

**FOR A QUESTION OF DATING TEMPLES OF MEDIEVAL INGUSHETIA****V.V. Pishchulina**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> Don State Technical University Rostov-on-Don, Gagarin square<sup>1</sup> viktvlad@mail.ru**Abstract**

*Studying of processes of transformations of architectural cultures of the North Caucasus and Northern Black Sea Coast which from 13th century represent the region with the general elements of so-called mountain traditional culture promotes definition of the place in modern common cultural processes of the North Caucasus and Northern Black Sea Coast of each of peculiar options of architectural development of space, to creation of the atmosphere of tolerance of cultures. Results of a research are: identification of borders of interaction of spatial temple cultures of mountaineers of the Ingushetia of the 13-15th centuries in the designated temporary continuum; identification of mechanisms of self - identification of spatial cultures by ethos's of the designated region in the conditions of introduction of new world outlook ideals from the centres of globalization, determination of features of correlation in spatial cultures "high" (world outlook) and "low" (tekhnosferian) architectural development of aspects of space, a place development of ethnos, his house-building creativity In anthropology and ethnography proxemics is aimed at revealing the peculiarities of social and psychological relations, the mentality of an ethnos, community, era. And in that respect the traditional architecture, being a spatial "cast" and the life stile of a nation, is a grateful material to reconstruct spatial and behavioural relations – an important aspect of ethnical mentality and the type of temple culture Medieval Ingushetia.*

**Keywords:** *traditional architecture, Medieval mountaineers temple architecture.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The construction of basilical temples in the northeastern Caucasus is possibly associated with the activities of Kartli and, presumably, Armenia. Two temples of this composition in the Assinovsky Gorge of Ingushetia, Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda, can be attributed by a number of signs to variants such as the Georgian three-church basilica, or the Armenian hall church with a bypass. In Armenia, this type was distributed until the 7th century; in Kartli, three-church basilicas were built until the 14th century.

**MATERIALS**

The temple of Thaba-Erda, located near the Khairakh village in the upper reaches of the As-sy river, on its right bank - is the most outstanding Christian church in Ingush. The temple is located on a small plain in which not so many mountain valleys meet, formed by the Assa River and its small tributaries. On one side of the plain are mountains covered with dense forest, on the other it is closed by tall cliffs of a bizarre shape. From the hillock on which the church and the surrounding burial ground are located, there is a picturesque view in all directions, and you can see the towers of the Hamhi and Targi-ma villages, standing by the Asse River. The temple is clearly visible from all sides and dominates the surrounding space, standing out for its shape, sharply different from the tower ensembles of mountainous Ingushetia. According to E.I. Krupnov, who discovered that the temple is located near the territory of an ancient unexplored burial ground with a number of pagan burials, an ancient sanctuary or holy place previously existed on this site. The best Uzden Vainakh surnames lived in Targim. On certain days, residents of the Hamhi, Galgai, Chul-khoi, Tskhyora and Fyappiy societies flocked to the temple to perform religious rites and resolve controversial issues. Also at the temple of Thaba-Erda was the "mehka khel" - the country's court. The temple of Thaba-Erda, judging by its location and ceremonies emanating from it in the late Middle Ages, was the main temple of the Nahche people during the entire Middle Ages. Probably, in this regard, it did not become part of the cult complex, which received space in this territory in the 10th-11th centuries.

The described principle of the location of the temple over any large object - several settlements, a road, a gorge, in the period X-XII centuries. becomes leading in the North Caucasus. In this principle, the elk also reflects the Christian concept of the universal significance of the Christian temple for all believers, and not just for a specific

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patronymic community. However, the immediate place for the construction of the temple was still determined by the sacred meaning of the previously existing sanctuary or holy place on it. So, at the base of the western wall of the Thaba-Erda narthex there is a cup stone, which probably stood here before the construction of the temple and retained its sacred significance.

