Art on the Edge: The Church of the Holy Cross, Jvari, Georgia

Antony Eastmond

Abstract

Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, overlooking the old capital of Georgia, Mtskheta, is a building that is literally and metaphorically on the edge. It is a liminal monument that crosses borders but also creates them. The church lies at the heart of Georgia's Christian history, but in the seventh century it lay on the frontier between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. Architecturally it belongs to a group of churches found across the Caucasus, but it has often been promoted as an exclusively Georgian monument. Jvari is a single monument that illuminates issues in transnational history, and the changing roles of a building in the creation of identities in the early Middle Ages.

Introduction

Perched dramatically on the edge of an escarpment that drops sharply away from its west facade, Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, dominates the landscape of Georgia in the Caucasus [Fig. 1 / L].[1] It is the most famous, the most visible, and arguably the most important medieval monument in Georgia. It stands above the confluence of the rivers Mtkvari (Kura) and Aragvi and looks down on the old Georgian capital of Mtskheta, the center of power of the early medieval eastern Georgian principality of Iberia (known in Georgian sources as Kartli).[2] The church was the centerpiece of a larger religious and palatial complex that was built between about 586 and 640 CE.

Jvari was built to mark a *locus sanctus* associated with the conversion of Iberia to Christianity in the early fourth century.[3] It also acted as the burial church of the *erismtavaris*, the archdukes of Iberia, many of whom are depicted in relief sculptures on the exterior of the main church. Its architecture, a highly sophisticated play of geometry and spatial volumes that presented a new solution to the problem of how to square the circle, is innovative and complex and belies the description of this period as “the dark centuries” of east Christian architecture [Fig. 2 / M].[4] Jvari lies at the geographic and symbolic heart of Georgia. It is a monument at the nexus of its religious and political history, and at the cutting edge of its architectural and cultural traditions. The church is the most eloquent contemporary source for the history and culture of Georgia at the start of the seventh century, a monument to princely power and piety, and the focus of pan-Caucasian pilgrimage. The building history of no other church in Georgia is recorded in such detail, underscoring its preeminence.[5]

At the same time, the church is a monument on the edge of history. It stands on a series of fault lines. It stands on the border between the transregional histories of the major Eurasian empires of the early medieval world. It is a point of conflict and dispute in the regional histories of the different peoples of the Caucasus—at one moment the object of pan-

Caucasian pilgrimage attracting visitors from Armenia and Caucasian Albania, at another a cult site restricted to Georgian worshippers. And it is caught between rival accounts of the history of architecture that have been used to support nationalist narratives in the Caucasus since the start of the twentieth century.

The most far-reaching of these fault lines was that between the Mediterranean empire of the Roman-Byzantines and the Sasanian empire in Iran. A treaty between these warring superpowers in 591 established a new frontier that cut through the middle of Iberia, dividing it into rival spheres of influence to be controlled from Constantinople and Ctesiphon. The border assigned the old capital of Mtskheta to the Byzantine sector and the new capital of Tbilisi, about 15 miles (25 km) to its southeast, to the Sasanian sector. Jvari, lying between the two cities lay right on the border. This gave the church a paradoxical status: it was both a symbol of power at the very heart of Iberia, and a liminal monument on the very fringe of the great empires of the early seventh century.

Within the Caucasus itself, Jvari also held a liminal status. It was located on the edge of the marchlands of Iberia and Armenia. This region was known variously by its different inhabitants as Gugareti or Somkhiti (Georgian) or Gugark (Armenian).[6] It included parts of the modern Georgian provinces of Kvemo (lower) Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti and Lori/Tashir in Armenia; but its borders are fuzzy and imprecise.[7] Somkhiti/Gugark was predominantly under Georgian rule, but its population was mixed. Armenians and Georgians lived in a bilingual and bicultural environment. It centered on the city of Tsurtavi which held the cult site of St. Shushanik (c.440-475), the shared Armeno-Georgian martyr par excellence.[8] Both Georgians and Armenians worshipped at her shrine, where their interactions and intermarriages led to “shared ties of blood and parenthood between our nobles and yours.”[9] The distinctive architecture of Jvari was equally shared by a small group of similar churches built in both Georgia and Armenia in this period, reinforcing the idea of an entwined religious, social, and architectural world.

However, since the twentieth century the church has been presented in a very different way. It is presented as the highpoint of a distinctly Georgian form of architecture and separated out from the wider Armeno-Georgian context. The church has increasingly been hijacked to suit a nationalist agenda that divides Georgia and Armenia as part of both states' desire to assert their independence and identity. The political appropriation of architecture began during the brief-lived independent Caucasian republics that emerged after the collapse of czarist Russia in 1917, and continued in the rivalry between their Soviet successors. It gained new energy after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.[10]

The study of Jvari is caught between these two different approaches, which prioritize very different ways of understanding the church. One looks at it in a wider, Caucasian context (although often in a highly competitive way, seeking to promote one of the churches in the group as the "original," and so relegate the rest to "copies," thereby assigning creativity exclusively to either Georgia or Armenia). The other presents a narrower, purely Georgian vision of the church and its design. In both approaches the church is placed at the heart of separate debates about the creation and development of incipient national identities in the Middle Ages.

This article examines those two apparently mutually exclusive oppositions. It proposes that during the course of its building the church's status oscillated between liminal and central, and between inclusive and exclusive. The interplay between these positions has informed how the church was understood in the Middle Ages and that has affected how it has been interpreted in modern scholarship. Elements that can be understood as signifiers of similarity and shared culture can equally be seen as markers of a distinct, new Georgian identity. Jvari is a site of agonistic exchange.

The interpretative framework for the church pivots around three events that occurred while it was being built. The most immediate of these was a theological crisis between the Georgian and Armenian Churches which led to a schism between them after the third Council of Dvin in 607. This ecclesiastical split came in the wake of two wider political crises. The first of these was the abolition of the position of king of Iberia in ca. 580, replacing the monarchy with a broader ruling elite led by a less powerful erismtavari. The abolition was imposed by the regional superpowers of Byzantium and Sasanian Iran. The second was a more intrusive intervention in 591 in which the two empires divided Iberia into rival spheres of influence with complete disregard to its existing internal political organization.[11]

Each of these events forced a reevaluation of the nature of the Georgian principality of Iberia as it shifted it between being a marginal space between empires, part of a loose Caucasian alliance with Armenia, and a more assertive entity that increasingly defined itself in opposition to the powers around it. All three events required people to reevaluate what it meant to be Georgian, but this was especially the case with the religious divide from the Armenians, because of the close religious, social, and cultural ties between the two peoples.

These three events provide lenses through which to study the church and I examine first the ecclesiastical crisis and then the two political interventions. All three had an impact on how the Georgians saw themselves and their state. As the primary evidence for this to survive from the time, Jvari is key to understanding the changing histories of this period and the role of art and architecture in forming and manifesting these identities.[12] The church, which survives largely in its original state, has a contemporaneity that primary textual sources lack; and it both supports and subverts its own liminality.[13] Jvari was not a passive monument, buffeted between the states around it, but an active agent that affirmed and defined alliances, reified power structures, and transformed complex networks of political and social authority. It gave these a material presence at a crucial point in the landscape.[14]

Liminality: the voice of the border

Jvari forces us to confront the idea that the border is simply the point at which two neighboring powers meet; it was a place in itself. One of the criticisms of global history is that its asymmetric nature reduces liminal cultures to being a "mere way station along the path of a global flow—a measly dot on a map, lacking any depth, agency or significance."[15] Jvari's importance underscores this critique and the ability of the microhistorical to illuminate the global.[16] Jvari's place within and between empires also reveals some of the issues raised by transnational history's broader concerns with movement, linkages, and networks across borders. As a physical monument that is inextricably tied to a single place in a landscape, there is a tension between Jvari's fixity, its static solidity, and its active role as a site at which local and transregional issues were negotiated and given material form. At such "dots on a map" we can see global issues distilled as rulers and builders sought to navigate their way between the different layers of power and identity that intersected: at a local level between the separate provinces that made up Iberia; at regional level between the Georgians and Armenians; and at transregional level between the great empires of the day. Jvari gives the border its voice and reasserts it as a key element in understanding transnational concerns.

Jvari raises questions about how a monument could look across and beyond borders, and also about how it created them: how people were divided in the seventh century. The frontier that Jvari sat on was primarily a military and diplomatic one; but it was at the heart of many other borders and divisions that involved ethnicity and family, language and religious confession, geographic location and regional culture, and shared history.[17] These helped to create a sense of inclusion among one group by simultaneously excluding others. The church was at the heart of these debates and its study shows the many ways in which groups could be defined. As Nikoloz Aleksidze has noted in his study of the texts of this period: "the same symbols that used to sustain the liminality of a space instantly become symbols of alterity, by turning a liminal space into a border, by erecting, as it were, a wall of separation in a marchland."[18]

The study of Jvari has long been intertwined with questions about the emergence and definition of national identities. Ideas about national identities, let alone nation states, in the early medieval period are nebulous and contentious to say the least. Despite the evidence of mixed communities and intermarriage, contemporary sources apply labels easily: they refer to people as "Georgian" (Kartveli ქართველი / Virk Վիրք) or "Armenian" (Somekhi სომეხი / Hayk' Հայք) with a clear expectation that their readers would understand how these could be distinguished. The elements that constituted these identities were certainly never fixed or singular. Jvari shows the ways a monument could act as the catalyst around which such identities coalesced.[19]

Liminal histories

Finally, Jvari also stands on a modern historical and art historical border. Thinking about medieval identities necessarily implicates modern approaches, particularly in a region as contested and subject to conflicts as the Caucasus. However, to study the Caucasus is to study a region that has fallen off the edge of history. Lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian, between the Anatolian plateau, the northwestern provinces of Iran and the southern slopes of the Caucasus mountains, the Caucasus lies on the edge of the major geopolitical world blocs. In geohistorical terms the region falls between Cambridge University Press's multivolume accounts of the medieval world (which is expansively defined to include "Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Near East"—in other words the medieval Christian world and its contact zones—and the Iranian world—again, broadly defined as including "other territories inhabited by peoples of Iranian descent"—but it barely registers in either of them.[20] Studies that focus on the Caucasus, in contrast, have tended to be inward looking and lose sight of the wider world.[21]

Georgia and Armenia are similarly overlooked in art histories of the medieval world.[22] In an article in *Art Bulletin* in 2006, Christina Maranci lamented the marginalization of Armenia from art history.[23] She explored the causes of this neglect—an accumulation of geographical, geopolitical and linguistic barriers—and argued for the importance of the study of the marginalized to understand the center. Scholars of Georgia recognize this marginalization even more acutely. This is partly because Georgia represents an even greater challenge to non-Indigenous scholars: its unique (and uniquely challenging) non-Indo-European language severely limits access to its primary sources. Like Armenia, it was cut off by the Iron Curtain for most of the twentieth century, but unlike Armenia it lay to the north of the main east–west trade routes from Iran to the Mediterranean, and lacked the diaspora that had spread Armenians, and with them knowledge of Armenia, its language, and literature, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean by the seventeenth century.[24]

In the nineteenth century the study of the Caucasus was led by Russian scholars. They treated Georgian and Armenian monuments as part of a collective Caucasian group, but they tended to see it, at best, as a provincial art dependent on Byzantium; at worst they denied its independent existence. Hence, in 1891 Nikodim Kondakov and Ivan Tolstoy were able to state unproblematically that "before the seventh century there can be no question of a characteristic Georgio-Armenian style of architecture."[25]

