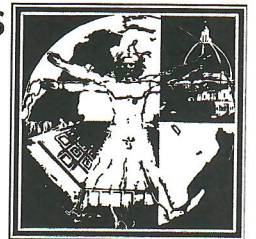


# International Conference

Life Beyond Tourism - countries, history,  
cultural tourism

Tbilisi 2010  
Regional Festival

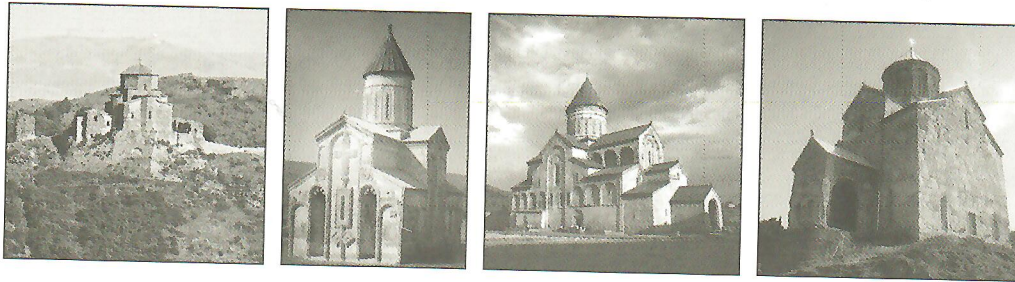
The meeting point for students, graduates,  
professionals and companies



**Marina Tevzaia, Georgia**

Apollon Kutateladze Tbilisi State Academy of Art / Associate professor

### Georgian Ornament Tour



Georgia, a country with a unique geographic location and a rich historical heritage is, with its versatile tourism possibilities, an attractive location for both local and foreign visitors. This time, though, we might add another context to all those existing traditional routes, and so we would like to guide you on a cultural tour around Tbilisi that focuses on the ornamental patterns of its architecture. The tour itself describes four monuments of Georgian architecture: Jvari Monastery and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in the city of Mtskheta, where Samtavisi Cathedral is also located, and the Metekhi Church in Tbilisi. These monuments have a lot in common and are also different. Thus this project is intended to offer readers and visitors a brief historical tour that illustrates the development of Georgian ornament based on these four masterpieces of Georgian architecture.

Ornament, like other forms of the fine arts, has two basic features which are the applied side of its use and the meaning of its content. Ornament itself is always presented on the surface or building as a type of architectural pattern that delivers a particular sense and serves as a decorative element.

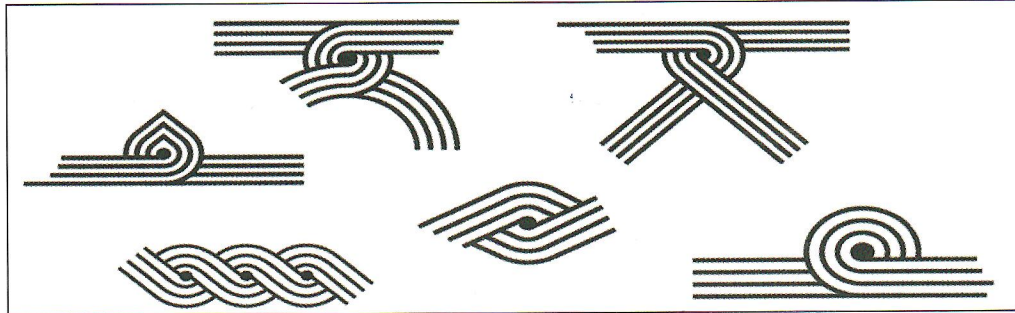
Ornament by its nature has two fundamental linear forms that are the bases for all conceptual contexts: one consists of straight lines (linear) and the other of curved lines (curvatures). Ornamental forms may depict different forms and images from nature, for instance they may be geometrical forms, animal shapes, or plant-shaped ornaments shown as foliage of a different kind: a pomegranate, a bunch of grapes, etc. The plant shape ornament comprises an element of plastic art as to depict some kind of reality.

The most distinct feature of the decoration of an ornament that marks it out from other forms of the plastic arts is its repeated rhythmic layout and symmetry. Such a main plastic element is shown as a plait.

The plait element is the most developed in Georgian art. The main characteristic feature of Georgian plait is a knot. A plait with a knot is a primary decorative element, especially in Christian Art. The plait, at the same time, usually represents a cross or crossing and can vary from two to multi-piece consecutive arrangements that give a picture of a particular endless succession of continuous ornamental rhythm.

The design of the stripe grooves is very substantial as it provides a direction to the knot and plait stripe and thus creates an element of plasticity.