Another important trend of this period is the beginning of the formation of the principle of including the Christian church in the previously formed natural-cult ensemble, including pre-Christian sacred objects. The Albi-Erda temple currently exists in a complex with another structure called Aushasel. Aushasel in plan is a rectangle 1.35 x 2.56 m, 2.98 m high, has an internal space, but does not have an entrance. On the outer wall of Albi-Erda, near the entrance, there is a handprint. At the same time, smallpox was considered a disease of fire, fire burned the patient, and the god of thunder and lightning Seli could send fire. In my opinion, in these two objects, the connection of these three deities is obvious - Tusholi, Seli, Albi-Erda, and the ceremony that coped here was probably devoted to protecting children from smallpox sent by the god of thunder and lightning. It is difficult to say when a complex of a Christian temple and a pagan pillar-shaped monument was formed. Perhaps the monument existed by the time the temple was built, or perhaps it was erected later.

### **DISCUSSION**

The temple of Thaba-Erda was described by a number of researchers, starting from the 19th century. From the moment of the discovery of Thaba-Erda to this day, the issue of the exact dating of the temple has not been finally resolved. There are several points of view. The first of them is D.Z. Bakradze and V.F. Miller<sup>1</sup>, B. A. Kaloev and A. I. Shamilev<sup>2</sup>, G.N.Chubinashvili<sup>3</sup> - the temple was built in 9<sup>th</sup> century. The second, proposed by L.P. Semenov<sup>4</sup> and E.I. Krupnov<sup>5</sup> - 12th century, the era of the reign of the Georgian queen Tamara. The date of construction of the temple proposed by V.F. Miller - 830 - is based on a letter from D.Z. Bakradze, who visited this monument in 1872 and allegedly saw a plate with the date on its central bas-relief. However, the slab was not discovered by Engelhardt in 1811, nor by W. F. Miller himself in 1886. E.I. Krupnov, considered the appearance of this entry in the field diary of D.Z. Bakradze, dedicated to Thaba-Erda, just a misunderstanding. D.Z. Bakradze himself, in a letter to Miller, did not insist on the accuracy of the recording<sup>6</sup>. A. G. Shanidze, based on an analysis of epigraphic monuments (at one time a parchment psalter was found in the temple), believes that the temple of Thaba-Erda should be dated no earlier than the 12th century<sup>7</sup>. This opinion was fully shared by L. II. Semenov, E.I. Krupnov, I.P. Shcheblykin and other researchers<sup>8</sup>. M.B. Muzhukhoev, based on available written sources about the internal-political life of Georgia of the 9th-12th centuries, an analysis of the motives of the ornament, the preserved ancient Georgian inscriptions on the bas-reliefs of the temple, came to the conclusion that its construction dates back to the 11th - early 12th centuries - the period of active actions of feudal Georgia (the reign of David the Builder) to spread its influence on the mountainous regions of the Central Caucasus<sup>9</sup>. V.A. Kuzmin, based on the results of laboratory analyzes of solution and wooden elements, dates the Thaba-Erda to the 12th century<sup>10</sup>. The question of dating can be somewhat clarified when analyzing possible samples for this temple.

It is necessary to dwell in some detail on the name "Thaba-Erda," since the debate about its meaning has been going on for a long time. The most common translation is "Two Thousand Saints"<sup>11</sup>. However, B.A. Alborov, on the basis of historical and linguistic analysis, translates it as "Holy God"<sup>12</sup>. He also notes the undoubted connection of Thaba-Erda with the cult of the god of fire and fertility, Gallerda, and even identifies them. Thaba-Erda, built in the Khamkha society, was highly respected. They were sworn in the same way as the Gallerds. The banner issued from Thaba-Erda determined the boundaries of land plots. The festival in the temple, according to B. Dalgat, was held back in 1893<sup>13</sup>. It happened on Krasnaya Gorka. Both Gallerda and Thaba-Erda asked old people for crops with open heads. The supreme court of the "country" - "mehka khel" - also took place here. Residents of the district societies Galgai, Chulkhoy, Tskhiora and Fyappiy converged here to solve the most important cases, such as the election of a prince and the conclusion of a peace treaty with external or internal enemies. The authority and fear of Thaba-Erda was so strong that the locals left bread, hay and other things unattended in full confidence that no one would dare to steal items under his auspices. Late medieval descriptions of the rites indicate that at the sight of the temple, the highlanders prostrated and did not dare to enter it. Only a clergyman entered the temple.

