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## **“Castle town Artanuji”**

Klarjeti region's centre has been Artanuji for centuries located in Artvini side, which growth was promoted by Castle-town's strategic importance and its Geographical location.

Artanuji had several vital functions: Fortressing strategic location, controlling economical and trading roads, administrative and sheltering place.

The history of the castle town of Artanuji, five important stages can be identified.

### **❖ Stage I - Establishment of the Castle town during the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali**

In the IV century, the main town of Klarjeti betrayed king of Kartli and was later subjugated to Byzantium. It was rejoined during the reign of King Vakhtang Gorgasali. First notes about Artanuji appeared at exactly this period. According to “The Georgian Chronicles”, Vakhtang, who had returned from the fight against Byzantium, saw a village named Artanuji in Klarjeti, he liked its strategic location and ordered his Affiliate- Artavazi to build a fortress.

According to the reports of Juansher, prior to the construction of Artanuji fortress, there have been two large fortresses in Klarjeti - Akhiza and Tukharis. The last one had been the residence of the local Dukes (Eristavi) until the V century, which later moved to Artanuji and formed the administrative-political center of Tao-Klarjeti (until the 16th century).

### **❖ Stage II - Downfall of Artanuji**

According to Georgian chronicler Sumbat David, in the 30s of the VIII century the Arabs, under the leadership of Marwan “The Deaf”, invaded Georgia. As a result of the battle, Artanuji fortress was brutally demolished. For the next decade, the abandoned-ruined castle and its surroundings were covered with forest.

### **❖ Stage III - The period of ascension and flourishing of Artanuji**

Significant political-economic developing and rebuilding processes in Tao-Klarjeti begun in the second half of the VIII and IX centuries. We can read about it in the hagiographic work of X century figure George Merchule “The Life of St. Gregory of Khandzta”. During this period, two great figures emerge almost simultaneously: Grigol Khandzteli, who played a major role in the rebuilding and development of monastic life in the region. Also, at the beginning of the IX century, the oppressed Kartli duke (Erismtavari) by Arabs, later King Ashot I, who fled to Klarjeti, takes Byzantine court title of Kouropalates and he creates a new political unit and Artanuji becomes its center.

In a small period of time 12 monasteries were established and renovated in Klarjeti: Opiza, Khandzta, Mere, Shatberdi, Mitznadzor, Tskarostavi, Baretelta, Berta, Jmerk, Daba, Parekhi and Doliskana.

By the end of the 9th century, after the death of Ashot Kurapalati, Ancestry of Bagrationi divides in two – Tao and Klarjeti branches. The administrative and strategic center of the Tao becomes the fortress town of Oltisi (IX-XI centuries), While Klarjeti's center becomes Artanuji, owned by the descendants of Ashot Kurapalati's elder son, Adarnese.

#### ❖ Stage IV - Unification of Georgia and ongoing processes in the region in XI-XVI centuries

At the beginning of the XI century, the process of unification of Georgia under the leadership of Bagrat III led to significant political changes. Including the abolition of the independent Klarjeti principality. In 1010, King of United Georgia Bagrat III invited Sumbat the Arthanujan and his brother in Fanaskert and imprisoned them in Tmogvi castle. Artanuji and the whole Klarjeti were incorporated into United Georgia.

In the XI century, the fortress of Artanuji was occupied for some time by Byzantine Empire, later ruled by Georgian duke (Eristavi) Liparit Baghuashi. And in 1080, according to the historian of David "the Builder", *Klarjeti was filled with Turkish till shores of Black Sea, one day Kutaisi, Artanuji and desert of Klarjeti were burned down.* Since the 13th century, Artanuji has been governed by Athabags of Samtskhe.

#### ❖ Stage V - Turkish-Ottoman Period

From the 50s of the XVI century, Artanuji came into the hands of the Ottoman Turks. In the 19th century, a new, powerful force emerges in the Caucasus in the form of Russia, which engages in wars against Turkey. 1877-1978 Artanuji, Adjara, Shavshet-Klarjeti, Kola-Artaani and the northern part of Tao were annexed by the Russian Empire. In 1918-1921 Tao-Klarjeti is within the borders of Democratic Republic of Georgia. It has been within Turkish borders since 1921.

