

Variants of “Folk” Church Building as Manifestation of Religious Contaminations in the Architectural Shaping of Churches of the Nakh Peoples

Victoria Pishchulina¹, Anton Rodichev²

^{1,2} Don State Technical University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia

Abstract

The article reveals that the general principle of localization of temples and sacred complexes on the territory of the Nakhs' residence corresponded to the radial-route model of space development: the most revered temple was necessarily located in the center of the ethnic community, temples and cult complexes existed in every patronymic community and patronymic family. Ensembleness is one of the leading characteristics of the temple architecture of this period. The hierarchical principle has received the greatest development. It is revealed that the identity of the variants of "folk" church building is determined to a greater extent by the nature of the introduction of traditional culture features into it, however, in this case, its formation was largely influenced by the Christian cultures of various directions existing in the specified territory (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Nestorianism), as well as Islam. The significant influence of Nestorian Christian culture on the process of formation of the features of the church building of the Sunny Valley strip of Nestorian Christian culture is indicated.

Keywords: church building, religious contaminations, architectural shaping of churches.

1. Introduction

The area of the initial settlement of the Nakh peoples (now mainly the territory of Ingushetia) was a strip of the so-called Sunny Valleys (North Caucasus), which are located in the transverse direction to the gorges and are located in the hollow between the Skalisty and Lateral Ranges. They were plateaus which were illuminated by the Sun most of the time of the year, as the clouds were kept back by these ranges. Gorges within the territory of Ingushetia and Chechnya in the direction from north to south are divided into three main groups, which differ in their climatic, landscape conditions, time of settlement, forms of traditional cattle breeding.

Over time, with the emergence of new settlements and population growth on both sides of the Skalisty Range, there have been changes in the nature of land ownership and communal grazing. [1].

Transhumance, which was the main and, sometimes, the only way of traditional nature management by the Nakhs, required a well-developed network of cattle trails, passes, premises for seasonal and basic livestock keeping. The house-building creative activity of the mountaineers was not limited to the construction of only a dwelling, because the dwelling itself already included premises for the keeping of livestock and storage of hay and fodder for its feeding, in addition, the object of house-building creative activity were cattle trails with the installation of special landmarks

"cairns", the arrangement of passes and sacred objects (churches and sanctuaries) on the upper points of these passes; summer and winter sheds, etc. Caves and grottoes were both fit up for being complexes of hunting shelters and preserved as sacred objects. In such caves, the skulls of the killed aurochs were preserved, the heads of which were a sacrifice to the patron god of hunters – Apsat.

A peculiar system of spatial communications providing a system of traditional nature management and communication of mountain societies among themselves and with the plain regions of the North Caucasus existed in the form of roads for arabas, trails, and passes. From these roads, which were the main traffic artery, led two systems of mountain trails – one provided connection in transverse latitudinal direction between highland societies. The other system of trails allowed seasonal sheep driving to winter and summer pastures. In some cases these systems were combined. However, only one main trail was really well-maintained and could not only allow the driving of the small cattle, but also was a means of spatial communication between highland societies. The construction and improvement of trails included, in addition to the actual engineering arrangement (retaining walls, etc.), the creation of a system of spatial landmarks, the so-called "cairns" - pillars of stones up to one meter high, often with Christian symbols located in places of mountain cliffs and changes in the direction of mountain trails and pasture boundaries. The organic

connection of sacred objects with traditional nature management was manifested in their landscape dissolution.

Archaeological data suggest that the penetration of Christianity into the North Caucasus begins in the VIII century [2]. The first churches appeared within the territory of the Nakhs in the X century, and the church building of the X-XII centuries is characterized by the construction of churches on the models of the nearest confessional centers – Byzantium, Armenia, Caucasian Albania.

During the XIII-XIV centuries, within the territory of the North Caucasus, several types of religious contamination of the worldview and, accordingly, several regional-ethnic variants of Christian architecture developed, one of which was formed in the Assinovskaya basin within the territory of Ingushetia. The most striking manifestations of religious contamination can be stated exactly in the spatial organization and external forms of churches. The originality of the variants of "folk" church building is determined to a greater extent by the nature of the introduction of features of traditional culture into it.