This Byzantine-centric approach was corrected by Josef Strzygowski, who championed the originality of the architecture of the Caucasus in *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, published in 1918.[26] The shadow of this highly controversial work still hangs over the study of the Caucasus more than a century later. It particularly damaged the study of Georgian art as Strzygowski chose to work solely on Armenia and dismissed Georgia as the home of secondary, noncreative imitators: “the Georgians, in so far as they were not independent or under Syro-Persian influence . . . adopted and disseminated Armenian forms.”[27] In support he cited the (Armenian) legend of the creation of the Georgian alphabet by the Armenian monk, Mesrop Mashtots.[28] This reinforced the racial prejudices underlying his thesis, enabling him to argue for the superior creativity of Aryan peoples (defined to include Armenians but not Georgians) and their role in the development of Armenian and European architecture.[29]

Strzygowski’s exclusion of Georgian monuments had an inadvertent impact on Western scholarship throughout the twentieth century, even among those who disagreed with his views. Richard Krautheimer’s *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, first published in 1965, set out expressly to refute Strzygowski’s conclusions, but in doing so he played entirely on his terms, with the result that his subchapter “Armenia and Georgia” does not mention a single Georgian building.[30] Strzygowski still dominated Cyril Mango’s overview of Byzantine architecture a decade later, which similarly accepted the presumption of the dominance of Armenian architects and Armenian architectural forms throughout the Caucasus.[31]

Within Georgia, scholars such as Vakhtang Beridze initially critiqued Strzygowski’s approach (dismissed as “foreign bourgeois scholarship” in keeping with 1940s Marxist constraints on all scholarship in the Soviet Union): “It is difficult to agree with any formulation of the question that sets up Armenian and Georgian architecture in opposition to define the ‘advantages’ of one against the other.”[32] But the longer-term reaction to Strzygowski’s book was to encourage Georgian scholars to argue for the significance of Georgian architecture by asserting that it developed independently. This has served only to isolate it further from wider study.

It also fed into the use of historic architecture to support modern debates about nationalism and national identity in the Caucasus. The first serious research on Jvari had been undertaken by the Georgian scholar Giorgi Chubinashvili in 1918–21. These were the brief years of the first independent Republic of Georgia, before it was violently suppressed in the Russian-led Bolshevik invasion of 1922. He heralded Jvari as an example of the antiquity of the Georgian state, its creative originality, and its tenacity, and he proclaimed the church as the progenitor of this architectural type throughout the Caucasus.[33] In his later publications, this patriotic pride became more strident, with the Armenian inscribed tetraconchs being dismissed as “mediocre” and “entirely dependent” on the Georgian models.[34] By the end of the 1960s the positions had become entrenched and the arguments reduced to repetitions of inherited, fossilized positions.[35] In arguing for the prioritization of Georgian architecture its advocates only succeeded in marginalizing it. It is only in the past fifteen years that scholars have heeded Beridze’s critique to attempt a more holistic and balanced account of the development of both Armenian and Georgian architecture.[36]

Jvari and the great schism of the Eastern Churches

The Third Council of Dvin in 607 was the climax of a series of debates between the Georgian and Armenian Churches.[37] It is presented in most histories as a moment of division and split. The headline issue of the rupture was dogmatic, with the Georgian and Armenian Churches disagreeing on the doctrine around the human and divine natures of Christ that had been set out at the Fourth Ecumenical Council held at Chalcedon in 451. It became clear that the Georgian Church would now follow the theology set out at Chalcedon, and the Armenian along with the other Eastern Churches would not. However, the theological disputes were ultimately proxies for the real issue at stake, ecclesiastical authority. The Georgian Church sought to strengthen its separation from the Armenian Church and exercise greater control over the marchlands of Somkhiti-Gugark. In the decades after the council the rift between the churches cemented into a schism which has remained at the heart of Georgian-Armenian relations ever since. On both sides people were encouraged to view their church as the central institution through which they should express their identity, with theological differences fed into wider social and political divisions.

The schism created a sense of calamity, disruption, and disaster that both parties contrasted with an utopian vision of a harmonious and shared world they claimed existed before. The Armenian catholicos, Abraham, wistfully wrote to Kyrion, his Georgian equivalent, that: “the unity of faith and hospitality between our two lands that was protected with a firm mediation by the church of Tsurtaw [Tsurtavi], where love, bodily kinship and spiritual communion was performed with joy full of bliss [is undermined]. From here people would travel to the cross of Mtskheta [Jvari] and from there to the holy Cathedral [of Echmiadzin].”[38] Abraham visualized the two cult sites of the region—the cross at Jvari and the site of St. Gregory the Illuminator’s vision at Echmiadzin—united through the common mediation of the cult of St. Shushanik at Tsurtavi.

Jvari’s architecture can be read as encapsulating the bucolic vision of unity and harmony that Abraham describes. Its forms are shared by a number of other churches across the Caucasus. All these monuments are sophisticated plays on geometry and spatial volumes that sought to reconcile the circularity of a central dome within a rectilinear ground plan. The solution employed at Jvari was the inscribed tetraconch [Fig. 2 / M]: at the heart of the church is a large dome that covers the naos (nave) of the church. Around this, there is a strong internal symmetry: four apses radiate out from the central square under the dome on the cardinal axes. On the diagonal between each apse a tall, cylindrical niche leads to a corner room. This cluster of spaces establishes the rectangular ground plan of the church.[39] The dome and the space below it dominate the interior and the smooth transition down to the four apses gives the sense of a single, large interior volume [Fig. 3 / M]. The internal symmetry is subtly distorted by the elongation of the barrel vaults beneath the western and eastern sides of the dome, which give the building a clear, but barely perceptible, longitudinal axis focused on eastern apse where the liturgy was celebrated. The octagonal drum of the dome rests on shallow squinches that rest on the sides of the arches over each apse without any clear relationship to the piers below.

The hierarchy of the spaces inside the church—dome to apses to angle niches to corner rooms—is reflected on the exterior [Fig. 4 / L]. The central octagonal dome is the highest point of the building, clearly rising from its square base. From this central cube extend the four apses, and their hemispherical roofs lead the eye upward to the dome. The apses have additional prominence as they extend slightly beyond the rectangular ground plan that otherwise determines the footprint of the building. The lowest elements are the four corner rooms, whose pitched roofs slope to north and south like the aisles of a basilica. Arched niches that separate the central apses from the corner rooms add to the play of light and shadow on the facades, giving the impression that the apses have just burst through an otherwise flat surface.

This complex design can be found in a number of other churches built in the seventh century across Georgia and Armenia. Seen as a group, they present a common practice of architectural adventurism in the Caucasus.[40] Jvari's most important counterpart is the Armenian church of St. Hripsime in Vagharshapat (now Echmiadzin), built over the site where Armenia's first saint was martyred [Fig. 5 / L].[41] St. Hripsime is similar in almost every respect to Jvari in terms of the core of its design, particularly the ground plan [Fig. 8b / M]. The two churches also share some of the same construction techniques, notably the way in which thin keystones complete the groin vaults in the corner rooms, embedding crosses into the very fabric of the building [Fig. 6 / M]. They both also have large relief crosses in their domes resembling rays of light bursting from the center.

Within those broad correspondences, however, there are significant differences in how the two churches were executed. St. Hripsime is a more austere building with unadorned dark gray tuff walls. Its apses do not extend beyond the rectilinear ground plan (which is emphasized by a heavy three-step stylobate) and the angle niches rise above the roof line to form a cluster of small cupolas around the central dome. The flatness of the four facades at St. Hripsime, only enlivened by the central triangular gables, disguises its internal volumes.

Internally, the buildings feel very different too. In St. Hripsime a cornice runs around the base of the dome, dividing the interior horizontally into different zones, in contrast to the undivided central space at Jvari [Fig. 7 / M]. The two churches also differ in the ways they use the squinches that transition from the square of the nave at ground level to the octagonal drum. At Jvari, the squinches perch on top of the four apse arches, whereas in St. Hripsime they are integrated with the apse arches, creating a more regular arcade that runs around the interior. Both Jvari and St. Hripsime have been extensively restored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but their current forms reflect their seventh-century origins.[42]

The shared architectural language at Jvari and St. Hripsime extends to their symbolic importance. Although the two churches sit very differently in their landscapes—Jvari stands dramatically on the edge of cliff, St. Hripsime rises, seemingly at random, from a largely empty plain—both were built to celebrate the foundation legends of Christianity in the Caucasus in the first decades of the fourth century. Jvari marked the site where the first Christian king of Georgia, Mirian III (284-361), erected a monumental cross to mark the new religion on the land.[43] The base of the cross survives beneath the dome of the present church (slightly off center because of the sharp fall away in the land to the west). Jvari overlooked the old capital of Mtskheta where St. Nino, the evangelist of Georgia, had performed the miracles that led to the Christianization of the country.

The Church of St. Hripsime was one of three churches in Vagharshapat that commemorated key events in the Christianization of Armenia by St. Gregory the Illuminator in the early fourth century. It was built over the place where Hripsime, a virgin martyr, had been executed for refusing to renounce her chastity and religion (her tomb is in a small crypt beneath the main apse). Nearby was the Church of St. Gayane, the leader of Hripsime's community of virgins, who offered herself up for martyrdom after seeing Hripsime's example.[44] The first shrines to both martyrs had been built by St. Gregory. The third church marked the spot where St. Gregory encountered Christ in a vision of light. This church was to become the main cathedral of Armenia and home of the catholicos.[45]

The question is how to interpret this list of similarities and differences. They certainly show that the builders at each site envisioned that such *loca sancta* required similar kinds of holy space, but that they found different solutions to some of the technical challenges they faced. They also had different aesthetic visions for the appearance of their buildings, partly determined by the locations and materials available at each site. However, most scholars have focused on the differences to argue for a hierarchy between the buildings, and this has diverted attention from their common features. Each group offers arguments in favor of an earlier date to their preferred candidate, so providing a chronological underpinning for their assertions of either Georgian or Armenian artistic primacy.[46] They have effectively recreated the theological splits of the Council of Dvin in 607 in modern academia. The arguments ultimately rely on subjective evaluations of each architectural feature (does the cornice that divides the upper and lower parts of the Church of St. Hripsime represent an improvement on, or a decline from the more unified space in Jvari? And can this be used to argue that it was built before or after Jvari?).

The urge to create a single iterative building sequence is reductive and unhelpful. The building of Jvari took place over an extended period. Juansher's *Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali*, the principal source for this period of Georgia's history, notes that Guaram (r. 588–ca. 590), the first ruling duke of Iberia, began building the church. His son Demetre (brother of the next ruling duke, Stepanoz I [r. ca. 590–605/627]) continued construction; and it was completed by Stepanoz's successor, Adarnase I (r. 605/627–637/642). Adarnase's son, Stepanoz II (r. 637/642–ca. 650), encircled the complex with walls, endowed the church for services, and built a palace at the site.[47] All these men, bar Guaram, are depicted on the exterior of the church. No other church in Georgia is recorded in such detail, underscoring the importance of Jvari.