#### ❖ Description of town

The current state of Artanuji's fortress town makes it difficult to talk about its plans. In addition to this, the archaeological study of the castle has not been carried out yet, and everything is based mainly on reports from Georgian and foreign scientists who have seen Artanuji in relatively better condition, although the damage during their visits was considerable. Artanuji was visited and touched upon by scientists such as Karl Koch, Nicholas Marr, Dimitri Bakradze, Praskovia Uvarova, Robert Edwards, Nicholas Evans and Vakhtang Jobadze.

The poor preservation of the castle and the scientific literature on it make it possible to talk only about the town's settlement and church buildings, as well as about the castle and the castle's hall church.

The present city of Artanuji is divided into two parts: new and old districts, located two kilometers from each other. New district was built in the 20th century on the right bank of the river Artanujitskali on a flat surface. Old district - the historic town of Artanuji, on the left bank of a rocky hill, was surrounded by fortress fence. The town is overlooked by Artanuji Castle from the west, from the cliff top.

According to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetic, historical Artanuji consisted of three parts. It was a fortress, or Acropolis, a small town and a "Rabati". "Rabati" in arabian means "Outdoor District", which was inhabited mainly by merchant-craftsmen. It can be assumed to be the place described by Nicholas Marr, one of main entrances to Artanuji, where the workshops were located.

According to Nicholas Marr, Artanuji had a main entrance on the east side. Gate consisted of two parts: One with big Arabic inscriptions. For today this gate doesn't exist any more, but in its place there is an ornamented stone with an inscription of Ottoman period. The workshops were arranged in two rows at the front door. One door to the north side of the castle town was cut, which was smaller in size, and the town was connected to the river Artanujitskali.

The old building on the territory of the city is considered to be a church built on northern corner, on a rocky cape, on a specially demolished and partially constructed place overlooking the Artanujitskali valley. The structure is almost completely demolished and traces of the western and northern walls about 1

meter high can be recognized. To represent the original architectural state of the church Dimitri Bakradze's, Praskovia Uvarova's and Nicholas Marie's descriptions are important, from which we find that the plan of the church was a rectangular, nearly square, complicated the Cross type building, which led to creating four additional storerooms in all four corners of the structure.

The temple had two wide entrances from the west and south-west storerooms. It also had a smaller sized entrance to the middle of the south wall under which the crypt was located. The altar was illuminated by two windows on the vertical axis, also one window was cut in Pastophorium and in other arms of the building. There is no information about the dome of the church because by the end of the XIX century it no longer existed.

What about church facade, according to Nicholas Marr, the church entrances were covered with medallion-shaped crosses, though the cross carved at the south entrance was taller than at the west entrance.

Local, whitish, rocky, roughly processed stone blocks are used as building materials. Also it's worth noting that at the bottom of the walls big boulders are used. The southern pastophorium's arch was built with incorrect shaped stones. The interior walls also had traces of sharpening and painting.

Use of large less processed stone in churches, building arch with sliced stones, approach to relief decor processing methods, ways and levels correspond to first half of IX-X centuries.

The Crosstype planning with storerooms on all four side are characteristic of the Tao-Klarjeti architecture, more specifically to Klarjeti, where the earliest monuments of this type are found, suggesting that both styles should have been formed here. As d. Khoshtaria says six of the nine preserved domed churches in Klarjeti are cross-sections (Midznadzori, Tskarostavi, Opiza, Artanuji, Doliskana, Shatberdi), And with all four storerooms in complicated style, only three monuments exist – in Klarjeti Artanuji City Church, Doliskana (937-958) and Dadasheni in Tao (X-XI centuries).

The Cross Type monuments complicated with storerooms on all 4 sides more or less close composite parallels can be found in Armenia, where corner storerooms were built into 2 floors, which are considerably smaller, and south and north arms shorter. These were called "Anberdi-type" structures, which formation and genesis are connected with Kupel-Hale type, although in Georgia it was formatted with complication of Cross Type. For note, "Amberdi Type" structures were more frequently built in XIII century, when Georgian corner-roomed Crosstype structures were built and later couldn't find any extension.

Above the church discussed, stood the second church, which was destroyed in the late Middle Ages. On its place, in 1864, resent Ruler of Artanuji Suleiman built Mosque of Isqender-Rectangular building with wooden roofing. Old church stones were used as building materials. According to Nicholas Marr, a stone was placed upside down on one of the walls of the mosque, with 2-lined ancient Georgian inscription of Asomtavruli-, *To Head of the Church and to his sister*-. The inscription is no longer visible, presumably due to the late rebuilding of the monument.

In 1790, an Armenian Catholic Church was built on the site of the Old City, which was destroyed in the 20s of the XX century. It is noteworthy that Nicholas Marr mentions the stone with an Armenian inscription, which could have been from the church.