2. Material

The principle of the location of the church over any large object - several settlements, a road, a gorge – in the period of the X – XII centuries becomes the leading one in the North Caucasus. This principle also reflected the Christian concept of the universal significance of a Christian church for all believers, and not only for a specific patronymic community. However, the place for the construction of the church was still determined by the sacred significance of the sanctuary or holy place that previously existed on it. The best example which illustrates this principle of spatial location is the church of Tkhaba-Yerdy in Ingushetia, which is located on a small plain in which several mountain valleys formed by the Assa River and its small tributaries converge. On one side of the plain rise mountains covered with dense forest, on the other – it is surrounded by high cliffs of bizarre shape. From the hillock on which the church and the burial ground surrounding it are located, opens a picturesque view, and one can see the towers of Hamkhi and Targim villages standing on the Assa River. The church is clearly visible from all sides and dominates the surrounding space, being distinguished by its shape, which differ greatly from the tower ensembles of mountainous Ingushetia. On certain days, residents of the nearest mountain societies came to the

church to perform religious rites and resolve disputes. Also at the church of Tkhaba-Yerdy there was "mehka khel" – the court of the country. Judging by its location and the ceremonies that took place in it in the late Middle Ages, the church of Tkhaba-Yerdy was the main church of the Nakh people. However, an earlier center of Christianity can be considered the church of Albi-Yerdy, dating from the X-XII centuries and located above the village of Targim, on the opposite bank of the river Assa. The best "uzdeni" (free people) Vainakh surnames lived in Targim. [3]

Almost all the churches were located on the spurs of Skalisty Range stretching from northwest to southeast. Built in different gorges of the village, they were closely connected by a network of mountain trails, both among themselves and with neighboring territories, cut off from the centers of Christianity. This contributed to the formation of similarities in the territorial and landscape arrangement of the churches of the X – XII centuries. The tradition of placing the church next to the sanctuary, while creating a sacred complex on mountain peaks and passes, was combined with the patronymic principle of each patronymy having its own sacred object. All the churches of the North Caucasus of that period became an integral part of unified natural and spatial complexes, which included not only Christian churches, but also pre-Christian shrines: caves, trees, stones, burials. The tradition of building sacred objects, now Christian churches, on almost inaccessible mountain peaks, over the places of passage of new trade routes, was preserved. Of great importance in choosing the location of the church was still the path to the sacred object, which was arranged in such a way that throughout the road it was visible from various angles and in combination with paintings of the animate nature, which dominated men.

The life activity of the patronymic society was based on customs, which, not being recorded, nevertheless preserved the main postulates of the worldview of the highlanders unchanged. However, gradually, unbeknownst to people, they changed, adapting to new conditions and influences, which was the Christian teaching. As a result, each patronymy lived according to its custom, which at the same time preserved the main features of the common traditional culture. On the one hand, the mountaineers had a stable traditional model of the world, corresponding to their limited activity in a narrow space when communicating with a relatively small number of other members of society, on the other – collective consciousness dominated over

individual. In these conditions, thanks to the activities of missionaries of various branches of Christianity, the current worldview was not rejected, but supplemented. At the same time, usually Christianity was included in the traditional religion, not vice versa. There was an interesting process of creating regional versions of Christian culture by concretizing Christian dogmas in accordance with the real living conditions of the highlanders, the peculiarities of their thinking and the following introduction of traditional cults into Christian worship. In the mountain societies of the North Caucasus, the identified processes formed peculiar variants of ritual, more or less comparable with Christian culture. The lack of permanent contacts with the confessional centers and the gradual local transformation of popular variants of Christian culture led to the nativization of Christianity, its saturation with local beliefs and rituals. The study established a number of features of both Christian and pagan rituals of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Their comparison with each other confirmed the conclusion that these cultures can be attributed to Christian cultures.

