, see Tamila Mgaloblishvili, "How Mtskheta Turned into the Georgian's New Jerusalem", in *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, Hanna Vorholt eds, Turnhout 2014, pp. 59–66; Giorgi Gagoshidze, "Jerusalem in Medieval Georgian Art", *ibidem*, pp. 133–138; Michele Bacci, "Echoes of Golgotha. On the Iconization of Monumental Crosses in Medieval Svanet'i", in *The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, Ivan Foletti, Erik Thunø eds, Prague 2016, pp. 207–223 (= *Convivium, Supplementum* [2016]).
- 86 Niko Chubinashvili, *Khandisi*, Tbilisi 1972, p. 8; Schrade, "Ad Crucem" (n. 85), p. 315; Kitty Machabeli, *Kartuli krist'ianuli khelovnebis sataveebtan* [The Origins of Georgian Christian Art], Tbilisi 2013, pp. 34, 143–144; Schrade, "Byzantine Ideology" (n. 85), p. 129.
- 87 The feast was established in the fifth century. It is noteworthy that, according to the calendar of Ioane Zosime (cod. Sin. geo. 34, tenth century), the date of one of the feasts of the Cross is also the third Sunday after Easter. *K'larjuli mravaltavi* [K'larjeti Polycephalon], text for the publication with research by Tamila Mgaloblishvili, Tbilisi 1991, pp. 481–482; Schrade, "Ad Crucem" (n. 85), p. 312; Constantine B. Lerner, *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography. The Early Medieval Historical Chronicle of the Conversion of K'art'li and the Life of St. Nino*, London 2004, p. 187; Mgaloblishvili, "How Mtskheta" (n. 85), p. 64; Bacci, "Echoes" (n. 85), p. 213; Schrade, "Byzantine Ideology" (n. 85), p. 122.
- 88 For this concept, see Zarras, "Narrating the Sacred Story" (n. 77), pp. 239–275.
- 89 Taqaishvili, *Works* (n. 3), p. 351. The modern church was built 100–200 years ago and completely whitewashed in 2014.

icon is notable that probably represents the patron saint of the church (thirteenth century) [Fig. 14]. The inscription names the Archangel Michael: “*მეფე-მეფე-მეფე-მეფე-მეფე*”. Such objects’ integration into and function within the original church are difficult to trace today; most likely, they were situated on the templon, where they served a devotional purpose⁹⁰.

The eternal nature of festal celebrations evokes the timeless eschatological fulfilment of Christ’s Second Coming, which each individual worshipper could experience by means of homilies, some of which underscored the importance of empathy⁹¹. The arrangement of the scenes creates a nexus of theological messages intimately connected with the dominant concept of the dual humanity and divinity of Christ. The worshipper was surrounded by vivid liturgy, which was inflected by local customs and specialized solutions emphasizing, for example, the integration of regionally significant saints and cult objects. The reverse conclusion is that the homiletic texts played an important role in the Georgian liturgy, such that artists met the need to reproduce them even in small churches. Especially in the little, remote church in Tanghili, a believer, perhaps having stopped in along an arduous journey from one valley to the other, finds himself reacquainted with familiar concepts of the promise of salvation.

⁹⁰ There is currently a copy of this icon in the church [Fig. 7].

⁹¹ Cunningham, “The Interpretation of the New Testament” (n. 57), p. 198.

Obraz a liturgie. Kostel Archandělů v Tanghili

Článek pojednává o malém kostele Archandělů v Tanghili na kopci v oblasti Svanetie z 13. století, který pravděpodobně sloužil jako poutní kaple na cestě mezi dvěma údolími. Jeho architektura i nepravidelný křížový typ jsou pro tento region ojedinělé. Celý omítnutý interiér vyzdobili dva umělci malbami, které se přizpůsobují architektuře, přičemž jediným zobrazeným světcem je sv. Jiří. Dominantní zastoupení této postavy – přestože není patronem kostela – můžeme vysvětlit jeho velkou oblibou v Gruzii, obzvláště pak ve Svanetii. V apsidě je zobrazen typ „Deesis“, do něhož je zakomponován Mandylion, což ukazuje na silně eschatologický charakter malby. Autorka článku se domnívá, že umístění Mandylionu v apsidě odhaluje bezprostřední liturgický význam tohoto motivu, jelikož odkazuje na Vtělení a Umučení Krista a evokuje tak konfrontaci věřících s Kristem při Druhém příchodu; Svatá tvář zde přitom funguje jako polysémantický symbol liturgické iniciace. Mandylion je také středem christologického cyklu zobrazeného v lodi kostela. Autorka ukazuje, že osm výjevů na klenbě a stěnách je

umístěno tak, aby na sebe prostorově i teologicky navazovaly. Úzké spojení mezi obrazem a liturgií vyplývá z propojení obrazového programu s texty intonovanými v posvátném prostoru. Cílem článku je zvážit toto propojení, a to mezi biblickými vyprávěními v homiletických textech a jejich vizuálními ekvivalenty, jakož i liturgickou zkušeností, která se odehrávala v tomto posvátném prostoru v Tanghili. Kostel Archandělů dobře ilustruje komplexní systém vizuálních vztahů – udržuje totiž diváka v dialogu s určitými obrazy a zároveň ho začleňuje jako aktivního účastníka do prostorového kontextu, který byl určován dobovými teologickými diskusemi a místní kultovní praxí. Věřící byli tímto způsobem obklopováni živou liturgií tak jak se postupně odvíjela. Homiletické texty hrály v gruzínské liturgii důležitou roli, načež umělci vyšli vstříc potřebě reprodukovat je i v malých kostelích. Zejména v malém odlehlém kostelíku v Tanghili si tak věřící, který se v něm možná zastavil na své namáhavé cestě z jednoho údolí do druhého, znovu mohl vyvolat představy o příslibu spásy.