The overlap in these regnal dates with those linked with the building of St. Hripsime and another inscribed tetraconch at Avan in Armenia suggests that any straightforward relationship of original and copy is highly unlikely [Fig. 8d / M].[48] All these churches are variants on a common theme, whose "original" form cannot singly be assigned to either Georgia or Armenia. Moreover, the inscribed tetraconch churches are just one class of a larger group of monuments that experimented with domes and multiple apses and/or with rectilinear ground plans in the Caucasus in this period. Typological classifications have attempted to impose a Darwinian narrative of evolution on these churches, to show how churches developed from simple domed structures and open tetraconchs with petal-like ground plans until they reached their ultimate form in the inscribed tetraconches at Jvari and St. Hripsime [Fig. 8 / M].[49] However, the varied dating of all these centralized buildings suggests that different designs coexisted; they did not simply develop in a straightforward linear progression toward an ever more sophisticated form. Thus, the free tetraconch with angled chapels at Ninotsminda [Fig. 8h / M] likely precedes Jvari, but that at Surb Zoravor near Yeghvard (built in the reign of Grigor Mamikonean, 661–685) postdates it [Fig. 8g /

M].[50] Equally, the tetraconch with cylindrical angle spaces at Soradir predates Jvari [Fig. 8e / M], and that at Kvetera postdates it [Fig. 8f / M].[51] Builders and masons were in constant dialogue with each other, creating and adapting designs but crucially also revisiting them over the course of the centuries. Somkhiti and its neighboring regions in both Georgia and Armenia partook in a wider dialogue between masons, builders, churchmen, and patrons, all seeking to find ways to create holy spaces that suited their liturgical needs and manifested their symbolic, theological and metaphorical ideas in three-dimensional form.

The correspondence in the *Book of Letters* shows that these sites were celebrated by all Christians in the region: Armenians came to Jvari and in return Georgians visited the shrines of Armenia. At the start of the seventh century, pilgrims to the sites were not divided by ethnicity, language, or religious confession (although the nature of the services conducted at each site may have been restricted by language and rite).[52]

There is concrete evidence in support of this from Jvari itself. At the same time that the main church was built, the three main patrons (Stepanoz I, Demetre and Adarnase) also commissioned a “stele,” a monolithic stone cross, that was set up outside the church. Only one small fragment of the shaft of the cross now survives but the base is better preserved. It holds a bilingual inscription in Georgian and Armenian that commemorates the three donors and extends their memory among all visitors to the church: “This Mtskheta cross was erected in prayer for Stepanoz *patrikios*, Demetre *hypatos* and Adrnerse *hypatos* to save their souls and bodies and to protect their whole house.”[53]

The very act of setting up a carved stele placed the three men squarely in the shared religious practices of Somkhiti-Gugark. Numerous other steles were set up across this region to mark holy places in the landscape. They are found in a wider area that stretched across northern Armenia and southern Georgia.[54] Two examples, from Khandisi in Georgia and Odzun in Armenia, show how close the correspondences between them were [Figs. 9 and 10 /

M].[55] They were certainly made by craftsmen from the same workshop in the later sixth century. They share the same structure, with figures in rectangular frames with beveled edges, and the same domed top with blind arcades. They also share the same figural style, with identical furrow-like parallel ridges to create drapery patterns, similar elongated faces with wide, almond-shaped eyes that stare out at the viewer, and the same pattern of interlocking circles that decorates their reverse faces. Yet, they were clearly made for different communities and reference separate local myths and legends. The Odzun stele features an image of King Trdat (ruled 298-c.330), Armenia's first king, with a boar's head (reflecting his punishment before his conversion to Christianity);[56] the Khandisi stele depicts a mother and child, most probably Saints Kvirike and Ivlita, who were important cult figures in Georgia. The surviving fragment of the Jvari stele also included local iconography: a scene from the life of one of the so-called Thirteen Assyrian Fathers, who were celebrated for bringing ascetic monasticism to Georgia in the late sixth century.[57]

The epitome of the shared world of Somkhiti-Gugark is found in the *Martyrdom of St. Shushanik*, written in Georgian at the end of the fifth century by her confessor, Iakob of Tsurtavi.[58] Shushanik (c.440–475) was the daughter of the Armenian general Vardan Mamikonian (387–451) and was married to Varsken (r. 470–482) , the Georgian-born *pitiakhsh* (Iranian viceroy) of the region. To further his career at the Sasanian court, Varsken renounced Christianity for Zoroastrianism and starved his wife to death in prison in Tsurtavi when she refused to apostosize with him. She carried an Armenian gospel book with her, but her confessor was a Georgian priest. The site of her burial attracted pilgrims from across the Caucasus, and her martyrdom was later avenged by the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali (ca. 440–ca.502) who hunted Varsken down and executed him. The *Passion* applies the terms Armenian and Georgian to its protagonists, but it is impossible to find easy ways to distinguish the two communities, who lived and worked together, intermarried, and worshipped side by side. This provides the most apt metaphor for the architecture of Jvari and St. Hripsime.

The architectural evidence of other seventh-century churches shows that if there was a schism between the Georgian and Armenian Churches it took time to work through to the people who built and used their places of worship. The schism was not as calamitous for architects as it was for churchmen. *Eristavi* (duke) Stepanoz II, who completed the complex at Jvari was also responsible for building a church at Tsromi in the west of Kartli, on the open plain of the river Mtkvari [Fig. 11 / L].[59] Tsromi was an innovative design in Georgia in its use of four piers to support the central dome, and its introduction of deep triangular niches on the east facade to articulate the internal divisions of the church between central apse and side rooms. However, in a broader Caucasian context, Tsromi sits comfortably alongside a wider group of domed basilical churches, including the Armenian churches of Mren and St. Gayane in Vagharshapat.[60] The engagement between Georgian and Armenian masons and builders clearly continued long into the 630s and 640s.

Mren is celebrated for its connections to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (ca. 575–641, r. 610–641), and it may be that Tsromi has a similar pro-Byzantine status.[61] It was built on the site of the martyrdom of St. Razhden (d. ca. 457), a Persian nobleman at the Georgian court. He was captured by Sasanian troops and executed when he refused to renounce his Christianity.[62] The main center of his cult was Nikozi, where his body was moved soon after his death. In a deliberately provocative move, the Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali interred it in a church built on the site of a confiscated Zoroastrian temple. To build a second church for the Christian martyr at Tsromi fits well with anti-Persian polemics of Heraclius campaigns. The apse of the church was decorated in mosaic that might reflect closer ties to the Byzantine world.[63] The tesserae are now lost, but the original under drawing shows that the composition depicted Christ standing in majesty.[64] This iconography is echoed by that in the apse paintings in the Armenian churches at Mren and Aruch.[65]

The architectural evidence suggests that Jvari is best understood in this wider Caucasian context. Given this, the question of how Jvari was separated from this group to become a distinctly Georgian monument, is crucial. At one level, the answer lies in the historiography of the monument that has been outlined; but this tells us more about the politics of art history in the twentieth-century Soviet world than it does about the monument itself.

To a certain extent the nationalist separation visible in twentieth-century art historical texts echoed those of the seventh century. It is possible to see the roots of Jvari's separateness in the Church Council at Dvin. Despite the evidence that the schism took a long time to trickle down to the level of architects and builders, it did have some immediate effects. The most visible of these was to ban Armenians from visiting Jvari. The Armenian catholicos Abraham sent out an encyclical proclaiming:

> Therefore the earlier resolution of our *vardapets* (scholar-theologians) which they decided in relation to Rome, and which will last until the end unless they shall return to the truth, we have ordered the same in relation to the Iberians, that is to say, not to share with them, neither in prayer nor food nor drink, nor friendship nor fostering children, nor going in prayer to the Cross which is celebrated through the sites at Mtskheta, nor to the [relic of the suppedaneum of the] cross at Manglisi, and not to receive them in these churches of ours, and to be completely distant in terms of the state of matrimony, but only to buy or sell something, as with the Jews.[66]

The ban imposed an economic as well as a spiritual sanction on the Georgians. The Georgian catholicos Kyrion (595-610) complained that Georgians were not able to visit

Armenian shrines (presumably including the burial site of St. Hripsime in Vagharshapat). Both acts were part of a tit for tat escalation that had already seen the Georgians banning Armenian language services at the shrine of St. Shushanik.[67] The earlier inclusive language of catholicos Abraham became more divisive: Jvari was now "*your* Holy Cross," the churches of Echmiadzin now "*ours*."[68]

These exclusionary actions widened the rift between the churches in favor of distinct entities based around language and ethnicity, and this then reinforced the idea that Jvari was a specifically Georgian site. It turned the church into a node around which other elements of Georgian identity could coalesce. It is possible that the builders of Jvari were already conscious of this and were accentuating the site's importance in Iberia: one alternative reading of the end of the fragmentary inscription on the stele base at Jvari suggests that it proclaimed itself as being for the protection "of all Kartli" rather than "their whole house."[69] Nevertheless, it was the decision of the Armenians to exclude themselves from the site that brought this more nationalist element sharply into focus.

Setting Jvari apart from the wider Caucasian communion primarily served to cement the association of its cult of the cross with the Georgians. The cross was everywhere at Jvari: it was embedded into the fabric of the building in the dome and corner room vaults; it was displayed on the tympanum over the main entrance, where two angels raised it to heaven (in a circular form with flanged ends distinctive to Kartli) [Fig. 12 / S]. A tripartite composition on the drum of the dome (now dispersed, with one part lost) showed donors kneeling before the cross [Fig. 19 / S].[70] The cross is invoked even when not visible: the central donor relief of Stepanoz I depicts the ruler at the imperious feet of Christ, but the accompanying Georgian inscription, written in the earliest Georgian *asomtavruli* alphabet, names only the cross as the agent of his salvation: "Cross of the Savior have mercy on Stepanoz, *patrikios* of Kartli."[71]

The aftermath of the schism of 607 marked the highpoint of the promotion of Jvari and the cross at the expense of other key sites associated with the conversion of Georgia in the fourth century.[72] The most significant loser was the cathedral in Mtskheta, immediately across the river Mtkvari from Jvari. According to legend, this was the first Christian building in Iberia, but the builders found it impossible to complete as no one was able to set one of the columns upright. The pillar was only successfully erected by the intervention of an angel in response to St. Nino’s prayers. The miracle gave its name to the cathedral: Svetitskhoveli, the Cathedral of the Life-Giving Pillar. The sanctity of the pillar was further strengthened by the belief that it stood over the grave of a Jewish woman, who had been buried clutching the tunic worn by Christ at the crucifixion, which had been brought to Georgia immediately afterward. Both Svetitskhoveli and Jvari were the sites of healing miracles, but Svetitskhoveli was the original crux of Christianity in Georgia.