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The temple of Thaba-Erda was related to the god of thunder and lightning, the giver of rain, as can be seen from the following rite recorded by V.P. Pozhidaev. According to him, the bones of St. Vampol lay in the temple of Thaba-Erda. During drought, they were taken out of the grave, put in the river and kept there until it rains. Before lowering the bones into the water and after their removal, the ram was cut. Red banners were taken out of the temple for the ceremony - bay cancer - kept in the clan of clergymen<sup>14</sup>.

All early descriptions indicate the three-apse nature of the temple, and its repeated restructuring, but for some reason most researchers are of the opinion about the original hall nature of its plan<sup>15</sup>. In 1886, Thaba-Erda was examined and described by W. F. Miller. He published a detailed description of the temple with a plan attached. On the inner walls of the altar, E.I. Krupnov notes the remains of red plaster, which was first noticed by L.P. Semenov, who visited this temple in 1926.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere in the altar walls is a plaster of pale pink, which allowed him to suggest that the walls of the altar were decorated with fresco painting<sup>17</sup>. I.P. Shcheblykin in 1926 found the temple greatly changed compared to the descriptions of the XIX century. "The roof vaults collapsed in three places; the walls were very oblique and cracked; the cornice was absent in many places; there were not enough relief figures with which the arch of the western wall was filled. The building was apparently subjected to repeated alterations, which is noticeable in the nature of the masonry of the walls and in the movement of some embossed decorations"<sup>18</sup>. Interesting is the observation of I.P. Shcheblykin that there was a stone fence around the temple, in the western part of which there was an entrance decorated with columns, as the author notes, "in the Georgian style." Similar columns were noted by I.P. Shcheblykin in the processing of the window of the eastern wall, with an arc and relief composition. In 1966, "Thaba-Erda" was examined by V. I. Markovin and engineer G. D. Tangiev. They counted at least four alterations of the temple at different times, and a 57 cm wide cache was found in the northern wall, going inside the wall of the apse and littered with stones<sup>19</sup>. G.N. Chubinashvili concluded about three construction periods in the history of the temple (8th-9th, 10th-12th, 14th-15th centuries)<sup>20</sup>.

In 1970, an archaeological survey before restoration was carried out by G.G. Gambashidze<sup>21</sup>. He also noted the existence of three construction periods. Of the archaeological finds, it should be noted a broken stone cross and a stone font, many fragmented and whole tiles (depicting relief crosses), and antefixes (depicting relief rosettes and crosses) made in matrix forms. An important sign is the presence of pastophoria in the northern aisle, which indicates the pro-service there. Cornice stones are inserted into the walls of the temple, in random places. According to G.N. Chubinashvili, who studied the temple of Thaba-Erda in 1940-1941, these stones served as brackets for the spring supports of the side churches. And, finally, a significant argument in favor of the stated assumption is the three-apse nature of the nearby temple of Albi-Erda. Its three-apsidness is beyond doubt - it is obvious in the appearance of the preserved ruins of the temple and proved by the research of M.B. Muzhukhiev at 1990<sup>22</sup> and V.A. Kuzmin<sup>23</sup>.

The question of dating the first construction period of the temple of Thaba-Erda is interconnected with its composition, but at the same time it is not an indisputable guideline. Three-church basilicas in Kartli were built until the 14th century. Hall churches with a detour in Armenia - until the 7th century. For the 9th century three facts indicate: the golden Byzantine coin of Emperor Michael III (842-867) in crypt No. 3, dating of burials in crypts No. 1-3 of the IX-XII centuries., four discovered by G.G.G. Ambashidze, inscriptions on flat tiles in the ancient Georgian font "asomtavruli," mentioning George bishop: "remember the soul of George the bishop." "In the name of St. George, I am George Bishop..." and others<sup>24</sup>. Thus, the local bishop is mentioned, in addition, there was a sintron in the temple, i.e. it was episcopal. V.A. Kuznetsov in one of his last works notes that M.G. Dzhanashvili, on the basis of some Georgian sources, wrote at one time, that in 830 the Georgians brought the Christian faith to Chechnya and founded a monastery with the bishop's chair in the town of Tkhaba-Yerdy, and considers that "an indication of the bishop's see in the above inscriptions, in the context of mentions of Bishop George allows these sources to be treated with great confidence". The argument of MB Muzhukhiev, dating the temple of the 11th century, is the method of decorating churches with various ornaments made in white stone, which has been observed in Georgian architecture since the 10th century, but has come to naught by the time of Tamara's reign, when fresco painting inside the temples flourishes. Analogies to the reliefs of Thaba-Erda, cited by E. I. Krupnov (in particular,