In addition to the details of the ritualism, a weighty argument in favor of the Christian character of the church-building culture formed in the North Caucasus in the XIII - XIV centuries is that the population of the region considered themselves Christians before the XIV century and in some regions even before the XVI century, as evidenced by the burial rites stored in the churches of the Gospel in the Georgian and Greek languages; a large number of cross necklaces discovered by archaeologists during excavations of medieval settlements, as well as features of spatial organization and ritualism, indicating that the liturgy was held in these buildings during the initial period of their existence.

In the three-dimensional arrangements of Christian churches of the XIII-XIV centuries within the territory of Ingushetia, first of all, one can find many features driven by the pre-Christian mythology and traditional culture. This is, firstly, the presence in the church, next to it or as part of the complex of a pillar-shaped monument – a symbolic belonging of the ancestral deity. However, the pillar-shaped monument located in the altar part of the church had rectangular and semicircular niches on its surface, in which candles and church utensils were placed. Usually there were hiding places in the walls of churches – sanctuaries. They were small channels that curved at right angles. The size of the holes was sufficient for the hand to move freely

through the channel. There were hiding places above the entrance, in the arches, in the altar part and in other places. In many hiding places, as mentioned above, crosses, church books, candelabra and other accessories of the Christian ritual were found.

In Ingushetia, in the Armkhi River basin and the upper reaches of the Assa River, about two dozen churches have preserved. We will consider the descriptions of the most characteristic of them. The church of Gal-Yerdy is located on the top of a steep mountain, on the right bank of the Armkhi River; the mountain is called "Tusholi-te", and at the foot of it is the village of Shuan. Near the church there are ruins of large residential towers. External measurement of the church walls: southern – 5.40 m, northern – 5.07 m, eastern – 4.10 m, western – 3.83 m. The walls are made of crude stone of a quite thorough sheathing with a good fitting; sometimes the laying has a regular nature. The walls end with a cornice, very primitive in shape, but having some resemblance to the cornice of Thaba-Yerdy. The roof is single-pitched, made of slate slabs, with a slope from south to north; it has preserved only in the eastern part. The walls are covered with a thick layer of ochre tone plaster. The door is made in the southern wall and is located closer to its western end; the top of the door ends with a semicircular arch. The width and height of the door increase inward. Above the door at a height of 0.30 m, a tile is embedded in the wall, protruding beyond the wall and serving as a canopy over the door, similar tiles were arranged over the loopholes in residential towers, for example, in the village of Erzi. In the same southern wall there are two small square openings opening inside into one common window niche. In the western wall there is a narrow window with an extension inside. The church inside is divided by two arches into three unequal parts. In each arch not adjacent to the northern wall, at a height of 0.82 – 0.87m. there is one niche, at the same height from the altar side in the arch there is a niche with a hiding place. The eastern and western walls also have niches with hiding places. In the western cache in 1928, an expedition of the Ingush Institute of Local Lore found various kinds of church vessels. The walls and arches inside are covered with white plaster. The floor of the church is below ground level and is separated by a high stone door threshold. Belonging to Christianity is also indicated by a stone slab at the wall of the altar with two small niches, one above the other. The slab and niches could initially serve as something like an

iconostasis, and later gifts in the form of money, cotton wool and food were put into the niches [4].

The Magi-Yerdy church is well preserved and has a gable roof. In its plan it is a quadrilateral. The walls are made of crude, well-hewn large stone on a strong lime mortar. Some rows consist of horizontally stacked, and others of vertically placed stones. The walls and ledges are covered with a thick layer of pale yellow plaster.

The door is located in the western wall, with an offset to the north. The width and height of the door increase inward. There is a semicircular copestone above the door. The door was locked with a large bolt that moved in a deep channel in the thickness of the wall. Just above the door, outside, to the right and left of it, two small niches are arranged in the wall. Above them, closer to the middle of the wall, there is a narrow window—slit, above which, to the right and left, one can see traces of horns once embedded here, judging by the remains of the skull, they belonged to an auroch; there is another narrow window between the horns.

