

# Georgian Architectural Terminology: on the Example of Some Church Architecture Terms

Tinatin Margalitadze

Center for Lexicography and Language Technologies,  
School of Arts and Sciences, Ilia State University,  
3/5 Cholokashvili ave., Tbilisi 0162, Georgia

E-mail: [tinatin.margalitadze@iliauni.edu.ge](mailto:tinatin.margalitadze@iliauni.edu.ge)

## Abstract

This paper presents Georgian architectural terminology through the example of some church architecture terms. These terms are closely connected and interwoven with the Christian religion. This fact is determined by the early conversion of the country into Christianity which gave great impetus to the construction of numerous churches and monasteries and the development of Georgian architecture. Church architecture terminology is mostly created on the basis of the Georgian language resources. Even the Georgian terms for *architect* and *architecture* are of Georgian origin, unlike terms for many other scientific disciplines, for which Georgian uses international terms of Latin and Greek origin. These Georgian terms are ხუროთმოძღვრება / *khurotmodzghvreba* ('architecture') and ხუროთმოძღვარი / *khurotmodzghvari* ('architect'). Although these terms are considered archaic in Modern Georgian and are replaced by არქიტექტორი / *arkit'ekt'ori* ('architect') and არქიტექტურა / *arkit'ekt'ura* ('architecture'), they continue to be used in the context of church architecture. For instance, architectural monuments of Georgia, i.e. Georgian churches and monasteries, are still referred to as საქართველოს ხუროთმოძღვრული ძეგლები / *sakartvelos khurotmodzghvruli dzeglebi*.

**Keywords:** art terminology; architecture; church architectural terms; religion and terminology

## 1 Historical Background

Terminological work has a centuries-old history in Georgia. Early conversion of the country into Christianity in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent translation of biblical literature into Georgian laid the foundation of the development of terminological work as well. The medieval period, particularly the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, represents an important era in the development of Georgian scientific terminology. It was characterized by intensive translation activity and remarkable linguistic ingenuity of terminological work. The accomplishments of this period are closely associated with prominent Georgian scholars and translators, such as Euthymius the Athonite, Giorgi the Athonite, Ephrem Mtsire (Ephrem the Minor), Ioane Petritsi – key figures affiliated with major intellectual and religious centers including Mount Athos (Greece), the Black Mountain (Syria) and the Gelati Academy (Georgia). Their bold, creative

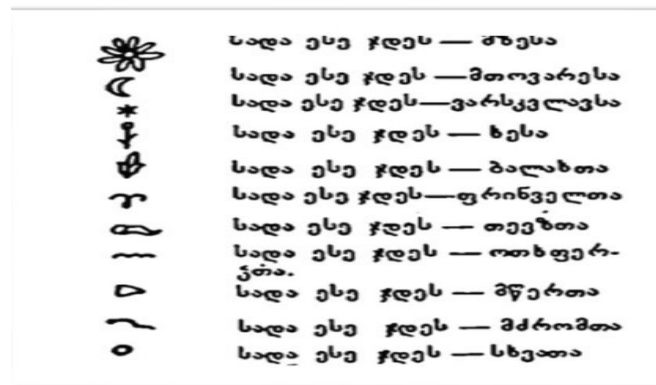


Fig. 1 Special symbols for domains introduced by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani in his *Georgian Dictionary*

quest for revealing the capacity and potential of the Georgian language in the term-formation process is indeed remarkable (Ghlonti, 1983; Uturgaidze, 1999; Karosanidze, 2019; Melikishvili, 2022).

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani and his *Georgian Dictionary* (1991) (end of the 17<sup>th</sup>, beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) hold a special place in the history of Georgian lexicography. He compiled the first complete explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language. The dictionary included a substantial number of terms from different fields. The lexicographer even introduced special symbols to mark terms of different domains, a practice analogous to modern subject labels (see Figure 1). These symbols identified categories such as the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, grass, birds, fish, quadrupeds, insects, reptiles and others (Orbeliani, 1991).