The overshadowing of Svetitskhoveli by Jvari began in the later fourth century. With the permission of the king Mirdat III (r. 365–380) and the bishop Iakob, people began to remove chips of the living pillar as healing relics. This literally dismantled the object of the cult. The pillar relics were then set into crosses for veneration and so St. Nino’s pillar was transfigured, fragmented into new objects more associated with Jvari than Svetitskhoveli itself.[73] The rebuilding of Svetitskhoveli as a basilica by Vakhtang Gorgasali in the late fifth century suggests the church had fallen into disrepair, but his new building does not seem to have revived its fortunes. During the sixth century Jvari grew in importance as a pilgrim site and interest in Svetitskhoveli declined. By the time of the disputes between the Georgians and Armenians at the Third Council of Dvin Svetitskhoveli simply did not feature in the debates: there was clearly no need to ban Armenian pilgrims from visiting it, even though it was just a kilometer from Jvari. The decline of Svetitskhoveli was further exacerbated by economic concerns as Mtskheta lost out to the new capital at Tbilisi.[74]

The status of Jvari as the cornerstone of Georgian Christianity was cemented by the seventh century, by which time it had become a key reference point for other monuments. This is most clearly acknowledged in an inscription dated 616–19 on a stele found in the castle at Tsqise: “This cross of Christ, I, Kostanti, son of Stepane and Guda, raised in the name of the *jvari* [cross] of Mtskheta on this land purchased on the first [?day] of Shahraman as the place for our prayers, of [my] wife and children, November 17. Amen.”[75] The letters Ⴟ~Ⴍ [J~O: *jvaro* “O Cross”] also began to appear on coins minted in Georgia at this time.[76]

The dominance of Jvari as the ultimate manifestation of the cross can only have increased in the 620s when the emperor Heraclius seized the only two relics of the True Cross in Iberia—the wood of the suppedaneum that was kept in the cathedral of Manglisi, and the nails that were kept in Erusheti—to take them back to Constantinople, even though Adarnase, the builder of Jvari “importuned and begged the emperor not to remove these gifts from God.”[77]

There is some evidence that the cult of St. Nino gained its first real impetus in the aftermath of the schism of 607, but this does not seem to have transferred to the cathedral of Svetitskhoveli. The full legend of St. Nino was first recorded in a text known as *Moktsevay kartlisay* [The conversion of Kartli] in the second half of the seventh century. It was the most prominent exponent of a new, more nationalistic Georgian literature that appeared at that time.[78]

The final evidence in support of the growing importance of Jvari in this period comes from Armenian sources which sought to counter its influence by denying its existence. Numerous Armenian texts invented stories that the cross had been removed from Georgia and taken to Armenia where it could be truly venerated away from heretical Georgian eyes. Some of these stories are linked to St. Shushanik, now also being represented as a true Armenian patriot at heart.[79] This negative evidence was not successful in undermining Georgian belief in Jvari.

Thus, the roots of Jvari's distinctiveness lie, paradoxically, in its similarities to Armenian monuments. In both medieval and modern histories, we can see that there was a need to counteract that narrative by reimagining the church as a uniquely Georgian monument. The Armenian ban on pilgrims visiting Jvari removed its original identity as a pan-Caucasian site and was complicit in its creation as a distinctly Georgian monument.

Jvari and the end of the Georgian monarchy

If the dispute with Armenia provided the greatest impetus for the reimagining of Jvari as a distinctly Georgian church, creating a border with Armenia, then the wider geopolitical events of the late sixth century that placed Jvari on two other frontiers—as that dot on the border between the Roman-Byzantine and Sasanian empires, and on the divide between being an independent monarchy and a dependent vassal state ruled by appointees agreed in Constantinople and Ctesiphon—gave this an additional edge.

Both political limens can be investigated through another element of Jvari: the donor portraits on its east and south facades. These reveal the intersection of imperial and local politics. The main donors of the church appear in a set of three images on the east facade of the church.[80] They most immediately speak to the constitutional crisis caused by the abolition of the Georgian monarchy in ca. 580, the first political lens through which to view the reliefs. They are the first monumental donor images to appear on a church in Georgia, and the need to advertise the new ruling elite is a sure sign of the fragility and novelty of their position.[81]

The three reliefs around the apse place Stepanoz I in the center. To his right, on the south side of the apse, is his brother, Demetre, and to his left, on the north side, is Adarnase I and his infant son (later to become Stepanoz II) [Figs. 13–15 / L]. They were clearly composed as a set. They are all carved into shallow sandstone panels with idiosyncratic, irregularly rectangular frames.

In the central panel, Stepanoz kneels before Christ who lays his right hand on the ruler's head. In return Stepanoz touches the edge of Christ's tunic; an angel carved in the hood molding above blows a trumpet to herald the Second Coming. The two outer figures are each directed toward the central scene by archangels, who gently guide their heads toward Christ. Stepanoz's centrality must reflect his seniority, although Juansher's chronicle credits most of the building work at Jvari to his brother, Demetre. The location on the east facade, surrounding the altar, placed the men in proximity to the holiest point inside the church while maintaining the visibility of their patronage.

These reliefs are joined by depictions of other noble families on the south side of the church. In the two niches to either side of the main, southern entrance are badly eroded panels that commemorated a further five, unidentifiable figures: to the east two men are blessed by the Virgin,[82] and in the west niche and a man and woman with a baby kneel before a saint, their arms raised in prayer.[83]

When Jvari was being built, the new political arrangement of archdukes instead of a king was still a novelty. The Sasanian shah had succeeded in abolishing the monarchy by buying off the aristocracy. He offered guarantees to the nobility of Iberia that they would inherit most of the powers the monarchy had wielded, and that their rights, lands, and positions would be passed on to their heirs.[84] The men depicted at Jvari were therefore complicit in the ending of a monarchy whose semi-mythical history could be traced back over eight hundred years. The portraits represent their first attempt to assert their newly endowed power and to justify its legitimacy.

The men chose to present their authority by firmly establishing themselves within the Persian visual world of power. The three dukes and the men in the south facade niches appear in a similar guise: they wear Persian riding coats with long, hanging sleeves and elaborately woven hems as well as baggy trousers. It is likely that these were robes of honor, sent from Iran in recognition of these men's new power.[85] The dress closely accords with that recorded by Movses Daskhurantsi as being given by Shah Yazdagird III (r. 632–651) to Juansher, a prince in Caucasian Albania (r. 637-80), in ca. 640: "They clothed him in a dark tunic with four hems, and taffeta and silken Persian coats with fringes of spun gold" as well as a belt of gold studded with pearls.[86]

The faces of the dukes are mostly lost, but where fragments survive it is possible to see that the men had large, oval eyes and thick, straight mustaches that stretched out across their cheeks to their ears. Their hair and beards were tightly curled. The portraits align with the magnificent depictions of Khosrow II (r. 590–628) at Taq-i Bustan in western Iran, where the shah's attendant gods wear identical attire, and all the men sport elaborate curled beards [Fig. 16 / M].[87]

The choice of Persian dress and appearance may have been envisaged originally to place the dukes of Kartli among their peers in Armenia as part of an international fellowship of rulers. By emphasizing the shared language of power they could appear as the pan-Caucasian guardians of a shared holy site open to all Christians in the region. In their portrayals on the west tympanum at Mren, Davit Sarahuni and Nerseh Kamsarakan wear similar Persian cloaks.[88] It was only in the aftermath of the schism with Armenia that these images could be recast as more distinctively Georgian.

The multiplication of images on the church addressed other concerns as well, which cast the abolition of the monarchy in a different light. Clearly one of the shah's goals in abolishing the monarchy was to fragment power by diluting it among a series of families, each of whom would be as much engaged in defending or increasing their own power as in building a credible opposition to Sasanian overall control of the region. This was further fragmented by the interference of the Byzantines, which provided another way to sow internal divisions and discord: “For the sons of Dachi were subject to the Persians, while the sons of Mirdat remained subject to the Greeks.”[89]

The presence of so many figures on the church suggests that the Georgian nobility initially reacted against this. The reliefs can be read as an assertion of unity among the nobility. While Stepanoz I and Demetre were brothers, and descendants of Vakhtang Gorgasali through the Guaramid branch of the family, Adarnase, who appears in the third panel with his son Stepanoz II, came from the rival Chosroid branch, initially outmaneuvered by Guaram and his sons.[90] It was only on Stepanoz I’s death that the Chosroids could regain primacy. Yet on Jvari the reliefs present a vision of harmony (however fictional) between the families. The now-eroded panels in the south facade niches presumably represented other branches of the family, extending its message of ducal cooperation. The prominent inclusion of children in at least two of the panels underscores the desire to secure the families’ longevity and hereditary rights.

Jvari and the Byzantine-Sasanian Treaty of 591

The emphasis on unity and harmony was given further impetus by the wider wars between the regional superpowers of Byzantium and Sasanian Iran that had been fought in Georgia and Armenia throughout the sixth century. This is the third lens through which to view the church and its decoration. In 591, exhausted by a century of on-off fighting, the two empires signed a new treaty (optimistic given the failure of both the so-called “Eternal Peace” of 532, and the “Fifty Year Peace” of 572). This divided Iberia into spheres of influence, with the border running along the river Mtkvari. Mtskheta to the west fell to the Byzantines, Tbilisi to the east to the Persians.[91] Jvari sat on the border itself.

The coalition of donors on the walls of Jvari can be seen as a response of Georgians on both sides of the new frontier to the partition. It presented a model of a new identity for Iberia as an independent entity, based around political autonomy and a distinct Christian tradition. The three men depicted on the east facade variously held power in the Byzantine-controlled province of Kartli and in the Persian-controlled province of Kakheti to the east. They worked across the frontier: Guaram, established as duke in Byzantine Mtskheta, proceeded to found the Sioni church in Sasanian-controlled Tbilisi.[92] Jvari provided the ideal location to present a rival vision of Georgia as a state that reached into both spheres of influence, nullifying the idea of it being a border monument to Georgia’s division.

Jvari’s sensitive location meant that the Georgian rulers needed to negotiate a path between both Byzantine and Iranian powers. Other details of the donor images exploited both superpowers’ traditions and expectations. As shown above, the men’s dress showed them as members of the Persian court. This could potentially have been problematic, as Persian dress signified very different meanings in the Roman-Byzantine world. In Constantinople, for example, it was more likely to be associated with the defeated than seen as emblematic of power: it is the dress worn by defeated barbarians depicted at the feet of Theodosios I on the obelisk base in the hippodrome, at the very heart of empire.[93]

The depictions at Jvari counterbalance their Persian appearance with elements that would speak to Byzantine viewers. These are most evident in the large, legible inscriptions written in the Georgian *asomtavruli* alphabet that fill the remaining space in all the panels. In addition to that describing Stepanoz as “patrikios of Kartli”; the other two read: “Holy Archangel Michael, aid Demetre hypatos”; “Holy Archangel Gabriel, aid Adrnerse *hypatos.”*[94] Patrikios and hypatos were Byzantine court honors, bestowed on the rulers of Iberia from Constantinople. The tradition of awarding Georgian rulers Byzantine titles had been established in 588 when emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) gave Guaram I the title of kuropalates when he installed him as the first presiding duke of Iberia.

Guaram is described by the chroniclers as the first builder at Jvari, yet he was not included in the donors on the east facade. This may be because his contribution was to build the small chapel to the north of the main church.[95] The chapel provided an enclosed space for worship at the site of Mirian's cross, before the decision was made to enclose the cross completely. It also acted as the dynastic mausoleum for the dukes who were buried in the crypt below.[96] Earlier rulers had been buried in the churches in Mtskheta itself; this was another marker of the way significance was moving away from the heart of the kingdom to the frontier itself. Mirian, the first Christian king, had been buried in the church of Samtavro just outside the old city walls; and Vakhtang Gorgasali had been buried in his new church at Svetitskhoveli (where, we are told by his chroniclers: "On his tomb is depicted his image [*khati*] life-size. Now nothing is clear beyond his armor and clothing").[97]

The relatively small scale of Guaram's chapel was compensated for by the magnificence of its decoration. Glass mosaic tesserae found in the apse show that it originally had a glittering interior.[98] The mosaic presumably depicted Christ or the Virgin, but its very presence was a signifier of Byzantine allegiance. Guaram had spent time in Constantinople after the failure of the 572 revolt against the Persians in which he had supported the Armenian rebel Vardan II Mamikonian (387–451).[99] It is possible that he brought mosaicists to Georgia when he returned as a way to advertise his new pro-Byzantine stance (as well as his wealth and status).[100] The combination of Sasanian and Byzantine elements at Jvari suggests that the rulers of Iberia were attempting to accommodate both powers, but it should be noted that the balance was skewed: Sasanian dress was immediately obvious to all viewers, the Byzantine titles only evident to those able to read the inscriptions.

