

Artistic Research

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(Small Artistic Research)

The ancient information about the cover (sheet) of Gelati main church (1106) roof was confirmed in the report description of the Russian ambassadors Nikifor Tolochanov and Alex levlev (1650-52)- at first, the church was covered with iron or copper.¹ Chronologically the second information (1772) about it belongs to the member of the Petersburg academy J. Guldenstedt who reports that in old times the domes of Gelati "Churches might have been covered with copper and now they are with lath."² supposedly the lath roof of Gelati main church was replaced after J. Guldenstedt's visit. Imereti King Solomon I (1752_1784) roofed the Virgin Mary's church³ with iron (tin G.G) brought from Russia approximately in 1772-1784. The further repairs of the Gelati Monastery roof are related to the exarchate epoch in Georgia. With the order of December 22, 1845, the synod office of Georgia-Imereti decided to repair the Gelati monastery thoroughly and allocated finances for it (7100 manats and 85 kapikis in silver). Monastery buildings were to be roofed with tin for this purpose the master Ivan Stephan Krasov was invited from Russia. On September 6, 1846, Krasov with his two laborers started roofing of Gelati great temple and ended it by November 10 (pic. 1, 2, 3). Within the same months, the roof was painted too. By February 1847 St. George's, St. Nikoloz's churches and the Bell tower had also been roofed and then painted green (Sic.)⁴ Necessary wooden works for the tin roof were carried out by carpenters the Berekashvilis, Berodzes, Uklebas, Kashibadzes, and Abesadzes⁵ from the village Kursebi, they used timber of 1000 chestnut trees and 200 oaks as roof rafters, 85 foot of iron was used for nails and hooks for the roofing works.

The last restoration on Gelati grand temple's tin roof was carried out in 1976 with the leadership of the famous architect-restorer V. Tsintsadze who used roof rafters made in 1946 and added additional barrier poles and then the church was covered with tin. (pic. 2,3).

¹ Article description of Tolochanov 's ambassadorship in Imereti 1650-1652, published by I. Tsintsadze, Tbilisi 1970, p. 116, report description of Alex levlev's ambassadorship in 1651-52 in Imereti kingdom, published by I. Tsintsadze, Tb. 1969 p. 122.

² J. Guldenstedt 's traveling in Georgia, research and translation by G. Gegelashvili v. I Tb. 1962 p. 145-147.

³ M. Kezevadze Gelati Monastery during Exarchate period, Kutaisi, 2006, p. 119.

⁴ also there p. 125, 126.

⁵ also there p.127.

⁶ also there p.126

On November 30 of the current year after removing a tin sheet affixed in 1976 from a tent dome of the temple the rafters of thick oak logs appeared with barrier poles affixed to them using forged nails and stacked with each other (pic.1-3); the construction of the 1846 year is very well kept. The outer dimension of the under roof dome sphere is roughly built and is beheaded cone-shaped (pic.7). This structure is a circular flatness on the top with a slightly heightened lime mortar dam around its edge. The lime mortar dam is surrounded by a thick oak tree belt (pic.1,8), attached to it are indirectly bundled rafters of dome tent roofing. The circular flatness of the dome is diametrically crossed with a thick tree pole on which the thick pole beam rests (pic2). The pole-beam reinforced with indirectly bundled rafters is in the center of roofing and the rafters fastened to the wooden belt are gathered on its top. As I have mentioned above the rafters were made in 1846 for a tin cover (sheet); the outer shapes of the dome made us sure that the rafters made in the XIX century repeated the old constructions. This kind of wooden frame was often met in the medieval centuries' Georgian architectural monuments and the old Georgian architects used to utilize it as for tile so for stone planks (lorfin) cover arrangements. To prove it we will bring two examples: the top of the Oshki temple (963-973) dome is cone-shaped using wooden poles and on them, flat and grooved tiles are affixed through lime mortar and nails (1022-1025).⁷ and as for Pitareti temple (1213-1222) the dome pyramid made of rafters and plastered with calcimine is covered with stone planks (lorfins).⁸

the certain part of rafters of Gelati Virgin Mary's church arms might be of repair works' time of 1846. They are directly affixed to arms' vaults. The church on the south and north chapels has the same constructions except northward located St. marine's chapel roofing. This chapel attached from the west to the north gate was constructed either in half or in the third quarter of the XIII century (pic.6)⁹. Its single slope roof was covered with shafted stone planks (lorfins). The side stone planks can be seen from the crack under the arch cornice and roof (pic.5). After removing the middle part of a tin cover of the roof the stone planks layer appeared (pic 4) (see R. Isakadze, the Roof Elements of Gelati Complex According to Archeological Materials and Historical Sources, pic 19). It is supposed that the stone planked roof of this chapel dates back to its construction date. Using stone planks (lorfins) as the cover of St. Marine's chapel does not mean that other parts of the church were covered with stone planks for sure. So, in the half of the XIII century or a bit later a part of Gelati temple was covered with stone planks (lorfins) (pic. 6).