King Vakhtang (1675 – 1737), often referred to as Vakhtang the Scholar, was actively engaged in lexicographic activities in addition to his general literary and scholarly endeavors. His lexicographic legacy includes Persian-Georgian glossaries appended to his translations of Persian astronomical treatises (Margalitadze & Meladze, 2022, p. 34). Their successors, Vakhushti Batonishvili, the Chubinashvilis and others also contributed to the development of Georgian terminology (Chubinashvili, D., 1984; Chubinashvili, N., 1961, 1971; Margalitadze & Meladze, 2022, p. 39).

Active terminological work was carried out in Georgia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was greatly facilitated by various scientific research institutes established under the auspices of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences. Scientific research institutes worked on the development of terminology specific to the disciplines they represented. The Department of Terminology at the Institute of Linguistics has also played a crucial role in proper development of terminological work in Georgia – a contribution that remains substantial to this day (Ghambashidze, 1986; Margalitadze & Meladze, 2022, p. 41).

The study of dictionaries published in Georgia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that there is practically no field of knowledge for which an academic dictionary was not created during this period. Notable examples include:

- *Terminology of Geology*, 1941
- *Russian-Georgian Dictionary of Agricultural Terms*, 1956
- *Legal Terminology*, 1963
- A. Maq'ashvili, *Dictionary of Botanical terms*, 1963
- A. Tchilaia, *Dictionary of Terms of Literary Criticism*, 1971
- M. Kutubidze, *Terminology of Ornithology*, 1973
- *Technical Terminology*, 1977
- *Russian-Georgian Dictionary of Archeology*, 1980
- Ts. Menabde, *English-Russian-Georgian Biology Dictionary*, 1983
- Ts. Gabeskiria, *English-Georgian Dictionary of Mathematics*, 1983
- V. Baratashvili, *Dictionary of Maritime Terms*, 1985
- Iv. Shaishmelashvili, *Military Terminology*, 1987
- *Terminology of Geophysics*, 1988

- *Russian-Georgian-Latin Short Medical Explanatory Dictionary*, 1988
- N. Kereselidze, *Multilingual Dictionary of Sociology*, 1988
- G. Davarashvili, *Dictionary of Market Economy*, 1991

and many others (see Appendix A).

It should also be noted that the majority of these dictionaries is Russian-Georgian or Georgian-Russian and, in general, the Georgian terminology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is greatly influenced by the Russian language.

In 1961, *A Concise Russian-Georgian Architectural Explanatory Dictionary* was published, authored by T. Kvirkvelia. In 1971, the publishing house “Ganatileba” released *A Dictionary of Musical Terms*, compiled by A. Qipshidze and G. Chkhikvadze, followed by *An Explanatory Dictionary of Art Terminology* (Qipshidze, 1985) which comprised terms from the domains of music, cinema, architecture, painting, choreography and circus. Even a superficial overview of these dictionaries reveals the influence of the Russian language on terminology in the field of art, as well as the prevalence of international terms within this domain. Many of these terms have entered the vocabulary of Georgian through Russian, if not directly borrowed from Greek, Latin or French.

In order to illustrate the extent of the influence of the Russian language on Georgian art terminology, a selection of terms from these dictionaries is presented below. The order of the examples is the following: the Russian term, its transliterated form in brackets, the domain in brackets, followed by the Georgian equivalent and its transliterated form in brackets.

- *Авансцена* (avantsena) (theatre) ავანსცენა (avantsena)
- *Арпанета* (arpaneta) (music) არპანეტა (arpanet’a)
- *Дизинволто* (dizinvolto) (music) დიზინვოლტო (dizinvolt’o)
- *Контражур* (kontrazhur) (cinema) კონტრაჟური (kont’razhuri)
- *Клишник* (klisnik) (circus) კლიშნიკი (k’lishnik’i)
- *Колиматор* (kolimator) (cinema) კოლიმატორი (k’olimat’ori)
- *Колонна* (kolona) (circus) კოლონა (k’olona).

