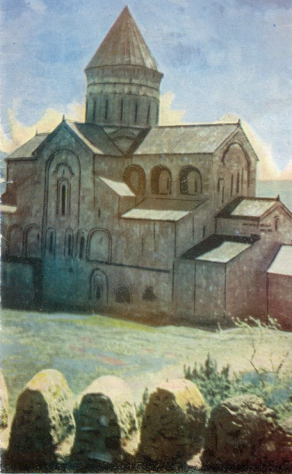


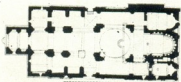


ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ
ՆԱԽԱՐԱՐԱԾԱԿ



ՏՎԵՒՏԻՔԻ ՄԱՐԿՈՎԵԼԻ

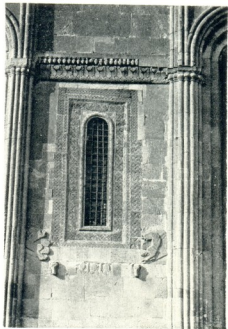
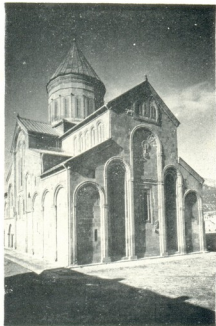
(1010—1029)



The patriarch cathedral „Svetitskhoveli“ („Tree of Life“) is in the ancient capital of Georgia Mtskheta, 25 km north of Tbilisi. The temple is dominating the surrounding area, its grandeur and harmony of shape attracting one's attention from afar.

Mtskheta is extremely rich in historical monuments. Crowning the top of the mountain at the confluence of the Kura and the Aragvi rivers, Jvari („Cross“) temple erected on the brink of the 6th and 7th centuries is rising. Jvari is a pearl of Georgian ancient art. Beyond it, on the crest of a higher mountain, a silhouette can be made up of the Zedazeni monastery founded in the 6th cen-





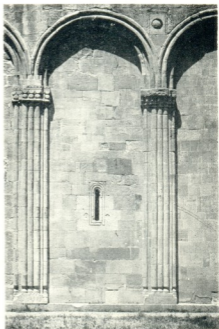
ture by John Zedazneli, one of the thirteen fathers—advocates of christianity in Georgia (the present church goes back to the 8th century). Within the confines of Mtskheta itself, near the Georgian military Highway the Samtavro cathedral is situated built in the first half of the 11th century. On the right bank of the Aragvi the 7th—8th century Antiochi church catches one's eye. During the archaeological excavations in Mtskheta and its neighbourhood, ancient sepulchres were discovered with abundant implements (on Samtavro field, in Arma-ziskhevi), as well as remnants of a magnificent Ar-maz-tsikhe acropolis, stone arched tomb erected in the first century B. C. etc.

This is the historical surroundings of the Svetitskhoveli, the centre of religious life of Georgia for a number of centuries.

The history of Svetitskhoveli is closely linked with historical life of Georgia. Foundation of the

Cathedral is connected with the adoption of christianity in the east Georgian kingdom of Kartli and with the early days of feudalism in Georgia. More than once did the cathedral suffer from foreign invaders and was subjected to damage and destruction, but it always "rose from ruins and ashes" as a symbol of immortal vital strength of the country and the people.

The name of Svetitskhoveli is associated with an ancient legend. The legend has it that on the place an inhabitant of Mtskheta Sidonia was laid down to rest with the "Christ's robe", brought from Jerusalem by her brother Eliaz. A gigantic lebanese cedar grew up over the burial place. When in the thirties of the 4th century the king of Kartli Mirian impressed by the preaching of Saint Nina decided to adopt christianity, he selected Sidonia's grave as the place for the erection of the first Christian church. The cedar was cut down and cleaved



cupola drums, as well as through huge lateral ports. Artistic integrity has, of course, been broken, since the only individual fragments of frescoes that survived are relatively young and of low quality (16th—17th century).

The grandiose Christ and archangels in the altar must be dating back to the 11th century, but they were repainted and spoiled in the 19th century.

A visitor of Svetitskhoveli should be informed about the following:

a) A small stone chapel built into the south nave of the church, is a copy of the Jerusalem temple. It could not have been built earlier than in the 13th—14th century.

b) A two-tier structure with a cartopy next to the cupola is Svetitskhoveli itself. Legend has it that right here a part of the "Tree of life" was kept. In fact, this structure dates back to the 17th century (earlier, the "Tree" must have been standing

elsewhere. Anyway, painting of the "Tree" (lower tier) devoted to the history of "Kartli conversion", i. e. of adoption of Christianity by king Mirian, was executed at the turn of the 17th century under the guidance of the artist Grigol Guldivarassahvili, a citizen of Tbilisi. We know this from the explanatory inscription.

Very rough painting of the north wall of "the Tree" is younger, probably of the 18th century.

c) The South-west sub-cupola abutment on its altar facing plane bears the pictures of historical persons: wife of king of Kartli Rostom, sister of Odishi ruler Levan Dadiani, queen Mariam with her son Otia killed during hunting. Mariam is noted for her philanthropy. She used to restore the temple. It is on her initiative that a set of manuscripts was rewritten ("The life of Georgia" by queen Mariam). The queen was buried on the spot, in front of her picture.

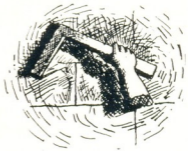
7 44/21



Before the altar, there are graves of the two last kings of Kartli and Kakheti Irakli II (died in 1798) and George XII (died in 1800). A bit to the west, as the legend goes, is the burial place of king Vakhtang Gorgasali (5th century). Burial stones were installed in 19...

d) Iconostasis of the 19th century.

The Svetitskhoveli is an acting church, but at the same time it is protected by the state as a brilliant monument of Georgian history and art.



Автор текста В. Берназе, редактор Г. Долидзе.
Художник Г. Горделазе, художественный редактор Р. Махарадзе. Издательство «Сабчота Сакартвело», Тбилиси, Маржанишвили 5, 1969 г.
Грузинское общество охраны памятников культуры.
УЭ 01801, Тирязь, 15000, Заказ № 285. Цена 6 коп.
Типография № 1 Главполиграфпрома Госкомитета Совета Министров Груз. ССР по печати. Тбилиси, Орджоникидзе 30.