Ultimately, however, the church and its reliefs can be read in a very different way. For all the Sasanian and Byzantine attributes of the depicted figures, what matters most is the Christian context in which they are shown. The close relationship between each ruler and the divine—whether Christ or an archangel—is crucial. It presents an alternative to the earthly narrative of Iberian authority being bestowed by emperor or shah and presents the true origins of their power as coming directly from God. The images depict this contract and show that the dukes of Iberia now acknowledged only one true overlord, Christ. Disguised as piety, the reliefs were a manifesto of earthly autonomy and independence.

The emergence of this distinct Georgian, Christian identity can be seen on coins as well. Guaram I was the first local ruler to mint coins in Georgia. These copied the Sasanian coins of Hormizd IV. They replaced the profile bust of the shah with that of Guaram but retained the Zoroastrian imagery of a fire altar on their reverse. The coins were a reminder of Georgia's dependence on the Iranian economy at this time. When Stepanoz I came to power he made one small but significant alteration to the design: he replaced the fire on the altar on the reverse with a cross [Fig. 17 / S].[101] This was a much more overt reference to Christianity than the cryptic "J-O" on earlier coins and could be seen as a direct confrontation to Zoroastrianism. The change seems to have been part of the delicate balancing act that Stepanoz was trying to achieve. He had reversed his father's pro-Byzantine stance to ally himself with Sasanian Iran (Guaram seems to have had close personal ties to Maurice, and so the emperor's murder by Phokas in 602 ended any ties of loyalty to Byzantium). Yet within the Sasanian economy he now marked his realm out as belonging to the Christian world. The Byzantines claimed that this made them the Georgians' natural overlords: "Since the Georgians have abandoned idol-worship, henceforth they are subject to the Greeks. . . . I [Maurice, the Byzantine emperor] am the supporter and patron of all Georgians and of all Christians."[102]

Stepanoz I may also have been trying to find a way to deescalate the growing hostility between the Georgian and Armenian Churches. Stepanoz's relief at Jvari shows him as an advocate of Christianity, but this is oddly contradicted by Georgian chronicles. Juansher derides him: "he was impious and did not fear God; he did not serve God, nor did he increase religion and [the building of] churches."[103] As with so much about Jvari the textual and material evidence seems irreconcilable. However, it is possible that the Georgian chronicler's dismissal of Stepanoz reflects a confessional, rather than a broader religious, condemnation. Juansher may have condemned Stepanoz because he had been trying to maintain the anti-Chalcedonian alliance with the Armenians. By the late eighth century, when Juansher's chronicle was written, the pro-Chalcedonian position of the Georgian Church was firmly entrenched and he would have had no incentive to praise an anti-Chalcedonian ruler.

The nature of power depicted at Jvari suggests that Sasanian influence in Georgia was increasingly a fragile facade that was beginning to crack. The superficial resemblances between the Iberian and Sasanian ruling elites were increasingly undermined. Stepanoz's coins show his desire to assert the Iberians increasingly militant and public adherence to Christianity in a medium that would circulate into the heartlands of Iran. The introduction of Byzantine titles that sought to duplicate or replace the Iranian administrative positions of the *marzpan* and *pitiakhsh* (military governor and marcher lord) show a state that was beginning to rebuild its ruling structures in a new way.

One final assertion of independence is found on the relief above the main south door into the church [Fig. 18 / L]. It shows a donor kneeling down before a standing saint who raises his right hand in blessing and holds a holy book in his covered left hand. At first glance the figure might be Christ, but the accompanying inscription names him: "St. Stephen have mercy on Kobul St. . . . i." The nobleman is often identified as Stepanoz II, but this remains uncertain and problematic.[104] The panel has the same irregular rectangular form as the panels on the east facade but is carved in a slightly different style. It broadly copies the composition of the Stepanoz I relief, but replaces its rounded, more naturalistic forms with a more angular technique, most evident in the zig-zag pleats at the feet of the standing figure and the angular pattern of the cloth that hangs from his left hand. The man wears an ornate belt, similar to that mentioned in the honorific dress given to the Caucasian Albanian prince Juansher.

The angular style of the relief can be linked with the panel of the kneeling donor now inserted on the drum of the dome [Fig. 19 / S]. Both panels must date later than the reliefs on the east facade, and a gap of fifteen to twenty years has plausibly been proposed.[105] This time frame fits the textual evidence of the length of time that building work continued at the site in the early seventh century.

The two later panels show the continued desire of the next generation of ruling families to associate themselves with Jvari. By the 630s the split between the Georgian and Armenian Churches was becoming more firmly entrenched. The campaigns of Heraclius in the Caucasus had embedded Byzantine power in the region and promoted and supported the Chalcedonian Church. This gave the Georgian Church greater authority, which served only to strengthen the idealized sense of Georgian-ness that Jvari presented.

Conclusion

During the course of its building, Jvari both subverted the border but also created and defined it. Some elements of subversion were conscious, notably the carefully modulated vision of princely power that was articulated first in the donor reliefs on the east facade of the church and then reinforced by the panels added on the south facade and dome. These images of men and families encapsulated a transregional model of power that drew on both Byzantine and Sasanian motifs but presented them in a distinctly local form. The use of low-relief sculpture was indigenous to the Caucasus, and the implicit message of autonomy that underlay the

Christian imagery established a new association between religion and power. The panels were designed to create a sense of order and unity in a divided and fractious country. The desire to present Jvari as a pan-Caucasian pilgrim site underscored this vision of unity.

At the same time, however, Jvari began to create a new border. As the Georgian and Armenian Churches separated, Jvari became increasingly emblematic of a distinct, autonomous Georgian Church. From the middle of the seventh century, the location and cult importance of Jvari underpinned a sense of Georgian identity, however idealized, that coalesced around the church. As contact with, and direct experience of, Armenian churches decreased, even the architecture could be reimagined as specifically Georgian; an idea reinforced in twentieth-century scholarship.

The possible reading of the inscription on the stele at Jvari as referring to "all Kartli" emphasizes the site's importance as a center where a new sense of identity was promoted and celebrated. The cult importance of Jvari, its architecture, and sculptural decoration represented a synthesis that combined language, religion, ethnicity, and kinship and united them through a vision of a shared history that was being shaped by the new ruling elite of Iberia. The desire to belong to this collective of people can be traced elsewhere. Both Armenians and Georgians had important expatriate communities in the Holy Land, and at about the time that Jvari was built we find similar references there. A mosaic floor just outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem is dedicated to "the memorial and salvation of all Armenians, whose name the Lord knows."[106] Georgian inscriptions similarly invoked membership of the larger group "of the Iberians." [107] It was still too early to define exactly what these terms encapsulated, and political, religious, and even linguistic affiliations could all be changed. However, geography could not: Jvari's location on the edge placed it at the heart of ideas of what it meant to be Georgian in the early Middle Ages.

Coda

One thousand years after it was built, Jvari found itself on the frontier for one last time. In 1694, Erekli I, king of Kakheti (ruled 1675–1676, 1703–1709), set up camp at the church. From there, his army could look down across the river Aragvi to Mtskheta, where his rival, Giorgi XI, king of Kartli (ruled 1675-88, 1703-1709), was encamped.[108] Both men were still in their own realms: Jvari now lay within the borders of Kakheti, while Mtskheta was in the kingdom of Kartli. The division was now firmly ensconced in the bureaucracy of Georgia: in his *Description of Georgia* completed in 1745, Vakhushti Bagrationi organized his accounts by kingdom and administrative province, leading to Jvari and Mtskheta being separated by almost two hundred pages, despite their geographical proximity.[109]

Jvari was now only important for its strategic military location, overlooking the major arterial road that connected eastern and central Georgia, which ran beside the river Mtkvari. Both kings ruled at the will of the Safavid shahs of Iran and had, nominally at least, to convert to Islam. Erekli had been brought up at the Russian court, and Giorgi was fully enmeshed in the intrigues of the Safavid court (he was later to become governor of Kandahar province in Afghanistan, where he was murdered).[110] Neither man was invested in Jvari as a symbol of a united Georgian state at a time of division.

Jvari was no longer the base for the making of a nation; the only postmedieval building work there was the erection of defensive walls around the complex in the seventeenth century. Its position in the cultural memory of Georgia had receded and attention now focused on Mtskheta once again [Fig. 20 / L]. The legends underpinning the cathedral of Svetitskhoveli and the Christianization of Georgia now dominated attempts to rebuild a sense of Georgian identity. The cathedral had been rebuilt on a monumental scale in the early eleventh century by the catholicos Melkisedek (catholicos 1010–1029) as part of his campaign to establish the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and his claim to be the

"Patriarch of the East."[111] His new cathedral once again focused attention on the legend of St. Nino and the miraculous life-giving pillar, a tradition that was periodically reinforced. In the late twelfth century the Nikoloz Gulasberidze (catholicos 1150-78, 1185-ca.1190) produced the greatest articulation of the legends in his *Sermon on the Life-giving Pillar, the Lord's Loincloth and the Catholic Church*.[112]

Following the collapse of its dome in 1656, Svetitskhoveli became a major focus of royal patronage. Mariam Dadiani (1599–1682), wife of Rostom, king of Kartli (r. 1633–1658) repaired the dome and repainted the interior; she was one of the major patrons of the Georgian Church in seventeenth-century Georgia.[113] Two decades later a new tabernacle was erected over the site of Sidonia's grave and the life-giving pillar by catholicos Nikoloz VII (catholicos 1678–1688) and painted with scenes recording the miracles of St. Nino. His successor Ioane VII (catholicos 1688–1691) built a new patriarchal throne. At about this time the cross from Jvari was also transferred to Svetitskhoveli.[114] Georgian historical memory now rested firmly with St. Nino and the life-giving pillar. Jvari was to remain neglected and forgotten until rediscovered by the first antiquarian scholars in the nineteenth century.[115]

Biographical statement

Antony Eastmond is AG Leventis professor of Byzantine art at The Courtauld, University of London. He has published widely on the arts of eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus and questions of artistic and cultural exchange within and between the Christian and Muslim populations of the region [Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, Vernon Square, Penton Rise, London WC1X 9EW, UK, antony.eastmond@courtauld.ac.uk].