## 2 Terms of Architecture

Against this backdrop, Georgian church architecture terminology stands out as a special sphere. It should be noted that, for the nomenclature of various branches of science, the Georgian language predominantly employs international terms of Latin and Greek origin, which entered the Georgian language through various intermediary languages. Examples include: *მედიცინა* / *meditsina* (‘medicine’), *ფიზიკა* / *pizik’a* (‘physics’), *ქიმია* / *kimia* (‘chemistry’), *მათემატიკა* / *matemat’ika* (‘mathematics’) and so on. There are a few exceptions in the language, one of which is the pair of Georgian synonyms corresponding to the international terms *architecture* and *architect*: *ხუროთმოძღვრება* / *khurotmodzghvreba* (‘architecture’) and *ხუროთმოძღვარი* *khurotmodzghvari* (‘architect’). The first part of the word *ხუროთმოძღვრება* / *khurotmodzghvreba* (‘architecture’), *ხურო* / *khuro* is attested in Old Georgian. According to the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language* (EDGL, 1950-1964) and the *Dictionary of the Old Georgian Language* (Abuladze, 1973), its meaning was ‘a carpenter’, ‘a builder, a house builder.’ In Old Georgian there are collocations, such as *ხურონი ხეთანი* / *khuroni khetani* (‘carpenters’, literally ‘artisans of trees’), *ხურონი ქვათანი* / *khuroni kvatani* (‘stonemasons’, literally ‘artisans of stones’). There are also compound words *კირით-ხურო* / *k’irit-khuro* (‘a bricklayer, stone mason’, literally an artisan working with lime), *ხით-ხურო* / *khit-khuro* (‘a house-building carpenter’, literally an artisan working on wood), *ქვით-ხურო* / *kvit-khuro* (‘a stonemason’, literally an artisan working with stone). These examples indicate that *ხურო* / *khuro* worked with both materials - wood and stone - and consequently was an ‘artisan, a builder’.

This term *ხურო* / *khuro* served as a lexical basis for the formation of the name of the field *ხუროთმოძღვრება* / *khurotmodzghvreba* (‘architecture’), which can be interpreted literally as ‘the teaching on building’. It is composed of *ხურო* / *khuro* + *ო* / *t* (plural-forming suffix) + *მოძღვრება* / *modzghvreba* (‘teaching’). The term *ხუროთმოძღვარი* / *khurotmodzghvari* (‘architect’) is

constructed following the same pattern: ხურო / *khuro* + თ / *t* (plural-forming suffix) + მოძღვარი / *modzghvari* ('teacher').

These Georgian words are considered archaic in contemporary Georgian and are replaced by the international equivalents არქიტექტორი / *arkit'ekt'ori* ('architect') and არქიტექტურა / *arkit'ekt'ura* ('architecture'). Nevertheless, the original Georgian terms remain in use in reference to church architecture. For instance, architectural monuments such as Georgian churches and monasteries are still referred to as საქართველოს ხუროთმოძღვრული ძეგლები / *sakartvelos khurotmodzghvruli dzegelebi*.

## 2.1 The Data

The data were collected from the *Concise Russian-Georgian Architectural Explanatory Dictionary* (Kvirkvelia, 1961), which contains up to 1,000 architectural terms. The terms were analyzed in accordance with the Georgian term-formation methods described in the monograph by Georgian terminologist and Head of the Department of Terminology at the Institute of Linguistics of Georgia, R. Ghambashidze (1986), as well as with the term-formation methods employed by mediaeval Georgian scholars, examined in D. Melikishvili's work on the Language and Style of Ioanne Petritsi (2022). As noted in Section 1, Georgian scholars tried to use the resources of the Georgian language for the development of the Georgian terminology and demonstrated remarkable creativity in exploring its capacity and potential for term-formation process. This effort is evident in the *Old Georgian-Ancient Greek Documented Dictionary of Philosophical and Theological Terms* (Melikishvili, 2020), which clearly demonstrates this quest in the rendition of Greek philosophical and theological terminology into Georgian.