Along the northern outer wall, at the base there is a protruding row of large stones serving as a seat during a meal. Inside, the church is divided by a pointed arch projecting from the very base into two equal parts: eastern and western. The walls are vertical, up to two meters high, then a false arch is formed by the gradual influx of stones. The arch begins to form a curve from the very base, the pilaster protrudes from the wall. There are also 9 niches on the north and south walls at different heights. Some have hiding places, the holes of others are partially covered with tiles. Beams are stretched across the church at different heights. In the eastern half there are seven beams in four rows, of which only five have preserved. In the western half the beams go in three tiers, in the amount of seven, all have preserved. A beam is also stretched in the arch, at a height of 2.56 m. The beams have a round shape and a dark color, sometimes becoming completely black. In the upper part, the ceiling is heavily smoked.

In the eastern part of the church there is a prismatic throne, made of stone and covered with plaster. Between the throne and the eastern wall in the northern corner there is an elevation formed by a rock. The northern wall, approaching the western one, makes a sharp bend inside, as in Gal-Yerdy. The floor is covered with a layer of lime mortar. A leveled platform adjoins the northern wall. It is surrounded by a stone fence made of large stones on lime. In the western part, the fence adjoins the rock and goes to the north, then turns to the southeast. There is a niche in the eastern

wall of the fence. According to the testimony of local residents, the niche served as a place where a vessel with beer was placed and flatbreads were put during worship. The height of the fence in some places reaches 1.50 m. In the western and eastern walls of the fence, doors with a semicircular copestone have preserved. The doors were bolted from the inside [5].

The church of Djalite is located in the gorge "Galgay-che", above the village of Kart, on a high and steep hill, the ascent to which is quite difficult and tedious. From the church there is a view of the entire gorge – a number of villages are visible below, and in the distance to the east there is a wide gorge of the river Assa. The church is oriented strictly to the east. There are niches on the southern wall outside: one to the left of the entrance (triangular) and four to the right (3 triangular and one rectangular). The entrance to the church is from the south, closer to the western wall. Inside, the church is divided by arches into four parts, with the pilaster of the middle arch starting from the floor itself, and the other two first merge with the surface of the wall. The height of all arches from the floor is 2.60 m, they represent a pointed false arch. The walls in the corners, at a height of 2 m, are lined with protruding flat stones, like in tower structures. A large number of niches are arranged in the northern, southern and western walls, in some places they are arranged in three tiers. Some of them have side branches, hiding places in which crosses, cups and other church utensils were stored. Icons and candles stood in niches without hiding places, which can be stated thanks to the soot that covers some of them. The eastern wall of the altar part has an original structure – a pillar-shaped monument, a kind of altar. The pillar forms masonry bond with a wall. The dimensions of its base are 0.98 x 0.18 m, gradually the pillar narrows upwards and ends with a phallic cone. Three niches are arranged in the front side of the pillar: the lower, quadrangular, is located closer to the northern wall. All three niches bear traces of soot. The floor of the church is slightly below the ground level and is separated from the outer ground by a high stone threshold with two internal steps. Carefully applied white plaster has preserved on the walls and arches [6].

The church of Dzorah-dela is located near the abandoned village of Gadaborsh. It offers a vast and beautiful view of the Assa gorge above the village of Puy, the Tkhaba-choch gorge and all the gullies, spurs and slopes covered with dense pine and mixed forest. Snow-capped summits of Khevsureti with pointed