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Nikorotsminda, built in 1014), are worn by a time earlier than the reign of Tamara. The presence of the so-called "kitor group" in the decorations of Thaba-Erda is a phenomenon absolutely alien to church buildings of the late 12th - early 13th centuries (the time of the reign of Queen Tamara), but very common in monuments of the 9th-11th centuries<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, the following data indicate the end of the tenth - beginning of the eleventh century. First of all, these are two inscriptions "asomtavruli." First: "Christ, exalt the patriarch of the East Mkizek, amen," in which G.G. Gambashidze sees a mention of the Catholicos-patriarch of Georgia of the first third of the 11th century Melkizedek I. Two more: "Christ, forgive (sins) Arsen M" and "Mamadmtarisais" (Catholicos), mention, according to G.G. Gambashidze, Catholicos of Georgia Arseny II (955-980). The ornament of a stone font and cross, as well as the ornament of some carved details (braids, harnesses) are dated as the first quarter of the 11th century<sup>26</sup>. Ancient Georgian manuscripts of psalters from Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda are dated by M.A. Shanidze as 10th - 11th centuries<sup>27</sup>. Burial inventory of crypts No. 4-5 dated to the 11th-13th centuries<sup>28</sup>. Thus, we see that elements indicating the 10th-11th centuries could appear on an already existing monument (tiles were updated, psalters were donated, burials appeared near the temple, a stone font and a cross could also appear during the intensification of the Christianization of Ingushetia from Georgia, which grew stronger in the 11th century). Most of the plot images on the temple are distinguished by local originality and are difficult to date. At the same time, there is a tile with indirect dating of the 9th century with the name of Bishop George. Based on a comparison of all these data, it can be assumed that the first construction period of the Thaba-Erda temple still dates back to the 9th century, and the temple was built in the form of a hall church with a bypass or a three-church basilica by the first missionaries. In the 10th and early 11th centuries the temple was updated, but remained in the same composition. It turned into a hall church with a fence in the 13th-14th centuries. The temple of Albi-Erda, most likely, was built a little later than Thaba-Erda (i.e. at the end of the 9th-beginning of the 10th centuries), judging by the similarity of composition and masonry, as well as the presence of a sintron and a large stone cross. V.A. Kuzmin also came to the opinion about the almost simultaneous construction of the temples of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda on the basis of the results of laboratory studies of structural elements.

E. Shantre reports that on the river. Asse has the ruins of two ancient temples: "Twirlis-Tsminda" (Resurrection) and "Thaba-Erda." It is possible that by the first he meant the temple of Albi-Erda. All researchers have ordered Georgian analogues to the temples of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda. G.N. Chubinashvili, G.G. Gambashidze, saw analogues in three-church basilicas, V.A. Kuznetsov - in a hall churches. Both do not name specific samples. E.I. Krupnov, who dated the temple of the 12th century, tying the construction of Thaba-Erda to the reign of Queen Tamar, cites analogues of the hall temples of Georgia and Abkhazia of the 12th-early 13th centuries.

Other sample variants are possible for the churches of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda. For example, the plan of Thaba-Erda corresponds to the plan of the church of the 6th century. in the city of Dvina, the then capital of Armenia, and also resembles Georgian three-church basilicas. In the church of Dvina, as well as in the temple of Thaba-Erda, on the basis of a graphical analysis of the plan, a construction module equal to 3 m was revealed. A three-meter module was also identified in the three-church basilicas of Georgia of the same period: Zegani - c. Kvela-Tsminda, Vachnadziani - c. Ami-dasturi, Sabue, Obardzi. True, unlike Armenian churches of this type, in Georgian there is no method of dividing the space of the central hall with arches with protruding pilasters, and in c. Thaba-Erda has this particular technique. In addition, in Armenia, as M. Asratyan notes, pastoforia have an apse<sup>29</sup>, in the churches of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda they also exist, while in Georgia an apse is rare in these premises. At the same time, it was not customary in Armenia to connect pastophoria with a bypass gallery (for example, c. in s. Kurtan, Kokhb, Gtevang), and in c. Thaba-Erda pastophoria simply go to the gallery, not separated from it at all. The Thaba-Erda gallery itself is actually not a bypass, since it is separated by a wall from the narthex, and the practice of separating the narthex in Armenian and Georgian churches with a bypass did not take place at all. Such a division appears in the three-church basilicas of Georgia of the 11th century. It is possible that in this temple it appeared as a result of the "reconstruction" of the XI century. In Thaba-Erda there is also another, additional gallery on the south side, also in the east having a chapel, which is a feature of this particular temple. In Thaba-Erda there are such details as a pediment with a tympanum, which depicts the so-called. "Ktitor group," and a paired window with an ornamented