The study also employed the etymological method of analysis to trace the periods of attestation of specific terms in Georgian, identify the sources of borrowings, and examine the basis for the selection of defining conceptual features in term-formation. For etymological analysis, the following dictionaries were used: *A Dictionary of the Old Georgian Language* by I. Abuladze (1973), *Georgian Dictionary* by S. S. Orbeliani (1991), *A Historical-Etymological Dictionary of the Georgian language* by B. Gigineishvili (2016), and *An Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language* (EDGL, 1950-1964).

The church architecture terms will be discussed in the following order: Section 2.1.1 will present the terms, denoting architectural elements of the interior of a church; Section 2.1.2 will analyze the terms, denoting architectural elements of the exterior of a church; Section 2.1.3 will examine some tendencies of the Georgian church architecture term formation.

### 2.1.1 Terms, Denoting Architectural Elements of the Interior of a Church

**საკურთხეველი / *sak'urtkheveli*** ('sanctuary').

One of the important parts of the interior of a church is საკურთხეველი / *sak'urtkheveli* ('sanctuary'). In Eastern Orthodox churches this is an altar behind an iconostasis, while in Western Christian traditions 'sanctuary' is called the area around the altar which is considered to be holy. The etymology of the word *sanctuary* is Latin *sanctuarium*, 'a sacred place'. The place is holy because of the belief in the physical presence of God in the Eucharist. The Georgian word საკურთხეველი / *sak'urtkheveli* is derived from the verbal noun კურთხევა / *k'urtkheva*, which means 'consecration, the giving of the sacramental character to the eucharistic elements of bread and wine, i.e. the action of declaring bread and wine to be or to represent the body and blood of Christ'.<sup>1</sup> The word კურთხევა *k'urtkheva* 'consecration' is a native Georgian word, attested in Old Georgian (Gigineishvili, 2016, p. 278). The noun საკურთხეველი / *sak'urtkheveli* 'sanctuary' is formed from this verbal noun by adding the Georgian prefix and suffix სა--ელი / *sa--eli*, resulting in *sa-k'urtkhev-eli*.

Thus, the Georgian term for 'sanctuary' is directly connected and associated with the Eucharist, the Holy Communion, the most important Christian rite.

**სამლოცველო / *samlotsvelo*** ('chapel')

<sup>1</sup>The definition is taken from the OED (n.d.).

**სამლოცველო** / *samlotsvelo* is ‘a chapel, a subordinate place of worship forming part of a large church or cathedral, separately dedicated and devoted to special services’. The Georgian term for ‘chapel’ derives from the Georgian verbal noun **ლოცვა** / *lotsva* (‘praying, prayer’). It is a native Georgian word, attested in Old Georgian. **სამლოცველო** / *samlotsvelo* is formed from **ლოცვა** / *lotsva* by adding the prefix and suffix **სა--ელო** / *sa--elo, sa-mlotsv-elo*. This term also refers to an important Christian rite - prayer, praying.

**საჟამნო** / *sazhamno* is another equivalent of *chapel* in Georgian. It is derived from the noun **ჟამნი** / *zhamni* ‘a collection of some prayers,’ by adding the prefix and suffix **სა--ო** / *sa--o, sa-zhamn-o*. This term is also connected to prayer, an important Christian rite.