peaks are visible on the horizon. In the north stretches the Gulgai-che gorge with the Rocky Range and majestic Ceylam closing it. The orientation of the church is from southwest to northeast. The roof is gable, with 12 ledges. There are traces of yellowish plaster on the walls and ledges of the roof. Inside, the church is divided by a transverse wall into two isolated rooms. This wall was built at the same time as the church, as it forms masonry bond with its walls. The entrance to the room is separate from the southeast, the opening is completed with a semicircular arch. The second large part of the church has dimensions: 8×2.70 m and is divided by two arches into three unequal parts. The arches of the pointed shape are laid out in the technique of a false arch and start from the floor itself. The height of the arches is 3.40 m, the outer height of the church to the roof ridge is 4.10 m. One beam is stretched in the span of each arch, in addition, two beams are stretched in each compartment. There are many rectangular niches in the walls: in the south-eastern wall – 9, in the south-western – 4, in the north-western – 13. Inside, white plaster has preserved. The entrance to the church is located in the southern wall of the western part, the opening has a semicircular completion. There are two niches in the south-eastern wall from the outside. In the south-western wall there are three small triangular-shaped windows. Adjacent to the south-eastern wall is a semicircular fence resembling the fence of Gal-Yerdy. The masonry of the fence is neat, made of the same flagstone as the church [7].

Thus, it is possible to distinguish the main features of the church architecture of Ingushetia. These include: the inclination of the longitudinal walls inward; the division of the interior space by transverse walls attached to the longitudinal and forming pointed arches in the false arch technique; the stepped-pyramidal completion of the roof corresponding to this form in a characteristic traditional design; transverse wooden beams, which are both tie-beams for longitudinal walls and an object for ritual throwing darts; the presence of a variety of options for pillar-shaped monuments; covering the walls with plaster, yellow on the outside and white on the inside. In these features, one can see the continuation and development of the architectural and constructive system formed in the earlier church of Ingushetia - Tkhaba-Yerdy. The newly emerged details are interesting – the arrangement of stone shelves for candles in the walls, stone hooks for a sacrificial animal,

numerous hiding places and niches in the walls of churches, as well as channels for locks in doors and windows. The latter have one feature – they are arranged so that the church was locked from the inside, not from the outside; this may indicate the presence in the divine service of a certain rite associated with the isolation of some of its participants in the church. Originality is given to some churches by a separate entrance to the altar room (Dzorah-Dyala church); a throne with steps (Gurmt church; such a detail is present in Armenian churches, symbolizing the ascent to Golgotha); the device of triangular-shaped through holes in the transverse walls above the arches (Dzorah-Dyala and Tumgo-Yerdy churches); arrangement of a box-shaped niche at the floor level in the eastern wall of the Tusholi church in the village of Lezhg (which is, apparently, a part of the crypt). (Fig.1)/

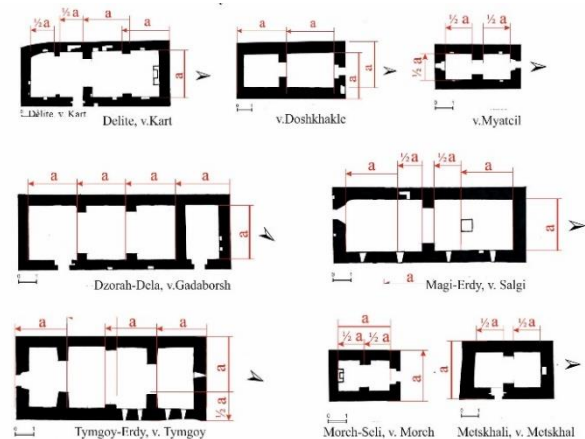


Fig.1 Temple of Nakhs. 13-14 c.

The analysis of the features of the spatial organization showed that with the obvious similarity and continuation of the traditions of the three-dimensional compositions of the first Christian churches, there is no inscribed apse in the large group of simultaneously constructed objects under consideration, a tendency has formed to stretch the proportions along the length of the plan with increasing divisions. A comparison of the plans of the churches of the Alans and the Nakhs allows us to state the formed local version of the church architecture of Ingushetia with a pronounced regional style. This circumstance forced the authors to turn to the search for analogues in provincial Christian architecture. Comparative analysis revealed similarities with Nestorian churches in Ephesus, Northern Mesopotamia and Central Asia. V.A. Kuznetsov pointed out the possibility of the influence of Nestorianism on the church building of the North Caucasus (in relation to the churches of Khazaria) in his last work [8]. In

addition, there is a material trace of the existence of Nestorian communities in the North Caucasus – in 1957. In the Trusovo gorge of Georgia (directly adjacent to the valley of the Armkhi River and North Ossetia), a tombstone with an inscription in the Syriac-Nestorian writing dating back to 1326 was discovered. The inscription was deciphered by G.F. Turchaninov [9].