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pillar in the middle on the eastern facade. Such elements are characteristic of the monuments of Armenia of the 5th century. In both temples, stone crosses of significant size were found, which could be installed on thrones in the altar, and in Albi-Erda the cross is equal. The installation of stone crosses on the throne in the altar was characteristic of the early Christian architecture of Armenia and Caucasian Albania, and equal tuff crosses were installed in the temples of the VI-VII centuries. Verkhne-Chiryurt settlement, allegedly built by Armenian and Albanian missionaries.

In the temple of Thaba-Erda, not only transverse arches are made, dividing the space into four parts, but also three longitudinal arches connecting them. Both those and other arches are brought out by letting in masonry stones on both sides, i.e. in the technique of a false arch. To strengthen the structure, puff logs are installed in the river arches, resting their ends on the treasure. As a result, a confidently executed original structural system appeared, of course, which did not have a place in the sample. The temple of Thaba-Erda has a number of design features. The transverse arches are not tied with the main walls, which caused judgments that they are of a later origin. However, the arches are made in the same masonry technique as the main walls, traces of plaster are also marked on them, and, finally, such arches are present in later cult objects of Ingushetia and in objects of neighboring Ossetia, where they are also not made for dressing. Most likely, this is just a constructive technique formed in regional Christian architecture.

The temple of Albi-Erda does not have transverse arches in the central hall, but traces of them are visible in the southern aisle. In addition, from the photo of M.M. Zyazikov it can be seen that the southern nave had an open entrance, decorated with pillars (or one pillar), which also brings it closer to the above analogues in Georgia and Armenia. Albi-Erda lacks a narthex, but this technique took place in the three-church basilicas of Georgia. Although the narthex may be the open courtyard discovered by M.B. Muzhukhoev, attached to the western side of the temple. In addition, the absence of a narthex may indicate that the temple was built later than Thaba-Erda, but not much. In Thaba-Erda, located nearby, there are both a narthex and a font, so their device in Albi-Erda could be considered inappropriate. The northern aisle of Albi-Erda is divided by a transverse wall without an opening into two parts, while the eastern part could be a pastoforium or a memorial. Here it should be pointed out the similarity of the functional scheme of the space with the Illichivsk Basilica. Noteworthy is the significant height of the walls of Albi-Erda and the presence in the upper tier of the southern wall of the central hall of three windows of equal size, having semicircular terminations.

Naturally, the question arises of which temple was nevertheless built earlier. Some clarification in this matter can be given by the analysis of temple structures. Originality and local color, indicating that a local construction team was involved in the construction, notes A.F. Goldstein in Thaba-Erda. In the temple of Albi-Erda there is a different design, technically more perfect, but difficult to implement for an unprepared builder. It lacks false-vault arch-walls supporting the roof. Everything indicates that a classic cylindrical arch was made in the temple, while it is unclear what outline the arch was in it, possibly semicircular, and possibly lancet. At the same time, in both temples, the arches of the ceilings of the altar apses are wedge-shaped semicircular, but in Thaba-Erda the lancet arch of the coating above the main volume rests on the false vault walls-arches.

In 2023 both temples was researched with author method (X-ray)<sup>30</sup> for the dating by lime solutions, Table 1.