**სანათლაჳი** / *sanatlavi*, **ემბაზი** / *embazi* (‘baptismal font’)

The baptismal font is an ecclesiastical architectural element that serves as a receptacle for baptismal water used in Christian rite of initiation both for infants and adults baptism.<sup>2</sup> In Georgian, two terms are used for baptismal font: **სანათლაჳი** / *sanatlavi* and **ემბაზი** / *embazi*. The term **ემბაზი** / *embazi* is an early borrowing from Greek (Gigineishvili, 2016, p. 140), attested in Georgian from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, **სანათლაჳი** / *sanatlavi* is a native Georgian term derived from the verbal noun **ნათვლა** / *natvla* ‘baptizing, christening’. The verbal noun **ნათვლა** / *natvla*, in its turn, originates from the noun **ნათელი** / *nateli* ‘light’ [**ნათელი** ‘light’ > **ნათვლა** ‘baptizing’ > **სანათლაჳი** ‘baptismal font’]. While the term *baptism*, in Latin *baptismus* and Greek *baptismos*, literally means ‘immersion in water,’<sup>3</sup> the Georgian equivalent **ნათლობა** / *natloba* is based on a completely different feature - ‘to accept / to receive light, to become illuminated’. It is noteworthy that no Christian tradition (as a consequence of having a translation of the Bible) with which the Georgian language had contacts during the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries (e.g. Armenian, Syrian, and others) contains a comparable term for *baptism* (Gadilia, 2011, 2017). **სანათლაჳი** / *sanatlavi* ‘baptismal font’ is formed from **ნათვლა** / *natvla* ‘baptizing’ by adding affixes **სა--ავი** / *sa--avi, sa-natl-avi*.

Thus, the terms designating key architectural elements in the interior of a church are closely connected to major religious rites, such as consecration, the eucharist, prayer, and baptism. These terms are derived from native Georgian words and are formed through suffixation and prefixation. This method - the formation of terms from Georgian words by adding suffixes and prefixes - was widely employed by Georgian terminologists both in the Mediaeval period and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Melikishvili, 2022; Ghambashidze, 1986).

In addition to native formations, there are also borrowed terms, denoting certain parts in the interior of a church. These are predominantly early borrowings from Greek and Latin, and they are attested in the Old Georgian language.

**კანკელი** / *k’ank’eli* ‘iconostasis’ is an early borrowing from Greek (Gigineishvili, 2016, p. 234). Later, the Georgian language borrowed another Greek word **იკონოსტასი** / *ik’onost’asi*. Thus, two synonyms exist in Modern Georgian denoting this concept: **კანკელი** / *k’ank’eli* and **იკონოსტასი** / *ik’onost’asi*, defined as “The screen which separates the sanctuary from the main body of the church, and on which the icons or sacred pictures are placed” (OED, n.d.).

Another architectural term, **ნავი** / *navi* ‘nave, main part of a church’ is an early loanword from Latin (EDGL, 1950-1964).

<sup>2</sup> Accessed April 5, 2025, from <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02274a.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Accessed April 15, 2025, from <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=baptism>



Fig. 2 'Neck' of a dome, Samtavro monastery



Fig. 3 A cornice of the 'arm' of the west façade of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta

### 2.1.2 Terms, Denoting Architectural Elements of the Exterior of a Church

Georgian architectural terms denoting parts of the exterior of a church or a monastery are often derived from names of the parts of a human body.

**გუმბათის ყელი** / *gumbatis q'eli* (literally a 'neck' of a dome) - 'a drum under a cupola / a dome, a construction on which rests the dome of a church' (see Figure 2). This architectural term exemplifies the metaphorical extension, where the word **ყელი** / *q'eli* 'neck' acquires a new architectural meaning through resemblance in both shape and structural position (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 34).

**ფასადის მკლავები** / *pasadis mk'lavebi* (literally 'arms' of a façade) – correspond to English 'sides of a façade' (see Figure 3). In this case, the metaphorical change of meaning of a word **მკლავი** / *mk'lavi* 'arm' is also obvious. This change is based on the similarity of structural position (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 34).

**თავანი** / *tavani* (the term is derived from the word **თავი** / *tavi* 'head' by adding the archaic plural-forming suffix **-ნი** / *-ni*) – denotes 'roofing consisting of vaults or a dome.' The term is also the result of the metaphorical change of meaning of the word **თავი** / *tavi* 'head', based on the similarity of the structural position.

**ქუსლი (კამარისა, თაღისა)** / *kusli* (literally, 'a heel of an arch, vault') – is the Georgian equivalent of the English term *coussinet* 'a stone placed upon the impost of a pier for receiving the first stone of an arch' (OED, n.d.). The Georgian word **ქუსლი** / *kusli* 'heel' shifts meaning metaphorically into an architectural term, due to the shared structural position.