⁷ Oshki tiles were renovated during the Byzantine emperors Basil II and Konstantine VIII period. See E.Takaishvili. 1917 Archeological Expedition in South Georgia, Tb. 1960, p.54; V. Jobadze Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historical Tao, Klarjeti and Shavsheti, Tb. 2006, p. 133, the respected author (V. Jobadze) is wrong when talking about Oshki dome glazed tiles, this church is covered with unglazed tiles.

⁸ M. Bochoidze About Pitareti architectural Complex and its Restoration, " a Friend of a Monument", N1(89), TB. 1993, p.38.

According to the observation of R. Gverdtsiteli, the stone planks' usage started at the turn of the early and developed middle ages, though such covering was characteristic only for those regions where there were proper stone quarries.¹⁰ Such regions are Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, and Samtskhe-Javakheti; D. Tumanishvili, D. Khoshtaria and N. Natsvlishvili think that the usage of stone planks (lorfins) in Georgia started in the VII century but was widely used only in the X century.¹¹ It should be noted that stone planked covering is not characteristic for Gelati micro-region. (see R. Isakadze, *Gelati Complex buildings...*; p.1); and indeed the temple located near the Gelati Monastery-Bagrati temple (1003) was roofed with grooved and flat tiles which are proved by archeological excavation carried out on the monument. Here green and liver-colored glazed tiles were discovered (X-XI)¹². Similar glazed tiles were found on Kutaisi "Inner city" territory.¹³ The Gelati monastery archeological excavations revealed many fragments of glazed grooved and flat tiles. Like the archeologist, R. Isakadze concluded the artifacts of two chronological periods XII-XIV and XVI centuries were observed. This important conclusion and the fact that fragments of stone planks (lorfins) were not discovered by excavations gives us every reason to suppose that Gelati Monastery buildings and specifically the Virgin Mary's Nativity main church were covered with glazed tiles as soon as it was built.

Thus, the history of the roof of Gelati main church can be generally imagined in the following way:

1. XII-XIV centuries glazed tiles (dark green swamp colored, light- of warm tonality green)
2. The half or third quarter of the XIII century- the roof of St. Marina's chapel covered with stone planks (lorfins)
3. XVI century- green of cold tonality and celeste glazed tiles.
4. Copper(?) roof (1650-1652)
5. Lath (1772)
6. Tin (1772-1784)
7. Tin (1846)
8. Tin (1976)

⁹ P. Mepisashvili *Gelati Ensemble Architecture* TB. 1966, p.75

¹⁰ R. Gverdtsiteli, *Lorfin roof* Tb. 1991 p. 1

¹¹ D. Tumanishvili, N. Natsvlishvili, D. Khoshtaria *Construction Masters in the Medieval Centuries of Georgia*, Tb. 2012, p. 184.

¹² O. Lanchava *Kutaisi Archeology*, Kutaisi, 2007, p. 167, 168; D. Tumanishvili, N. Natsvlishvili, D. Khoshtaria *Construction Masters...* p. 195, pic.178.

¹³ D. Tumanishvili, N. Natsvlishvili, D. Khoshtaria *Construction Masters...* p. 189 pic.174.

Recommendations for Gelati Main Church Roofing

1. The dome and arms of Gelati main church should be covered with glazed tiles. The glaze color of tiles should be selected with a specific moderation. I think the glaze should be warm tonality green color. The glaze colors of tiles can vary from warm green to ochre, we should avoid laying drastically different colors of tiles on the roof. It should be noted that tin roofs of Gelati buildings were painted green in the half of the XIX century, which I think was due to monastery location and local traditions.
2. Dark green and liver-colored tiles should be avoided because they will aggravate the monastery exterior.
3. We should keep old well kept stone planks (lorfins) on the roof of St. Marine's chapel (the west part of the church's north façade), damaged lorfins should be replaced with new ones hewn from the analogical stone.
4. I think the roofs of the lower tier of the Gelati main church (south and north chapels, gates, narthex) can be covered with stone planks (lorfins): a) the roofs of these extensions are not sloping and thus it is desirable to be covered with waterproof and strong materials. b) grey color of lorfins of the roof of the lower-tier matches the warm tonality green tiles on the arms and outlines the church architectonics.
5. If the covering of roofs of the lower tier with glazed tiles is decided a) the color of these tiles should be selected with great care, because these roofs are lower and easily catches an eye, here we should also avoid usage of drastically different color tiles. B) Stone planks (lorfins) should be by all means kept on the roof of St. marine's church.

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Photos

1. Gelati main church, dome, rafters (1846)
2. Gelati main church, dome, pier, and rafters (1846)
3. Gelati main church, dome, rafters
4. Gelati main church, Northwest chapel (St. Marine) roofing, under the wooden construction lorfins can be seen (XIII)

5. Gelati main church, Northwest chapel (St. Marine) roofing, under the roof the layer of lorfins (XIII)
6. Gelati main church, plan, St. Marine's chapel roofing with stone planks (lorfins) is marked with a streak.
7. Gelati main church, dome outer mass, and rafters.
8. Gelati main church, rafters, and a wooden belt.