Image Captions

01 Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 640. Distant view from the south. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Antony Eastmond

02 Ground plan of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 640. Plan by Matilde Grimaldi

03 Interior view to dome in Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 640. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Diego Delso

04 Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 640. View from south west. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Gilad Topaz

05 Church of St. Hripsime, Vagharshapat, Armenia. ca. 618–30. View from southeast (with St. Gayane beyond). Artwork in the public domain; photograph by Hovhannes Kyurkchyan, 1887; photograph provided by the Armenian Historical Museum, Yerevan

06 Cross in groin vault of the southwest corner room of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 610. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Davit Khoshtaria

07 Interior view to dome in the Church of St. Hripsime, Vagharshapat, Armenia. ca. 618–30. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Antony Eastmond

08 Ground plans:

A: Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia, ca. 586–640

B: Church of St. Hripsime, Vagharshapat, Armenia, ca. 618–30

C: Dzveli Shuamta, Georgia, seventh century

D: Church of the Mother of God, Avan, Armenia, ca. 590–600

E: Church of the Holy Cross, Soradir, Armenia (now in Turkey), 6th century

F: Kvetera, Georgia, tenth century

G: Surb Zoravor near Veghvard, Armenia, 661–85

H: Ninotsminda, Georgia, sixth century. Plans by Matilde Grimaldi

09 The four faces of the stele from Khandisi, Georgia. 6th–7th century (destroyed in 1992–93). Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Giorgi Chubinashvili Institute for the History of Georgian Art, Tbilisi

10 Detail of west face of south stele at Odzun, Armenia. 6th–7th century. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Sipana Tchakerian

11 Tsromi, Georgia, 632–40. View from the southeast. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Antony Eastmond

12 Ascension of the cross. Stone relief over the main, south entrance of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 610. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Antony Eastmond

13 Demetre *hypatos* kneeling before an angel. Stone relief on the southeast face of the east apse of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 610. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Zaza Skhirtladze

14 Stepanoz I *patrikios* before Christ. Stone relief on the east face of the east apse of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 610. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Zaza Skhirtladze

15 Adarnase *hypatos* and his son Stepanoz II kneeling before an angel. Stone relief on the northeast face of the east apse of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 586–ca. 610. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Salome Meladze

16 Khosrow II between Ahura Mazda and Anahita. Stone relief at Taq-i Bustan, Iran. ca. 600. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Mohsen Chareh-Saz

17 Silver drachm of Stepanoz I, ca. 600, obverse shows Stepanoz I, reverse shows cross on an altar. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Georgian National Museum

18 Kobul kneeling before St. Stephen. Stone relief over the south door of Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 630. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Zaza Skhirtladze

19 Kneeling donor. Stone relief on the south face of drum of the dome at Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, Mtskheta, Georgia. ca. 630. Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Zaza Skhirtladze

20 Jvari, the Church of the Holy Cross, seen from Svetitskhoveli, the Cathedral of the Life-Giving Pillar, Mtskheta, Georgia. Cathedral built 1010–29 (west facade restored 1413–40; dome restored 1656). Artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Antony Eastmond.

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[1] D. Khoshtaria, ed., *Jvari, Church of the Holy Cross at Mtskheta* (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2008); Giorgi N. Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki Tipa Dzhvari* [Monuments of the type of Jvari] (Tbilisi: Sakartvelos SSR metsnierebata akademiis gamomtsemloba, 1948); M. A. Chkhikvadze, *Arkhitektura Dzhvari* [The architecture of Jvari] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe arkhitekturnoe izdatel’stvo Akademii arkhitekturi SSSR, 1940); Theodor Kluge, *Versuch einer systematischen Darstellung der altgeorgischen (grusinischen) Kirchenbauten* (Berlin: Otto Elsner, 1918), 51–54; Armen Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura stran Zakavkaz’ia VII veka. Formirovanie i razvitie traditsii* [Church architecture of the 7th century in Transcaucasian countries. Formation and development of the tradition], vol. 2 of 4, (Moscow: Locus Standi, 2012–13), 311–55;

Patrick Donabédian, *L'âge d'or de l'architecture arménienne: le VII siècle* (Marseilles: Paranthèses, 2008), 178–81.

[2] To simplify the terminology: "Georgia" is used to refer to the modern state (Sakartvelo in Georgian), and "Georgian" to the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups that refer to themselves as in Georgian as "Kartveli." "Iberia," a label taken from Greek sources, is used to refer to the early medieval state that occupied eastern Georgia, including the provinces of Kartli, Kakheti, Klarjeti, Samtskhe, and Javakheti (as opposed to the western state of Colchis, also known as Lazica/Egrisi). Kartli, which is the native Georgian name for Iberia, will be used just to refer to the central province of that name.

[3] Marine Bulia and Mzia Janjalia, *Mtskheta* (Tbilisi: Betania, 2000).

[4] Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (London: Electa, 1978), 89. Robert Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture. The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 245–47 and 267–77, contrasts the situation in Byzantium and the Caucasus.

[5] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," in *Kartlis tskhovreba*, ed. Simon Qaukhchishvili (Tbilisi: Sakhelgami, 1955), 1: 221–29; Robert W. Thomson, ed. "Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali," in *Rewriting Caucasian History. The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles. The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation*, Eng. trans. Robert W. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 231–36. The details are repeated in the *Royal Lists* 1 and 2, which additionally note that when Heraclius arrived in Georgia (in 626) "the church of the cross was not yet completed" and in Smbat Davitisdze's *Life and Tale of the Bagratids.* Both texts are edited and translated in Stephen H. Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts*, [CSCO: 601; Subsidia: 113] (Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 308–11, 352–54.

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[6] Strabo, *The Geography*, Eng. trans. Horace Jones (London: Loeb, 1928), 11.14.4, refers to it as Gogarene.

[7] Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1963), 437–99; for attempts to map the region, Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), maps 28–33; for art historical studies of the region, Nicole Thierry, "Essai de définition d'un atelier de sculpture du Haut Moyen-Age en Gogarène," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* (1985), 1: 169–225; Annegret Plontke-Lüning, "Culture and Art in the Gogarene in the 5th and 6th centuries. Iberians and Armenians in Dialogue," in *Cultural Interactions in Medieval Georgia*, Scrinium Friburgense 41, eds Michele Bacci, Thomas Kaffenberger, and Manuela Studer-Karlen (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2018), 189–206.

[8] Iakob Tsurtaveli, "Tsamebay tsmidisa shushanikisi dedpoalisay" [The martyrdom of queen Shushanik], in *Dzveli kartuli agiograpiuli lit'erat'uris dzeglebi* [Monuments of ancient Georgian hagiographical literature], ed. Ilia Abuladze (Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk Gruzinskoi SSR, 1963), 1: 11–29; partial Eng. trans. David M. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), 44–56.

[9] *Epistoleta tsigni. Somkhuri teksti kartuli targmnit, gamokvlevita da komentarebit* [The Book of Letters], ed. Zaza N. Aleksidze (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1968), 75, Armenian text with a Georgian translation, study, and commentaries; Fr. trans. Nina G. Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, [CSCO: 574; *Subsidia* 100] (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 553. English translations of the letters can also be found in Gorun Kojababian, *The Relations between the Armenian and Georgian Churches according to*

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the Armenian Sources, 300–610 (Antelias, Lebanon: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2001), 251–387.

[10] For an introduction to the historiography of art history in Armenia in this period see Ivan Foletti and Pavel Rakitin, “Armenian Medieval Art and Architecture in Soviet Perception: A Longue Durée Sketch,” *Eurasiatica* 16 (2020), 113–50.

[11] *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, trans. Robert W. Thomson, Translated texts for historians 31 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 18–20; the border lay between Mtskheta and Tbilisi.

[12] I have been greatly influenced by the mnemohistorical study of the textual sources by Nikoloz Aleksidze, *The Narrative of the Caucasian Schism: Memory and Forgetting in Medieval Caucasia*, [CSCO: 666. Subsidia 137] (Louvain: Peeters, 2018).

[13] The only later intervention recorded at the site before the nineteenth century is the destruction of the cross by the Saracens in the early tenth century (they then repaired it when they realised that the cross was punishing them with dysentery for their actions); see “Matiane Kartlisa,” in *Kartlis tskhovreba*, ed. Simon Qaukhchishvili (Tbilisi: Sakhelgami, 1955), 1: 265; , Robert W. Thomson, Eng. trans. “The Book of K’ar’tli,” in *Rewriting Caucasian History*, ed. Thomson, 268. The first modern restorations took place in 1893 and 1921: Chkhikvadze, *Arkhitektura Dzhvari*, 6–7.

[14] These sentences deliberately paraphrase Christina Maranci’s comments about the importance of Mren in the seventh century to highlight the similarity of the importance of the two monuments and the debt of my approach to hers: Christina Maranci, “Building Churches in Armenia: Art at the Borders of Empire and the Edge of the Canon,” *The Art Bulletin* 88 no. 4 (2006), 656–75 at 657.

[15] John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian,” *Past & Present* 242, Supplement 14 (2019), 1–22, at 10; Patrick O’Brien, “Historiographical

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traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history," *Journal of Global History* (2006) 1, 3–39.

[16] Romain Bertrand and Guillaume Calafat, "La microhistoire globale: affaire(s) à suivre," *Annales* 73, no. 1 (2018), 3–18; C. A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006), 1440–64.

[17] Anthony D. Smith, "National Identities: Modern and Medieval?" in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leeds Texts and Monographs New Series 14, eds. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1995), 21–46; Rees Davies, "Nations and National Identities in the Medieval World: An Apologia," *Journal of Belgian History / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste* 4 (2004), 567–79.

[18] Aleksidze, *Narrative of the Caucasian Schism*, 28.

[19] The majority of literature on the formation of identities in the early medieval Caucasus concentrates on Armenia. See, for example, the changing role of confession in Armenian identity in the seventh to ninth centuries: Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Confession religieuse et identité nationale dans l'Église arménienne du VIIe au IXe siècle," in *Des Parthes au Califat. Quatre leçons sur la formation de l'identité arménienne*, Travaux et Memoires Monographies 10, eds. Nina G. Garsoïan and Jean-Pierre Mahé (Paris: De Boccard, 1997), 59–78; Nina G. Garsoïan, *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity (ca 600–750)*, [CSCO: 640; *Subsidia* 127] (Leuven: Peeters, 2012); Theo M. van Lint, "The Formation of Armenian Identity in the First Millennium," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89 nos. 1–3, 251–78; Timothy Greenwood, "Armenian Space in Late Antiquity," in *Historiography and Space in Late Antiquity*, ed. Peter van Nuffelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 57–85.

[20] *New Cambridge Medieval History*, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995–2005); *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 4 of 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University

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Press, 1968–89) (1983), 505–36: David M. Lang, “Iran, Armenia and Georgia.” The first edition did include a chapter on Armenia and Georgia: Cyril Toumanoff, “Armenia and Georgia,” in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Joan M. Hussey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 4: 593–637, 983–1009.

[21] For notable exceptions to this see Stephen H. Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). Only preliminary studies of art have been begun: Nina Iamanidzé, “Georgian Reception of Sasanian Art,” in *Sasanidische Spuren in der byzantinischen, kaukasischen und islamischen Kunst und Kultur / Sasanian Elements in Byzantine, Caucasian and Islamic Art and Culture*, eds. Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger and Falko Daim (Mainz: Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum, 2019), 93–106.

[22] As has been illuminatingly discussed by Christina Maranci, “Armenia and the Borders of Medieval Art,” in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration: Studies in Honor of Slobodan Ćurčić*, eds. Mark J. Johnson, Robert Ousterhout, and Amy Papalexandrou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 83–95.

[23] Maranci, “Building Churches in Armenia.”

[24] Sebouh D. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[25] Nikodim P. Kondakov and Ivan Tolstoy, *Russkiia drevnosti v pamiatnikakh isskustva* vol. 4: *Khristianskiia drevnosti Kryma, Kavkaza i Kieva* [Russian antiquities in monuments of art, vol. 4: The Christian antiquities of the Crimea, the Caucasus and Kiev] (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva putei soobshchenii͡a, 1891), 37. For important discussions of this see Ivan Foletti, “The Russian View of a ‘Peripheral’ Region: Nikodim P. Kondakov and the Southern Caucasus,” in *Exchanges and Interactions in the*

Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean, Convivium Supplementum, eds. Ivan Foletti and Erik Thunø (Prague: Masaryk University, 2016), 20–35; Ivan Foletti, and Pavel Rakitin, “From Russia with Love. The First Russian Studies on the Art of the Southern Caucasus,” *Venezia Arti* 27 (2018), 15–34.

[26] Josef Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* (Vienna: Schroll, 1918), 2:725, claims that Georgia had already received enough attention—referring only to the brief pamphlet by Kluge, *Versuch*.

[27] Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst*, 725.

[28] Gabrielle Winkler ed., *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 245, (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 1994), 105–106. For a critical review of the origins and uses of this legend: Aleksidze, *Narrative of the Caucasian Schism*, 142–47.