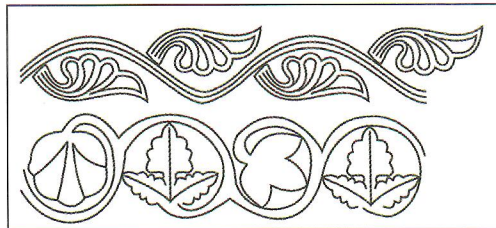
The basic principles of Georgian ornament are: moderation, plasticity, generality, light-and-shade transition interaction, and harmony between the overall ornament and the architectural pattern.

The most supreme of architectural ornaments is fretwork, which in the Georgian case may be represented in several ways:

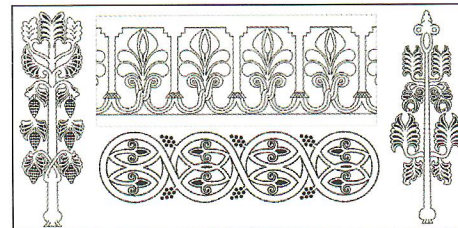
1. A plant that respectively portrays a leaf, flower or other plant.
2. Various geometrical systems of interwoven cross and circle.
3. Interwoven geometrical and leaf-flower patterns
4. Interwoven geometrical and leaf-flower circles portraying animals, birds, human and floral images.

Patterns of plastic refinements on building facades and their step by step development and brief comparative studies are showcased on examples of distinguished Georgian architectural monuments from the sixth-fifteenth centuries: Mtskheta's Jvari, Svetitskhoveli, Samtavisi and Metekhi.

Jvari - The three-piece ribbon ornament presented on the southern window contains a plait leaf with deep relief and visual/graphical stripes. The plain walls are built with carved stones that serve as a decoration as well. The conceptual idea of the memorial defines all its visual aspects. Jvari has reliefs on the south-western side only, and can be viewed from the entrance yard. The Jvari Monastery fretwork represents a trefoil that dates back to the archaic period.



Jvari, 6th C

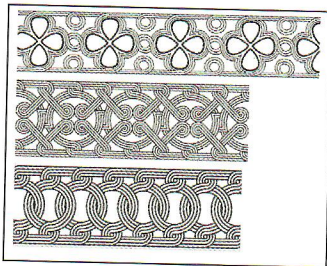


Svetitskhoveli, 1029.

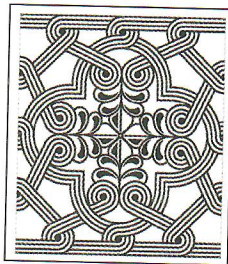
Svetitskhoveli has a convex-concave foliature (leaf-like) ornament with deep relief on the western façade, presented on a different surface. The ornament images are leaf and leaf-plait, plait, curvatures, both simple plait and plait with knots and grooves. Sash fretwork (tracery) on the northern window of Svetitskhoveli depicts a floral-plait presented as a grapevine with a cross image.

Samtavisi - with the ornament on the western and eastern facades, presented on different

elevated layers. The ornament includes both knot and knotless plaits, with grooves and different decoration and fretwork patterns separately from one another. The Samtavisi ornament is a baroque that also exists as an accomplished overall form apart from the construction. Distinguished as a free light-and-shade composition with airiness, here transparent and with an abundance of luxury patterns and concrete forms.



Samtavisi, 1030



Metekhi, 1278-1293.

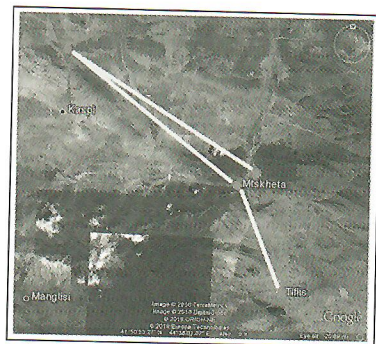
Metekhi - with a convex ornament on the eastern window, the images are leaf and leaf-plait patterns with knot and knotless plait elements having one- and two-piece grooves and less distinct relief.

Thus the one day cultural tour around Tbilisi described here gives visitors an excellent opportunity to comprehend and fully enjoy all the versatile features of the Georgian architectural heritage. The historical monuments extend over a nine-century time span that links the archaic to the late baroque period. Visitors meanwhile are surrounded by a unique wild environment coupled with the historical and cultural inheritance of the past. As well as this, we hope tours of this type will further promote tourism with similar concepts and increase the number of visitors both in Georgia and abroad.

We plan to set up similar two-day sightseeing tours in Imereti-Samegrelo-Racha, Samtskhe-Javakheti-Klarjeti and Kartli-Kakheti regions for the purpose of sightseeing and researching the virtues of Georgian architectural ornament.

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