Picture 1

Picture 2

Picture 3

Picture 4

Picture 5

Picture 6

Picture 7

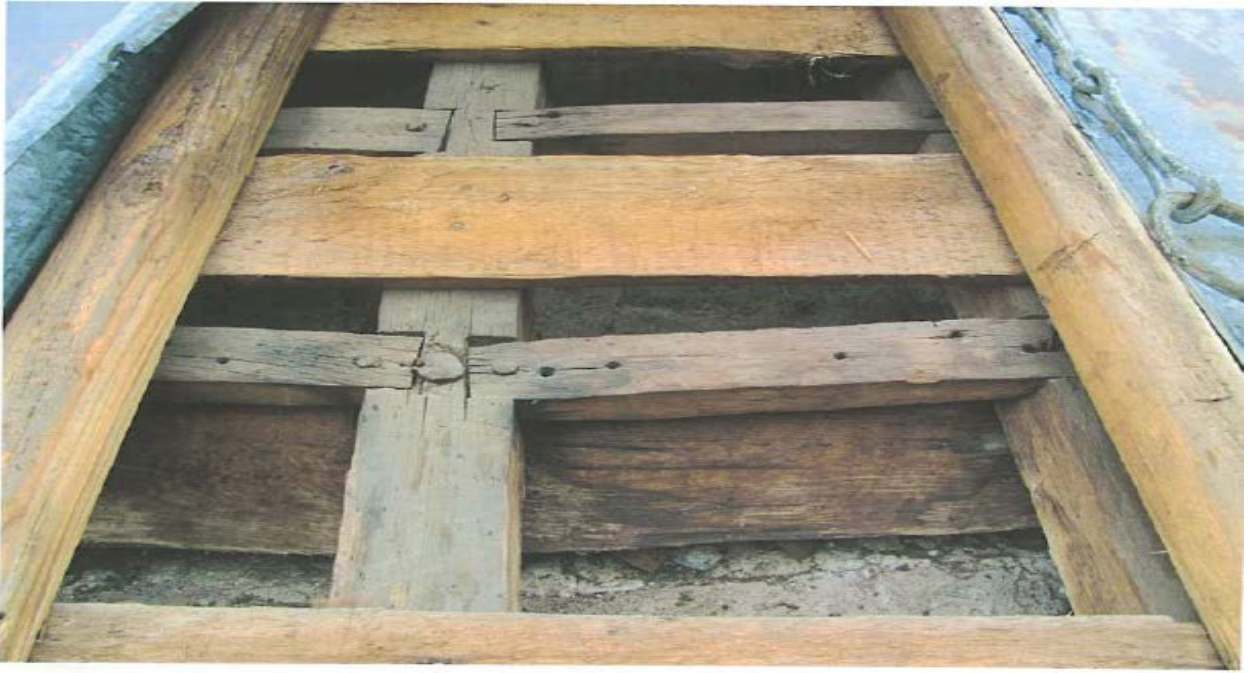
Picture 8



Pic.1



Pic.2



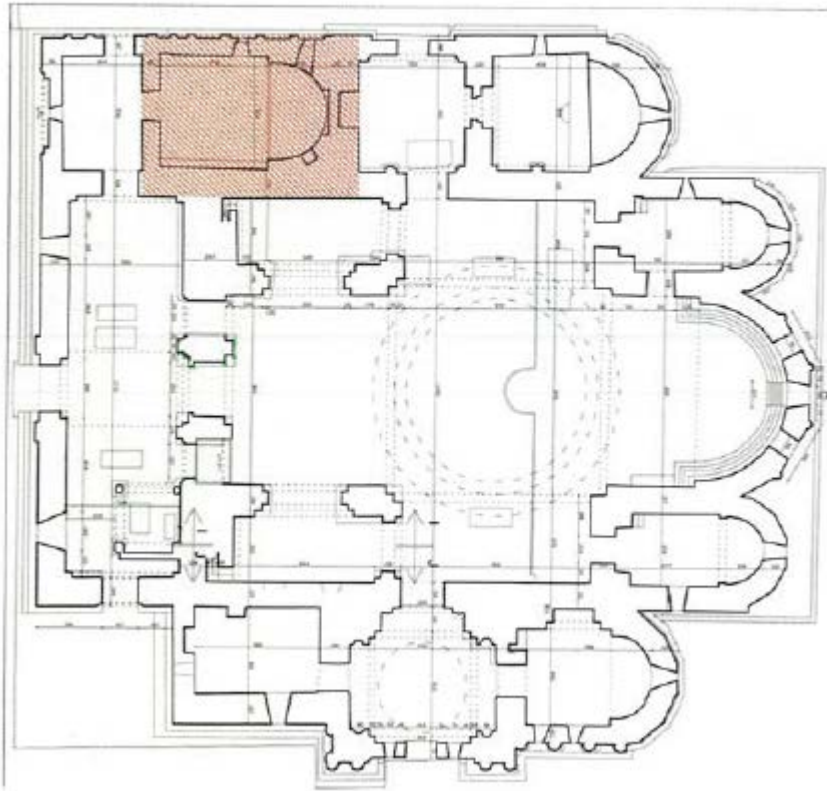
Pic.3



Pic.4



Pic.5



Pic.6



Pic.7



Pic.8