**საცრემლე** / *satsremle* (the term is derived from the word **ცრემლი** / *tsremli* 'tear' by adding the prefix and suffix **სა--ე** / *sa--e, sa-tsremle*, literally, 'something for collecting tears') – is a Georgian equivalent of the English term *dripstone*, an architectural feature for handling rain water, a moulding over a door or window which deflects rain. Thus, **საცრემლე** / *satsremle* metaphorically





Fig. 4 Jvari monastery in the ancient capital Mtskheta

represents a receptacle for collecting water, metaphor rooted in functional similarity.

**გამობურცული წარბი / gamoburtsuli ts'arbi** (literally 'a bulging eyebrow') – is the Georgian equivalent of the English term *bolection*, 'a term applied to mouldings which project before the face of the work which they decorate, as a raised moulding round a panel' (OED, n.d.). This term demonstrates another example of the metaphorical change of meaning of the word წარბი / ts'arbi 'eyebrow,' based on a similarity of shape (Geeraerts, 2010, p. 34).

**შუბლი (კიბის საფეხურისა) / shubli** (literally, 'a forehead of a step of a staircase') corresponds to the English term *riser* (of a step of a staircase). The Georgian word შუბლი / shubli 'forehead' is used metaphorically, again due to the perceived resemblance in shape.

These examples clearly demonstrate how terms referring to parts of a human body are metaphorically applied to describe architectural elements of the exterior of a church. These words migrate to the domain of the church architecture as a result of internal creation (Buchi, 2016, p. 349), via metaphorical transfer of meaning grounded in observed similarities of shape, function, or structural position.

The application of the parts of a human body for denoting architectural elements of the exterior of a church conveys the impression that a church is identified with a human being, and is perceived as a man. In this context, an illustrative example is the proportions of the Jvari monastery, the 6<sup>th</sup> century monastery on top of a mountain in the ancient capital of Mtskheta. The proportion of the monastery to the mountain is identical to that of a human head to its body, namely, one seventh (see Figure 4). Thus, it can be assumed that a church is viewed as the house of Jesus, the house of God or as **consubstantiality** which in Christian theology means "identity of substance, of the three persons of the Trinity."<sup>4</sup> It can be also assumed that a church is identified with Christians in general, who are "considered either as His [God's] offspring, as the objects of His loving care, or as owing Him obedience and reverence."<sup>5</sup>

This concept finds also reflection in the definition of the collocation '*the seat of God*' from the dictionary of the 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar Ephrem Mtsire. In his small dictionary, appended to his translation of the psalms, '*the seat of God*' is defined in the following manner: "*the seat of God* is how at a time Heaven is referred to, or at a time the Church is, or at a time a Virgin, or at a time the lich of a man, or anything else, whereupon the Will of God may reside." (Margalitadze, 2022).

<sup>4</sup>Definition taken from the OED (n.d.)

<sup>5</sup>From the definition of *father* in the OED (n.d.), definition 5a.

The metaphorical transfer of meaning from common Georgian words - including those denoting parts of a human body - is also a widely used method employed by Georgian terminologists. For example, the word *cheek* has a technical meaning of 'a side surface of an equipment'; the word *tongue* appears in metallurgical terminology as the name of a part of an open-hearth furnace; the word *pocket* is used in botany and zoology, and *eye* is applied in botany, among other examples (Ghambashidze, 1986).

As mentioned above, borrowing is another method, used in the development of terminology in Georgian church architecture. These loanwords are, in most cases, early borrowings from Greek and Latin.

The term **ეკლესია** / *ek'lesia* 'a church' is borrowed from Greek and has been documented in Georgian since the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Gigineishvili, 2016, p. 139). The same applies to the term **მონასტერი** / *monast'eri* 'a monastery,' another early borrowing from Greek (EDGL, 1950-1964).