Nestorians could have penetrated to the North Caucasus along the Great Silk Road in the early Christian period, but obviously they did not stop here, otherwise a local variant of Nestorian architecture would have been formed here, as in Central Asia and Mesopotamia. The considered variant of regional architecture in Ingushetia appeared no earlier than the XIII century. The comparison of the plans of Ingush churches with Nestorian churches shows, however, a clear similarity: a straight altar part, elongation of the proportions of the plan along the length, dividing the space by arches into not three, but more parts, the arrangement of niches, pointed arches, triangular slit-shaped windows. But, based on historical events, Nestorians could reappear in the North Caucasus, settle as a large community in the Armkhi River basin and in other regions, since Nestorianism was brought by the Tatar-Mongols who came from the east.

A few words about the Nestorianism among the Tatar-Mongols. In the XI century, a large Kareit tribe in Mongolia (about 100 thousand people) adopted Christianity led by their leader. The territory of this tribe gradually became known in Europe as the kingdom of Nestorian Prester John. In 1203 Genghis Khan defeated the Kereites, and his son Tolui married the daughter of their leader, whose name was Sorkaktani. She belonged to the Nestorian Church, kept her clergy and property with her, and raised her sons – Mongke, Kublai, Hulaga and Arig-buk – in respect for the Christian religion, although they could not be baptized according to the Mongolian Yasa (traditional religion). According to the testimony of the Italian traveler Marco Polo, Kublai himself adopted Nestorianism in Samarkand. Since that time, Nestorians have held high positions in the headquarters of the great khans. They provided support and assistance to all Christians of the empire, using their influence on the Mongol khans [10]. In 1253 Guillaume de Rubruk arrived at the headquarters of the son of Batu Khan – Sartak, and found that most of the queens and courtiers openly profess Nestorianism. The Khans (Guyuk, Batu, Sartak, Mongke) were also Nestorians, although they avoided directly expressing their views, since in order to rule the Mongols, it was

necessary to openly profess their pagan religion. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that Nestorianism was the dominant religion for them during the invasion of the Tatar-Mongols in the North Caucasus. Only the death of the great Möngke Khan in 1260 marked the beginning of the end of the era of Nestorian domination in Mongolian society. In the steppes of the Pre-Caucasus, during the existence of the Golden Horde, the institution of nomadic Nestorian priests was formed and that a large number of nomadic Christians in this territory contributed to the creation of the Sarai Diocese of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1265. Thus, Nestorianism must have had a significant impact on the culture of the peoples of the North Caucasus in the XIII – XIV centuries. In the current historical situation, they did not have a strong state religion before the Tatar-Mongols, as it was in Transcaucasia and Rus'. The penetration of the Tatar-Mongols into the highlands, their residence there and mixing with the local population is confirmed by anthropological analysis of skulls in burials [11, 12]. The peculiarities of the Nestorian ritualism were noted by G. de Rubruk and P. Karpini [13], and perhaps the features of this ritualism were reflected in the divine services of the highlanders of the North Caucasus, supplemented by the traditional ritualism. A similar phenomenon took place in the Nestorian Tatar-Mongol church. It is not by chance that the main planning characteristics of Nestorian churches and churches of the North Caucasian highlanders coincide, especially the main feature – the direct design of the altar part in the plan. This can also explain the obvious parallels between the Ingush church construction of the Armkhi River basin and the churches of the Digor Gorge in Ossetia, despite the fact that these two territories are significantly removed from each other to speak about neighboring borrowings. Thus, it can be assumed that the entire "folk" church building of the Sunny Valleys of Ingushetia, and possibly the North Caucasus as a whole, was formed in the XIII century under the influence of Nestorianism [14].