[29] The best analysis of Strzygowski’s work remains Christina Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture. Constructions of Race and Nation*, Hebrew University Armenian Studies 2, (Leuven: Sterling VA, 2001).

[30] Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 321–30, esp. 326. Even the fourth edition of 1986, revised by Slobodan Ćurčić, retains this weakness.

[31] Mango, *Byzantine Architecture,* 98–107, concludes with a discussion only of “the virtuosity displayed by the Armenian architects of the seventh century.”

[32] Vakhtang Beridze, *Protiv iskazheniia istorii gruzinskogo isskustva (drevnegruzinskoe iskysstvo v svete zarubezhnoi burzhuaznoi nauki)* [Against the distortion of the history of Georgian art (ancient Georgian art in the light of foreign bourgeois science)] (Tbilisi: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk Gruzinskoi SSR, 1949), 41. Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture*, 235–36.

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[33] The work was written in 1921 but only published in 1948 (see Khoshtaria ed., *Jvari*, 43), but the title establishes the overall thesis that Jvari is the model for all other tetraconchs: Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*. Contrast Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 83, who presents St. Hripsime as "emblematic" of the type.

[34] Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 126–32, sets out a reasoned opposition to Strzygowski, but by 1967 his language had become more extreme: Giorgi N. Chubinashvili, *Razyskaniia po armianskoi arkhitekture* (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1967), 19–39.

[35] Most evident in the "dialogue" about the dating of Jvari between Pavel Muradian (Armenian) and Ilia Abuladze (Georgian): P. M. Muradian, "L'inscription arménienne de l'église de Djvari," *Revue des études arméniennes* 5 (1968), 109–39; I. Abuladze, "Quelques remarques à propos de l'article de P. Mouradian 'L'inscription arménienne de l'église de Djvari'," *Revue des études arméniennes* 6 (1969), 373–92; P. M. Muradian, "Encore au sujet de l'inscription arménienne de l'église de Djvari," *Revue des études arméniennes* 6 (1969), 393–410.

[36] Patrick Donabédian, "Armenia—Georgia—Islam. A Need to Break Taboos in the Study of Medieval Architecture," *Eurasiatica* 16 (2020), 63–112. For more balanced recent accounts see Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*; Annegret Plontke-Lüning, *Frühchristliche Architektur in Kaukasien: Die Entwicklung des christlichen Sakralbaus in Lazika, Iberien, Armenien, Albanien und den Grezenregionen vom 4. bis zum 7. Jh.* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007); see also the more Armenian-focused: Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*; Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura*.

[37] Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 283–353; Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 169–70; for a very different take: Aleksidze, *Narrative of the Caucasian Schism*, 100–102.

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[38] Aleksidze, *Book of Letters*, 66–67; Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 548; Eng. trans. Aleksidze, *Narrative of the Caucasian Schism*, 29–30. Garsoïan suggests that the holy cathedral referred to here is that at Dvin, but Echmiadzin seems more plausible as Dvin Cathedral was being rebuilt at this time. I am grateful to my second reader for alerting me to this.

[39] Chkhikvadze, *Arkhitektura Dzhvari*, 7, proposed that the corner rooms were added after the central core, but he does not mark the phases on his plan of the building, and this has not been observed by any later architectural historians. See also Jean-Michel Thierry, "Les tétraconques à niches d'angle," *Bazmavep* (1980), 124–80, esp. 131.

[40] Plontke-Lüning, *Frühchristliche Architektur*, 376, Table 32, lists 16 examples from the late sixth to the eleventh century.

[41] Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura*, 1: 290–324; Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 83–87; Patrick Donabédian and Jean-Michel Thierry, *Les Arts Arméniens* (Paris: Citadelles, 1987), 518–19. Plontke-Lüning, *Frühchristliche Architektur*, 94, reviews the issues about the inscriptions that the usual dating of 618–30 depends on.

[42] The restoration histories of the two churches are set out in Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura*, 1: 294–95, 2: 314–17.

[43] L. Mroveli, "Ninos mier kartlis moktseva," in *Kartlis tskhovreba*, ed. Qaukhchishvili, 1: 119–22; Thomson, "The Conversion of K'art'li by Nino," in *Rewriting Caucasian History*, 133–35.

[44] Nazenie Garibian de Vartavan, *La Jérusalem nouvelle et les premiers sanctuaires chrétiens de l'Arménie. Méthode pour l'étude de l'èglise comme temple de Dieu* (Yerevan: Isis Pharia, 2009).

[45] The narratives are recorded in *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians*, ed. Robert W. Thomson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976).

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[46] Recent scholarship offers a range of dates for Jvari: either clustering around the years 586–605 or considerably later in the 630s–640s. These neatly align either side of the usual dating of St. Hripsime to 618–30. The most balanced review of the arguments is Plontke-Lüning, "Katalog der erhaltenen Kirchenbauten", 203–11, a CD-ROM appended to her *Frühchristliche Architektur*. The textual and numismatic sources are set out in Christian Settipani, *Continuité des élites à Byzance durant les siècles obscurs: les princes caucasiens et l'empire du VIe au IXe siècle* (Paris: De Boccard, 2006), 420–31, who argues for Stepanoz I dying by 605, as also set out in Zaza N. Aleksidze, "Mtskhetis jvari—mtsveli qovlisa kartlisa" [The Cross (Jvari) Monastery of Mtskheta—protector of whole Kartli], *Analebi* 3 (2009), 153–63; for the later dating: Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura*, 2: 327–34.

[47] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 221–29; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 231–36. The dates are repeated in the *Royal Lists* 2 and 3, which additionally note that when Heraclius arrived in Georgia (in 626) "the church of the cross was not yet completed" and in Smbat Davitisdze's *Life and Tale of the Bagratids*: Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 308–11, 352–54. The dates of the rulers I take from Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, 382–407, and Cyrille Toumanoff, *Les dynasties de la Caucasie chrétienne de l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle. Tables généalogiques et chronologiques* (Rome, 1990), 380–82 (stemma 80 and 81); but these dates are insecure and the evidence for them contradictory. Alternative chronologies have been proposed, such as Settipani, *Continuité des élites*, 538, (stemma 4). It is because of these contradictions that I am reluctant to narrow the dates down as others have attempted.

[48] Kazaryan, *Tserkovnaia arkhitektura*, 1: 256–77; Donabédian and Thierry, *Les Arts Arméniens*, 500–501.

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[49] See the typological tables in Adriano Alpago-Novello et al., *Art and Architecture of Medieval Georgia* (Louvain La Neuve, Milan: Catholic University of Louvain, 1980), 259–63; Irene Giviashvili, “Georgian Polyapsidal church architecture,” in *Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures*, eds. Peter Skinner, Demetre Tumanishvili, and Anna Shanshiashvili (Tbilisi: Georgian Arts and Culture Centre, 2009), 173–82. It is implicit in the structure of chapter 2 of Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 63–89.

[50] Surb Zoravor: Donabédian and Thierry, *Les Arts Arméniens*, 593; Ninotsminda: Alpago-Novello et al., *Art and Architecture*, 416–17.

[51] Soradir: Donabédian and Thierry, *Les Arts Arméniens*, 577; Kvetera: Alpago-Novello et al., *Art and Architecture*, 370.

[52] Aleksidze, *Book of Letters*, 66–67; Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 548.

[53] Nana Sikharulidze and Zaza Skhirtladze, “Stelis pragmenti mtzkhetis tsm. jvris tadzridan” [Fragment of a stele from the church of Jvari, Mtskheta], *Saistorio krebuli* 5 (2015), 325–87, esp. 344; Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 43, 83–84, fig. 10, pl. 31: “ad step’a[no]s patriki[osi]sa, demetr[e wip]atosisa, a[drn]erse wipa[tosi]sa sowil[t’a] da q’orc’t’[a m]at’t’a meo[xed?] da q[ov]lisa [sax?]lisa mc’v[el]ad.” An alternative reading of “[sax]lisa” as “[kart’]lisa” is discussed below.

[54] Sipana Tchakerian, “Toward a Detailed Typology: Four-Sided Stelae in Early Christian South Caucasus,” in *Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean: The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, Convivium supplementum, eds. Ivan Foletti and Erik Thunø (Prague, 2016), 124–43, with earlier literature; Plontke-Lüning, “Culture and Art in the Gogarene.” These are rare exceptions to studies that are generally confined to one country or the other: Kitti Machabeli, *Early Medieval Georgian Stone Crosses* (Tbilisi:

Giorgi Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, 2008); Giorgi Javakhishvili, *Adreuli shua saukuneebis kartuli mtsire kandakeba* [Early medieval Georgian small-scale sculpture] (Tbilisi: Meridiani, 2014); Grigor Grigoryan, *Early Medieval Four-Sided Stelae in Armenia* (Yerevan: History Museum of Armenia, 2012).

[55] Niko Chubinashvili, *Khandisi: Problema rel'efa na primere odnoi gruppy gruzinskikh stel poslednei chetverti V veka, VI i pervoi poloviny VII veka* [Khandisi. Problems relating to the reliefs of one group of stelae of the fifth, sixth and first half of the seventh centuries] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1972); Ani Baladian and Anna Leyloyan-Yekmalyan, "Les colonnes de la foi d'Ojun. Essai pour une nouvelle lecture," *Revue des études arméniennes* 36 (2014–15), 149–212.

[56] Baladian and Leyloyan-Yekmalyan, "Les colonnes de la foi d'Ojun," 182–84 argue against this reading; but see also the fifth-century example from Kharabavank: *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 48, cat. 4.

[57] Sikharulidze and Skhirtladze, "Stelis pragmenti," 325–87.

[58] Iakob Tsurtaveli, "The martyrdom of queen Shushanik," 11–29; Lang, *Lives and Legends*, 44–56.

[59] Giorgi N. Chubinashvili, *Tsromi. Iz istorii gruzinskoi arkhitektury pervoi treti VII veka* [Tsromi. On the history of Georgian architecture in the first third of the seventh century] (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 9–10; the foundation is confirmed by an inscription on the south wall of the church: "Holy church have mercy on Stepanoz [hypatos]."See *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1: Aghmosavlet da samkhret sakartvelo V–X ss.* [Lapidary inscriptions 1: East and South Georgia, V–X centuries], ed. Nodar Shoshiashvili, *Kartuli tsartserebis korpusi* [Corpus of Georgian Inscriptions], 1, (Tbilisi, 1980), 168–70.

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[60] Donabédian and Thierry, *Les Arts Arméniens*, 518 (St. Gayane); 556–57 (Mren).

[61] Christina Maranci, *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia*, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages 8, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 23–111.

[62] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 199; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 217.

[63] Giorgi N. Chubinashvili and Jakob Smirnov, *Die Kirche in Zromi und ihr Mosaik*, Georgische Baukunst 2, (Tbilisi: Metekhi, 1934), 89–124; Chubinashvili, *Tsromi*, 22–25, pl. 99; also Shalva Amiranashvili, *Istoriia gruzinskoi monumental'noi zhivopisi*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: Sakhelgami, 1957), 25 and pl. 6.2.

[64] Zaza Skhirtladze, "A propos du décor absidal de C'romi," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* 6–7 (1990–1991), 163–83.

[65] Maranci, *Vigilant Powers*, 77–92; Donabédian, *L'âge d'or*, 61, 220–21 for a list of other mosaics and wall paintings in seventh-century Armenia.

[66] Aleksidze, *Book of Letters*, 121–22; Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 582. I am grateful to my second reader for this translation. The relic of the suppedaneum at the cathedral of Manglisi was a gift from Constantine the Great in the early fourth century: Mroveli, "Ninos mier kartlis moktseva," 117–18; Thomson, "The Conversion of K'art'li," 131.