There are also loanwords in church architecture terminology borrowed from Turkish and Persian. For example, **გუმბათი** / *gumbati*, 'a dome' according to Gigineishvili (2016, p. 100) is of a Persian origin, while **თაღი** / *taghi* 'arch,' according to the same author, may have been borrowed from Turkish (Gigineishvili, 2016, p. 190).

### 2.1.3 Some Tendencies of the Georgian Church Architecture Term Formation

The study of Georgian church architecture terms reveals the main tendency of term-formation, namely the application of Georgian words in the architectural term-formation process. As discussed in the previous sections, this process primarily includes the derivation of terms through affixation and metaphorical transfer of meaning of common words resulting in their migration into the domain of architecture.

The analysis of church architecture terms is also interesting from the point of view of the selection of a characteristic feature of a concept used for its naming, which creates clear, transparent terms. Some examples are discussed below.

**წოლანა** / *ts'olana* - 'a horizontal beam', is based on the Georgian verbal noun **წოლა** / *ts'ola* ('lying'). As lying implies a horizontal position of a body, this feature is selected for the naming of the concept. To the verbal noun **წოლა** / *ts'ola* 'lying,' the suffix **-ნა** / *-na* is added, *ts'ola-na*.

**ქვაბული** / *kvabuli* - is an equivalent of English *foundation pit*. The term derives from the noun **ქვაბი** / *kvabi*, which meant 'a cave' in Old Georgian. As *foundation pit* implies a large area, dug below the surface level, **ქვაბი** / *kvabi* 'a cave' is selected as the indicator of this feature, a large space, existing under the surface level. The Georgian term is formed by adding the suffix **-ული** / *-uli* to this word, *kvab-uli*.

**ბრჯენი** / *brjeni* (from the verbal noun **მიბჯენა** / *mibjena* 'leaning') is a Georgian equivalent of English terms *support*, *buttress* 'a structure of wood, stone, or brick built against a wall or building to strengthen or support it' (OED, n.d.). Out of many characteristics of this concept, the feature of 'leaning' is selected for the naming the concept and creating the corresponding term.

**ფენილი** / *penili* 'flooring, the action of flooring or laying down a floor from planks.' The characteristic feature, selected for the formation of this term is the verbal noun **დაფენა** / *dapena* 'spreading out'.

**სამრეკლო** / *samrek'lo* - is a Georgian equivalent of the English term *bell tower*. It is based on the verbal noun **რეკვა** / *rek'va* ('tolling'). The characteristic feature of this concept in Georgian is not a bell, but the action of tolling, maybe implying the tolling of bells for Christians.

The same method of selecting one of the characteristic features of a concept for its naming is applied in compound terms, also forming clear and transparent terms. Below are some examples of such terms.

A Georgian term for an *arcade* is - **თაღნარი** / *taghnari*. It is formed from the Georgian equivalent of *an arch* **თაღი** / *taghi* + the word-forming element **-ნარი** / *-nari* 'a place or space covered in many specified items.' The same word-forming element is applied for the formation of the Georgian equivalent of a *colonnade* **სვეტნარი** / *svet'nari*, **სვეტი** / *svet'i* 'a column' + **-ნარი** / *-nari*, *svet-nari*.



Another illustrative example of semantically transparent term formation is **სვეტიბთავი** / *svet'istavi* - a Georgian equivalent of a *capital*, literally 'a head of a column', **სვეტი** / *svet'i* 'a column' + **თავი** / *tavi* 'a head'.

In later periods, Georgian adopted several Latin-origin borrowings to denote the architectural concepts mentioned above, namely **არკა** / *ark'a* (arch), **არკადა** / *ark'ada* ('arcade'), **კოლონა** / *k'olona* ('column'), **კოლონადა** / *k'olonada* ('colonnade'), **კაპიტელი** / *k'apit'eli* ('capital'). As a result, synonymous terms of both Georgian and Latin origin co-exist in the architectural terminology.