3. Conclusion

1. The general principle of localization of churches and sacred complexes within the territory of the Nakhs' residence, as well as the entire North Caucasus, corresponded to the radial-route model of space reclaiming: the most revered church was certainly located in the center of the ethnic community, churches and cult complexes existed in every

patronymic community and patronymic family. The analysis of the territorial and landscape location, spatial organization of these structures in accordance with the ceremony taking place in them, their patronymic status, modular analysis, as well as the correlation of all these features in the light of a single space of traditional highland culture allowed the authors of this article to determine that the sacred objects of the entire band of Sunny Valleys in general during this period were complexes in which three hierarchical groups can be distinguished: general patronymic, patronymic and generic. Ensembleness is one of the leading characteristics of the church architecture of this period. The hierarchical principle received the greatest development, which becomes especially relevant in connection with the need to create a system of spatial "amulets" in conditions of constant danger from invaders moving from the foothills. Churches were no longer included in the system of defensive structures of the settlement – they were endowed with a higher, spiritual power of protection. General patronymic complexes were located near the main patronymic villages or in significant natural places, patronymic complexes were located near the central villages of patronymic clans, and ancestral churches were located above each village. In this sense, the church served as a symbol of the clan. Sometimes burial was performed in the ancestral church, but most often it was the center of the patronymic group of burial places in crypts. Sacred complexes, like before, included both artificial objects – Christian (churches) and pagan (pillar-shaped monuments, stones with cup marks), and objects of naturalistic paganism. All artificial objects of the complexes were built at the same time, as evidenced by the same character of masonry and decoration, according to archaeologists.

2. The trend of "completion" of previously erected Christian churches was revealed: they were surrounded by a fence, inside of which trees that received the status of sacred grew over time; pillar-shaped sanctuaries were erected nearby; the walls were decorated with petroglyphs, handprints on plaster, horns and skulls. Both during the new construction and during the "completion", the ceremony involved visiting first pagan sites, then a Christian church, holding divine services in it and completing the ceremony with a mandatory meal with a sacrificial animal near the church. The similarity of the principles of landscape location of religious complexes throughout the Sunny Valleys can be explained not only

by the common origins of traditional culture, but also by the intensive contacts of the population of this territory with each other along mountain trails.

3. The originality of the variants of "folk" church building is determined to a greater extent by the nature of the introduction of traditional culture features into it, however, in this case, its formation was largely influenced by the Christian cultures of various confessions existing in the specified territory (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Nestorianism), as well as Islam.

4. Was revealed a significant influence of Nestorian Christian culture introduced by the Tatar-Mongols on the process of formation of the features of the church construction of the Sunny Valley strip. This was expressed in the decor, details of ritualism and spatial compositions, the distinctive feature of which is the straight completion of the altar part. Comparative analysis showed similarities with Nestorian churches in Ephesus, Northern Mesopotamia and Central Asia. The wide prevalence of the straight completion of the altar part could also be due to the influence of Catholicism, as well as the genetic connection of the highland church with the dwelling, the use of this form in sanctuaries and crypts. An important point is that there are no examples of inscribed apses, i.e. there was no significant influence of Transcaucasian architecture.

5. The features of constructive and decorative techniques associated with intensive processes of cultural interchange and the development of similar constructive and decorative techniques in all variants of "folk" church building based on tradition are revealed: in churches there were necessarily: a false vault (stone or wooden), transverse pointed arches, beams, stepped-pyramidal or smooth pointed roof. A number of constructive and decorative techniques were sacralized, had a sacred symbolic meaning and were used in other "sacred" structures - crypts and towers. A characteristic feature is the use of sacred meanings of traditional forms in Christian architecture (the appearance of a stepped-pyramidal shape in the endings of the protruding apses, the completion of the apse with a pot helmet-like top and not a dome with a cross).