Caravanserai/caravansary also was present in town, which was destroyed by fire in the second half of the XIX century. Hamami (Bath), Elongated rectangular shaped building, built in the XVIII century was located in old district; Springs and fountains were built in the city. To date, only a few such well-preserved springs have

survived. In the XIX century 2-floor Stone Houses were built, with wooden balconies, some of which still exist today.

The historic city of Artanuji was undergoing changes at every stage of its existence, as evidenced by the various purpose-built buildings in its territory that have evolved over time to meet new needs.

#### ❖ Description of Castle

Artanuji fortress is located on a flatted out rocky cliff, which is Elongated from south to north. Its length is almost 220 metres, width from 20 to 55 metres. Castle's fence follows the landscape, which width varies between 1 to 1,5 metres. For note, there is no sign of tower built in the fence, presumably, because of steep, flatted out rock, which safely protected the structure.

Unfortunately, poor guarding of the castle makes it impossible to talk about the system of defence. There is no visible signs of Ambrosians for gunpoint and canons, which are quite significant for middle ages.

According to Nicholas Marr, there were two difficult access roads to fortress – one from the north and one from south. On the territory of the fortress, signs of four structures are visible. One of them is the old water reservoir made of thin carved stones.

Nowadays, out of the buildings inside the fortress, The smaller hall church located in the middle of the citadel is relatively better preserved with dimensions 10,4X10,4 metres. From the north of the church, Rectangular side chapel follows it on the full length, from the east finished with a semicircular Apse. From the west portico was added to the church, which connects side chapel and main Hall. Entrances are constructed from the south and from the west, to side chapel – from the west. From the north, church has little, Elongated storeroom with no windows, which is not connected with side chapel and the church. It has separate entrance for the west, water reservoir is located under it from west to north-west corner. Clay water pipe systems is mentioned by Nicholas Marr. Near the church he describes a pool filled with broken rock fragments, with ball-shape elongated form. Church's west wall is fully destroyed, but eastern side walls. With Apse, 3 metre high wall is preserved. Church's interior was lighted with one window carved into the Apse.

The church is built with local, whitish-ivory, rocky, roughly broken, almost unprocessed big stones. The use of large blocks as construction material can be characterized to the early churches of this region. Church's outside and inside walls consist of roughly-shaped stones, which formate irregular lines, with frequent use of filler solution. The interior of the temple is plastered and painted, which can be verified with signs of red and blue Pigments on the lower parts and northern walls of the apse. On the Facade there is no sign of decorations.

Temple according to stylistic signs (architectural embellishment and lack of pilasters resting on the arches) belong to the IX century. From the north side storeroom, added to the chapel, is not attached to northern structure and is thought to be added later in the X century.

According to Sumbat David's notes, the church in fortress can be considered to be built by Ashot Kouropalates (as personal chapel), which is named as one of his resting place (Grave).

Like every other region in Georgia, design of fortresses in Tao-Klarjeti were dictated by the landscape, interior of which incorporated various purpose buildings. At present, in fortification structure preserved in Tao-Klarjeti are readable signs of small churches, but it is hard to speak about functional importance of other structures.

In Tao-Klarjeti in fortificational structures we came up with simple-type hall churches without any signs additional annexes or pastophoriums, with signs in the altar whose plane is inserted in a rectangle. Facade décor is monotonous and simple, interior is divided with one or two pillars. Despite the key features listed above, there are some exceptions.

Basically, the period of construction of fortress hall churches in this region varies from IX-X centuries. Also construction of active defensive structures in the region and its coverage by a single network, mainly IX-X centuries should have taken place, when region was political and economically strong. During this period most of the old castles that were destroyed by the Arab invasions should have been restored. In the late Middle Ages, however, they had to be adapted to the new requirements associated with the introduction of firearms.

In conclusion, we can say about important center of Klarjeti, castletown Artanuji with its geographical location, with strategic and historical importance, with functional load, stylistic-architectural solutions is one of the most interesting example not only for Klarjeti Region, but among all fortificational structures in Georgia, which hasn't lost its strategic importance for centuries. In addition, connections to the Eastern and Western Christendom, later being possessed by Muslim Country has played subsequent role in an urban development and architectural solutions. Despite the poor protection of the castle, different layers of construction can be separated, emphasizing the architectural-stylistic influences of church structures, however, further proper study of the castletown will provide us with lots of new information.

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