Georgian church architecture terminology has preserved some native Georgian words for naming concepts, that have been otherwise replaced in the general language by loan words. For example, **სარკმელი** / *sark'meli* is an Old Georgian word for 'a window', which was later replaced by a borrowing from Persian **ფანჯარა** / *panjara*, and the meaning of **სარკმელი** / *sark'meli*, in literary Georgian, was narrowed to denote the following: 'a small hinged pane for ventilation in a window.'<sup>6</sup> However, the original Georgian word **სარკმელი** / *sark'meli* is preserved in the church architecture to denote the specific windows of Georgian churches and monasteries. This architectural element is so important, that the concept, 'a high narrow window,' was lexicalized in Georgian in one more word **ლანძვი** / *landzvi*, attested in Old Georgian with this meaning.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century many architectural terms were borrowed into Georgian from European languages, mostly via Russian. These terms are connected to Western or Eastern architectural styles or denote architectural elements, characteristic of these styles. For example:

- **არაბესკი** / *arabesk'i* – arabesque
- **ფრიზი** / *prizi* – frieze
- **ფრონტონი** / *pront'oni* – fronton
- **ქიმერა** / *kimera* – chimera
- **ანტაბლემენტი** / *ant'ablement'i* – entablement
- **ბარელიეფი** / *bareliepi* – bas-relief
- **გორელიეფი** / *goreliepi* – gorgon relief
- **ატრიუმი** / *at'rium* – atrium
- **დორიული ორდერი** / *doriuli orderi* – the Doric order
- **იონიური ორდერი** / *ioniuri orderi* – the Ionic order
- **კორინთიური ორდერი** / *korintuli orderi* – the Corinthian order and many others.

While Georgian church architecture terms mostly use Georgian words in term-formation, borrowings reflect Western or Eastern architectural terminology in order to denote different architectural styles or architectural elements characteristic of them.

### 3 Concluding Remarks

Georgian art terminology contains many borrowings from different languages, which entered the Georgian vocabulary at different periods of its development. However, the majority of these terms were borrowed into Georgian via Russian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, Georgian architectural terminology includes many loanwords that reflect different Western and Eastern architectural styles or architectural elements characteristic of these styles.

Against this backdrop, Georgian church architecture terminology stands out as a very special domain, which mostly relies on Georgian language resources for term-formation. Many terms are created on the basis of common words by adding Georgian affixes. Metaphorical transfer of meaning is also customary in the creation of church architecture terms. The percentage of loan words is comparatively small, and they are predominantly early borrowings from Greek and Latin, attested already in the Old Georgian period.

An overview of Georgian church architecture terminology testifies to the potential and ability of the Georgian language to be creatively used in the term-formation process. This is also supported by other studies (Ghambashidze, 1986; Karosanidze, 2019; Melikishvili, 2022; Kvitsiani, 2025). According to

<sup>6</sup> Accessed July 15, 2025, from <https://www.multitran.com/m.exe?s=small+hinged+pane+for+ventilation+in+a+window&l1=1&l2=2>

Kvitsiani (2025, p. 74), approximately 80 per cent of Georgian terms in the period up to the 1980s were formed using Georgian linguistic resources. This tendency differs dramatically from the term-formation of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when a significant influx of English borrowings has been observed across nearly all fields of knowledge (Margalitadze, 2019). Reflecting on Georgian traditional term-formation methods and their study is crucial for developing the proper terminological policy in contemporary Georgia.

Church architecture terms are deeply interwoven with religion. Names of some architectural elements in the interior of a church are connected to the most important Christian rites, such as consecration, the eucharist, prayer, and baptism. The terminology of the architectural elements of the exterior of a church is likewise deeply rooted in the Christian theology. Such interconnection of church architecture and religion can be explained by the early conversion of the country into Christianity which gave great impetus to the construction of numerous churches and monasteries and the development of Georgian architecture. The group of churches and monasteries at Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia, represents an outstanding example of mediaeval ecclesiastical architecture in the Caucasus and testifies to the high level of art and culture in the kingdom of Georgia.

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