[67] Aleksidze, *Book of Letters*, 67; Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 548.

[68] Aleksidze, *Book of Letters*, 67; Garsoïan, *Le grand schisme*, 548.

[69] This reading is suggested in *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, Shoshiashvili ed., 96: "[kart']lisa."

[70] Zaza Skhirtladze and Neli Chakvetadze, "Mtskhetis tsm. jvris eklesiis erti reliepis gamo [On one relief on the Church of the Holy Cross at Mtskheta]," *Chronos* 1 (2020), 258–68, argue effectively against the previous identification of this figure as the builder/mason of Jvari.

[71] Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 143; *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, Shoshiashvili ed., 159–60, no. 68: "J[uar]o macxovrisao step'anos k'art'lisa patrikiosi š[eicqal]e." Tamar Khundadze,

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"Nouvelles observations sur les relief figurés de l'église Sainte-Croix de Mtskheta," *Anadolu ve Çevresinde Ortaçağ* 2 (2008), 21–30, esp. 21.

[72] Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Christianisme et église dans le monde géorgien," in *Histoire de Christianisme des origines à nos jours*, vol. 4, eds. Jean-Marie Mayeur, Charles Pietri, Luce Pietri, André Vauchez, and Marc Venard (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1993), 549–603; Bernadette Martin-Hisard, "Jalons pour une histoire du culte de sainte Nino (fin IVe-XIIIe s.)," in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honor of Nina G. Garsoïan*, eds. Robert W. Thomson and Jean-Pierre Mahé (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 53–78.

[73] Leonti Mroveli, "Ninos mier kartlis moktseva," 131–32; Thomson, "The Conversion of K'art'li," 147–48.

[74] For example, *Royal List* 2: Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 310.

[75] Shoshiashvili, *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, 97–99, no. 32; Valeri Silogava, *Samtskhe-Javakhetis istoriuli muzeumis kartuli epigrapikuli dzeglebi* [*Georgian epigraphic monuments in the Samtskhe-Javakheti Historical Museum*] (Akhaltsikhe: Sakartvelos Metsnierebata Akademia, 2000), no. 45: "ese j[uar]i k'[rist]ē[s]i me, kostanti ż[ema]n step'anesman da gudasman, aġhumart'e saxelsa mc'xet'isa j[uar]isasa, nasqidevsa k'ueqanasa z[ed]a, šahramansa *a*, s[alo]c[vela]d č[ue]nda, colisa da švilt'a, noembersa *iz*, amen." The dating system of "the first day of shahraman" is unclear.

[76] Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes*, 326–27.

[77] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 228; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 236.

[78] Stephen H. Rapp, "Christian Caucasian Dialogues: Armeno-K'art'velian relations in medieval Georgian historiography," in *Peace and Negotiation. Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages

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and Renaissance 4, ed. Diane Wolfthal,(Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 170; but countered by Aleksidze, *Narrative of the Caucasian Schism*, 127–28.

[79] Robert W. Thomson, “The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc’i,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 125–226 at 199.

[80] As with so much about Jvari, the identity of the figures here is subject to debate. The conventional identification was set out by Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 74–84. An alternative was proposed by Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, 395–97; but this was effectively demolished by Wachtang Djobadze, “The Sculptures on the Eastern Façade of the Holy Cross of Mtzkheta,” *Oriens Christianus* 44 (1960), 112–35 and *Oriens Christianus* 45 (1961), 70–77. On style, see Natela A. Aladashvili, *Monumental’naia skul’ptura Gruzii* [Monumental sculpture of Georgia] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), 30–40; Tamar Dadiani et al., *Medieval Georgian Sculpture* (Tbilisi: Giorgi Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, 2017), 15–16.

[81] For donor images on steles see Dadiani et al., *Medieval Georgian Sculpture*, 44–89; Zaza Skhirtladze, “History in Images: Donor Figures in Medieval Georgian Art,” in *Cultural Interactions in Medieval Georgia*, Scrinium Friburgense 41, eds. Michele Bacci, Thomas Kaffenberger, and Manuela Studer-Karlen (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2018), 47–74, esp. 48–51.

[82] Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 148; Shoshiashvili, *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, 167.

[83] Khundadze, “Nouvelles observations,” 23, identifies the figure as Christ, but it is more likely that it is a warrior saint, holding a lance in its raised right hand; Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 147–48, suggests the woman is Temestia, who funded the southwest corner room, which was reserved for women for prayer.

[84] Juansher, “Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa,” 217; Thomson, “Life of Vakhtang,” 229.

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[85] Jenny Rose, “Sasanian Splendor: The Appurtenances of Royalty,” in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Stewart Gordon (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 35–56.

[86] C. J. F. Dowsett, ed., *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movses Dasxuranci*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 111–12.

[87] Johanna D. Movassat, *The Large Vault at Taq-i Bustan: A Study in Late Sasanian Royal Art*, Mellen studies in archaeology 3, (Berkeley: Edwin Mellon Press, 2005); Elsie H. Peck, “The Representation of Costumes in the Reliefs of Taq-i-Bustan,” *Artibus Asiae* 31/2/3 (1969), 101–46; Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 200–23.

[88] Maranci, *Vigilant Powers*, 61–67.

[89] Juansher, “Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa,” 207; Thomson, “Life of Vakhtang,” 225.

[90] Juansher, “Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa,” 219; Thomson, “Life of Vakhtang,” 230.

[91] Thomson, *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, 18–20.

[92] Juansher, “Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa,” 221; Thomson, “Life of Vakhtang,” 231.

[93] Bente Kiilerich, *The Obelisk Base in Constantinople: Court Art and Ideology*, Series Altera in 8°, Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia: 10 (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1998).

[94] Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 143; Shoshiashvili, *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, 160–64, nos. 69–70: “C[mida]o M[i]k[ae]l mtavarangelozo Demetres wipatossa meox xeqav” and “C[mida]o G[ab]r[ie]l mtavarangelozo Adrnerses wipatossa meox eqav | [… Adrn]erses że.”

[95] This was originally proposed by Chubinashvili to explain why Guaram is not depicted on the main church: Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 1–25 for a counter argument: Kazaryan,

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Tserkovnaia arkhitektura, 3: 316–24, who dates it later in the 660s. The lack of alignment between the churches suggests to me an earlier date to the smaller church, and the thinner south wall may be linked to it needing to accommodate the structure over the cross that preceded the building of Jvari: a canopy had been set up over the cross by Rev, the son of King Mirian III, in the fourth century: Leonti Mroveli, "Ninos mier kartlis moktseva," 123; Thomson, "The Conversion of K'art'li," 137.

[96] Aleksidze, "Mtskhetis jvari."

[97] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 204; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 223.

[98] Giorgi N. Chubinashvili, *Die Kleine Kirche des Heiligen Kreuzes von Mzchetha*, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der georgischen Baukunst: 1. Bd, 1. Heft, (Tiflis: Verlag der Staats-Universität, 1921), 17–19; Zaza Skhirtladze, "Early Medieval Georgian Monumental Painting: Establishment of the System of Church Decoration," *Oriens Christianus* 81 (1997), 169–206 at 170.

[99] John of Ephesus, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia*, ed. E.W. Brooks (Paris, 1936), Book 6.11; R. Payne Smith, ed., *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephasus,* R. Payne Smith, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860), Book 6.11; Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, 380.

[100] Liz James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World: From Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 230 for artistic context.

[101] Tedo Dundua and Giorgi Dundua, *Catalogue of Georgian Numismatics*, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: Meridian, 2013), 127.

[102] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 221; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 230–31.

[103] Juansher, "Tskhovreba vakhtang gorgasalisa," 222; Thomson, "Life of Vakhtang," 232. For discussion see Mariam Chkhartishvili, "Two Verbal Portraits of Erismtavari

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Stephanoz I. Discussing Principles and Practices of History Writing in Medieval Georgia," in *Laudator Temporis Acti: Studia in Memoriam Ioannis A. Božilov*, vol. 2: *Ius, Imperium, Potestas; Litterae; Ars et Archaeologia*, ed. Ivan Biliarski (Sofia: Institute of Historical Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 37–68.

[104] Shoshiashvili, *Lapidaruli tsartserebi 1*, 164–65, no. 71: "C[mida]o S[te]p'[an]e, K'obul st . . . i š[eicqal]e." Some scholars, following Chubinashvili, *Pamiatniki*, 146–49, 154–56, argue that the end of the inscription should read Kobul St[epanoz]I; i.e., it shows Stepanoz II as an adult. This is difficult to reconcile with Chubinashvili's theory that the church was completed by 605, as the timeframe is too short to encompass both this image and that showing Stepanoz II as a child on the east façade. The identification only works if a much longer building time is accepted, extending into the 630s. It also requires Stepanoz to have the additional "pagan" name of Kobul, which is not attested in any other source. The alternative is that this is a new donor with a Byzantine honorific title: "Kobul *st*[*rateg*]*i*": Djobadze, "The Sculptures 1," 127–35.

[105] Djobadze, "Sculptures 1," 129.

[106] Helen C. Evans, "Nonclassical Sources for the Armenian Mosaic near the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, eds. Thomas F. Mathews, et al. (Washington DC, 1982), 217–22; Yana Tchekhanovets, *The Caucasian Archaeology of the Holy Land. Armenian, Georgian and Albanian Communities between the Fourth and Eleventh Centuries CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 78–80. 108: the monastery of the Armenian women

[107] Tchekhanovets, *Caucasian Archaeology of the Holy Land*, 152, 166, 189, 191.

[108] Vakhushti Bagrationi, "Aghtsera sameposa sakartvelosa [Writings on the kingdom of Georgia]," in *Kartlis tskhovreba*, vol. 4, ed. S. Qaukhchishvili (Tbilisi: Sakhelgami, 1973), 908; this situation is discussed in Khoshtaria, *Jvari*, 33–35.

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[109] Jvari is accounted for in just one sentence: Vakhushti, “Writings,” 4: 348–49 (Mtskheta), 536 (Jvari); trans. Marie-Félicité Brosset, *Description géographique de la Géorgie, par le Tsarévitch Wakhoucht, publiée d'après l'original autographe* (St Petersburg: Typographie de l'Academie Impériale des Sciences, 1842), 209 (Mtskheta) and 301 (Jvari).

[110] Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 211–21.

[111] Tamar Khundadze and Ana Shanshiashvili, “Svetitskhovlis simboluri sakhe tqoba-erdis eklesiis fasadis mortulobashi [The symboic image of Svetitskhoveli cathedral on the exterior decoration of Tqoba-Erdi Chruch],” *Sakartvelos Sidzveleni*, Treasury of Georgia 15, (2011), 156–66.

[112] Nikoloz Gulaberisdze, *Sakitkhavi suetis tskhovelisay kuartisa sauploysa da katolike eklesiisa* [Sermon on the life-giving pillar, the Lord's tunic and the Catholic Church], ed. V. Karbelashvili (Tbilisi, 1908); Michael Tarchnishvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur*, Studi e Testi 185, (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1955), 235–37.

[113] Bulia and Janjalia, *Mtskheta*, 89–91.

[114] Khoshtaria, *Jvari*, 35.

[115] Nikolai Muraviev, *Gruziia i Armeniia* [Georgia and Armenia], vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1848), 264: “the altar exists, but there is no worship there as the monastery has been deserted since the time of Czar Giorgi.” The first restorations took place in 1893 and then 1923: Chkhikvadze, *Arkhitektura Dzhvari*, 6–7.