6. In the XIII – XIV centuries, when there were neither contacts with confessional centers, nor strong state power, the process of Christianization continued and reached the most remote areas of the highlands, where variants of the so-called "folk Christianity" were formed on the basis of traditional culture and the

influence of Nestorianism. The peculiarity and originality of the architecture of the sacred objects of the considered period are the result of the most complex and time-consuming process of the formation of religious contamination in the worldview of the population. At the same time, the peculiarities of the ritualism recorded in various periods (but mainly after the XVI century) and historical events in the region indicate that these contaminations cannot be considered signs of the extinction of the once strong Christian faith, and the peculiarities of the rites - the result of a gradual distortion of the liturgy. This complex phenomenon should be considered as an initially formed version of Christian culture, which has analogues in other traditional cultures of the world.

Acknowledgments: research support by Russian Science Fond, project № 23-28-00827.

References

- [1] Gambashidze, G.G. From the history of relations between Georgia and Ingushetia in the Middle Ages/[Text]: IV Krupnov readings: abstracts of reports / G.G. Gambashidze. Ordzhonikidze, 1974. - pp. 40-41.
- [2] Butinova M.S. Religious syncretism in Oceania [Text]: M.S. Butinova // Local and syncretic cults. - M.: Nauka, 1991. - pp. 136.
- [3] Miller, V.F. Archaeological observations in the field of Chechens [Text]: materials on the archeology of the Caucasus / V.F. Miller. - M., 1888. - Issue I. - pp. 1 - 42.
- [4] Krupnov, E.I. Georgian temple "Thaba-Yerdy" in the North Caucasus [Text] / E.I. Krupnov // KSIIMK. - M., 1947. - Issue. 15. - Pp. 421 - 423.
- [5] Krupnov, E.I. Georgian temple "Thaba-Yerdy" in the North Caucasus [Text] / E.I. Krupnov // KSIIMK. - M., 1947. - Issue 15. - Pp. 419-421.
- [6] Krupnov, E.I. Georgian temple "Thaba-Yerdy" in the North Caucasus [Text] / E.I. Krupnov // KSIIMK. - M., 1947. - Issue 15. - pp. 416-418.
- [7] Krupnov, E.I. Georgian temple "Thaba-Yerdy" in the North Caucasus [Text] / E.I. Krupnov // KSIIMK. - M., Pp. 423 - 424
- [8] Kuznetsov, V.A. Christianity in the North Caucasus before the XV century. [Text] / V.A. Kuznetsov. - Vladikavkaz, 2002. - p.23
- [9] Turchaninov, G.F. Trusovskaya Ossetian Syrian-Nestorian inscription of the first half of the XIV century [Text] / G.F.Turchaninov// News of the North Ossetian Research Institute. - Ordzhonikidze, 1960. - Vol. XXII. - Issue I.-p.41057
- [10] Plano Carpini D. History of Mongols. Rubruk G. Journey to the Eastern countries [Text] / D. Plano Carpini, Rubruk. - M., 1997. - p.136-157
- [11] Alekseeva, E.P. Archaeological excavations in the area of Verkhny Chegem village in 1959. [Text]: collection of articles on the history of Kabardino-Balkaria / E.P. Alekseeva. - Nalchik: "Elbrus", 1961. - Issue IX. - pp. 193 - 204.
- [12] Alekseev, V.P. To the craniology of the population of the lowland areas of Kabardino-Balkaria [Text]: Scientific notes of the Kabardino-Balkarian Research Institute / V.P. Alekseev. - Nalchik, 1968. - Vol. 25. - pp. 178 – 182.
- [13] Plano Carpini D. History of Mongols. Rubruk G. Journey to the Eastern countries [Text] / D. Plano Carpini, Rubruk. - M., 1997. - p.161,240
- [14] Pishchulina V. On the medieval architecture chronology of the Black sea Coastal area north in the North Caucasus and the Crimea//2019 IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng. 698 033056 <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/698/3/033056>