

## Parekhta Monastery

Tao-Klarjeti was and is of great importance for Georgia. This region has a particular meaning for each Georgian and is known as the area where St Grigol Khandzteli (749-851) had unfolded his activities. In the 8th-9th centuries, St Grigol and his disciples were very active in founding new monasteries and rehabilitated the old ones, the monasteries becoming most significant centers of culture. Even more, the spiritual fathers who were educated there were founding new Georgian monasteries abroad, which became important cultural and spiritual centers in Byzantium, Palestine, Syria or on the Holy Mountain of Athos. Especially the Georgian (Iberian) Monastery of Mount Athos (10th c.) and the Georgian Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (11th c.) were, along with their cultural designation, also of political importance.

It must be noted that there are no evidences about early buildings in Klarjeti. Some scholars thought that a monastery of Parekhta should be established at 6-7 century. Researchers' opinion is based on the life of Serapion Zarzmel, that St. Michael One of Shio's disciples (follower), arrived in Klarjeti, stayed in Opiza for a while, and then built a monastery Parekhta for his and his brothers.

According to the life Gregoli of Khanzta when Khandzta became known for its grace and of its spiritual fathers, at that time a great desert ascetic, Father Mikel came to Khandzta from Midznadzoro and settled in Parekhta, because he was a friend of Blessed Father Gregory. He longed for the eremitic life and found his own place to dwell at Parekhta in Berta. Through the intents of this holy man, he settled therein and became even more pleasing to the Lord.

When the devil saw the brevity of the holy men. He troubled Mikel through visible and hidden visions, that he might drive him from the desert. Mikel however defeated every appearance of his evil tricks through the help of Christ and the supplication of the saints.

There was one occasion where Father Mikel had departed from his cell and was standing at the top of a high cliff in a desolate place. The devil cast him down from the heights. Christ God the King of All protected him, completely unharmed. When his spiritual father, Father Gregory knew [nju:] about this incident, the saint quickly went to the aid of his brother through the power of the Lord and gave him spiritual encouragement. He created of his own accord two wooden crosses, marks of Christ, to give him victory, protect him, and to drive away the enemy. He erected them here and there, at some distance from his cell and established them as a boundary for the holy man as thus:

— “Remain without fear between these two Crosses of Christ through the help of the Holy Trinity and the power of the Honorable Cross. If you cross this boundary, you shall suffer even worse than the first time.” The Blessed Mikel however found complete respite, because he had

defeated the prideful enemy through humility. He did not trust in his own righteousness, but instead brought his spiritual father and brother, Gregory as help, by trusting in God.

Blessed Mikel was from the land of Shavsheti, from the village of Norgiali, and became a monk at Midznadzoro, whereas after the passing of many years, he earned his salvation in Parekhi and when he had finished his earthly course, he was buried in that very place. He is buried together with the glorious Father Basil, who dwelt in Parekhta after him. They bestow healing upon men who go to them in faith.

According to Davit Khostaria The historical fates of Serapion Zarzel's life must be old. parekhta Monastery was probably founded in the 6th century by the mikhael. However, today's architecture is not early than the 9th century, and he cannot find it early building.

the Monastrey of Parekhta is located in the Karchal Valley and eight kilometers north of Berta Monastery. The Monastery is located on the left side of small mountain stream called Duganli. The Mandra lies on a horizontal ledge about 150 m long. The only access to the monastery is from west side through the narrow fortified gate, which is now collapsed. From the narrow path can be reach to the hermitages and other monastery structure. According to V. Djobadze he discovered rock cat two Hermitages and other Monastery structure. He counted three or five rectangular buildings. They were constructed with roughly dressed stones. All of them were ruined. The scholar thoughts that can be monks cells or storage room. Among the ruined building V. Djobadze show a larg rectangular room. He accept to N. Marr to the function of this structure. According him that can be a refectory, which could have easily accomadated twenty to thyrt Persons.

Near to the refectory there are two buildings: waterfall and a small cistern which can be provided more water for whole Monastery. Northwest of the gate there are two water mills and further west fields and orchards. The surrounding of the monastery and the plentiful environment would have supplied the monastic community with an abundance of food and amount of heating and constructing materials.

On the north side Marr mentions a sizable funerary chamber in which he found numerous human bones. According of the life of Grigol of Khanzta this was the burial place of Michael, founder of the Monastery and his followers Basil. When researchers talks about the Monastery of Khazta they always mention her attention of the two churches. As we show this churches are erected substructures on the mountain ledge.

### **The first church**

The first church built on the level of the east-west path of the monastery is a vaulted rectangular longitudinal nave with a semicircular apse that has two wide symmetrically placed niches. the construction material is locally and the masonry of the churches is rather crude. the interior and

exterior facing consists of poorly squared blocks. the stones used on the interior of the building are more carefully dressed. Its western and northern walls as well part of the apse are rather well preserved. the south wall on the other hand is almost completely gone. the interior of the church is filled with debris and covered with two trees. the south half of the church is supported by high substructure. On the west is an 1. 20 m. wide entrance which could be entrance which could be approached by a narrow passage through a descending staircase, part of which still remains. The light would have entered the church from the window above the western door and the apse, as well as was from the now destroyed south wall window. The north wall, for security reasons has now windows.

Attached to the north side of the church is longitudinal barrel vaulted side chamber, accessible only through the church itself by wide door. On the east it is terminated by a semicircular apse pierced by a single window. According Jobadze inhabitants found a large wine vessel below the floor on the west side. A second vessel was in situ when he arrived in Parkhali. According him it may be contained wine for the Eucharist and northern chamber was used for the prothesis. This possibility is suggested by other Georgian churches built in early medieval period in which similar vessels have been found.

After study many Georgian materials can be said that in early Period a wide variant of single naved churches was built in Tao-Klarjeti. this type have been lived the most long time in Georgia. After study this region the scholars agree with that churches, which are built of the end of eight and the first half of the ninth century have the common features:

### **The second church**

The second church built also special substructure. Its three nave basilica. Its very common architectural type in early medieval Georgia not only in Tao-Klarjeti (Nukas Sakdari, Esbeki) but in other provinces of Georgia as well. In comparison with the first church this is more carefully constructed. With rhythmic articulation of exterior walls Parekhta church look like monuments of the same time period. namely at the church of Tsirkoli.

The only entrance to the church is from the western door and its preceding which is now collapsed. The second opening in the south wall of the church is located at the edge of the vertical cliff. Jobadze can not say about the function of this exit. According him it can be the door to the balcony.

On the south side of the apse wall of the both pilasters of the west wall flat rectangular impostes are in situ. According to V. Jobadze that can be three nave basilica, which was flanked both side with chamber.

We have not documentary evidence when the second church was constructed, the researchers did not find any inscription they dated this second church with the analysis of the structure of architecture. They suggest that it can be dated at the end of the ninth or the early tenth century. The smaller church could no longer satisfy the demands of the growing monastic community, making necessary the another large church. This process was described in the life of Gregory of Khantzta. Additional information concerning the activities of the monastery Parekhta was a significant centre of literature studies. After the death of the foundation Michael at the end of ninth and the beginning of tenth century monks of Parekhta composed his biography. It has not survived. We also know about the renowned man Ilarion who was living during the time of Grigol Khanzeli. A significant information gives us the Colophon of Parkhali Gospel. The Author is Makari, who was living in sixteenth century and according to this evidence the monastery of Parekhta was still flourishing.

#### Literature:

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