**Table 1:** Dating by lime solutions

No	temple	Point in sity	means	Cent
1.	Albi-Erda	narthex	2650	13
2.	Albi-Erda	The center of the apse	3380	11
3.	Albi-Erda	East facade	3030	12
4.	Albi-Erda	North apse	3450	10
5.	Albi-Erda	The eastern facade	2750	13

No	temple	Point in sity	means	Cent
6.	Albi-Erda	The southern apse	2208	14
7.	Albi-Erda	Top of the wall	3012	12
8.	Albi-Erda	The left apse	2795	13
9.	Albi-Erda	The apse	2283	14
10.	Albi-Erda	Coating Front fence	1816	16
11.	Thaba-Erda	The vault	4000	9
12.	Thaba-Erda	inside the North Gallery	3540	10
13.	Thaba-Erda	The Crypt	3800	10
14.	Thaba-Erda	Top of the wall	2400	14
15.	Thaba-Erda	Before the limit	1929	15
16.	Thaba-Erda	The outer wall is south	2029	15
17.	Thaba-Erda	The right apse.	2258	14
18.	Thaba-Erda	Wall.	1758	16

The masonry of buildings is also different. The temple of Albi-Erda is all laid out of neatly hewn slabs, and in Thaba-Erda only the western and eastern walls with pediments are more carefully laid out, in some places there is no dressing in the corners. At the same time, the corners of Thaba-Erda are lined with larger stones, as in tower architecture, while in Albi-Erda there are no large stones in the corners, but the dressing is made more professional. Local features of the architecture of the church of Thaba-Erda include a vaulted crypt on the south side of the gallery and the presence of plaster for painting in the interior. Plaster for painting also takes place in the temple of Albi-Erda. V.A. Kuzmin came to the conclusion about the primacy of the structural systems of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda and the absence of significant rebuilding of the building<sup>31</sup>. If the temples were built in the same time period, the structural systems of both temples were not changed, the temples belong to the same compositional type (three-church basilica or hall church with a bypass), but their planning schemes are completely different, it suggests that they were built on the basis of different samples and different construction teams. They were not samples for each other, and the choice of the same compositional type is explained by functional, liturgical needs. The stone font of Thaba-Erda in the form of a flower bud also has unusual ornaments and shape. In total, three fonts are known in the North Caucasus: in Thaba-Erda, in the Northern Zelenchuk temple and in the temple of the village of Aktoprak Balkaria. Each font is original in shape.

The paired window in the altar wall of Thaba-Erda is similar to examples of Armenian temple architecture of this period, but the peculiar tympanum above it and, especially, the plot sculpture on it give this element an identity. In all likelihood, the Nativity of Christ is depicted here: in the center - one of the Magi, carrying the good news, to the right of the non-nativity - the Mother of God with crossed hands, to whom she gives the baby a Chelo-eyelid in the headdress of an Armenian or Georgian priest. To the left of the Magus is the figure of a man with an animal, apparently with a ram. I would like to note that the figures on this bas-relief and on a number of others embedded in the walls depict people dressed in local clothes and hats, while on the well-known "ktitorsky" group of the main facade the clothes and appearance of people are different. Men of the "ktitor" group have a pronounced Turkic appearance and are dressed in belted clothes also of the eastern type. All characters are built in one plan and turned in face. The figures are squat, in identical dressing gowns, the faces are similar, stylized, wide-cheeked, hair, beards, weapons, wing details - very carefully ousted, in which this panel follows the traditions of art of the peoples of the Caucasus and the East. The panels of the altar barrier from Tsebelda are very close in style and iconography to this panel, the work of undoubtedly local masters, which absorbed, like the "ktitor group" of Thaba-Erda, multiple

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traditions of decorative art of the Caucasus and the East. The plates are dated by L.G. Khrushkova in the first half of IX century. She draws parallels, in terms of the style of images, between the Tsebeldin plates and the silver Nestorian dish from Semirechye, also dating from the 9th-10th centuries<sup>32</sup>. To this can be added a terracotta icon with images of Nestorian priests also from Semirechye (Taraz), dating from the 6th century, with similar squat flat figures in similar clothes<sup>33</sup>. M.B. Muzhukhoev drew analogies with simultaneous sculptural images in Georgian temple building and came to the conclusion that the "ktitor group" on Thaba-Erda, although it has some similarities with the Georgian temple sculpture, is still a somewhat simplified version<sup>34</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION**

The temple of Thaba-Erda had several construction periods and was possibly built earlier (late 9th - early 10th century), as evidenced by the presence of a narthex and font in it, rich decor, as well as the fact that it was this temple and its constructive system served as a guideline for temple building nahche of the subsequent period. Both the Georgian and Armenian temple, which the first missionaries were guided by, could serve as a model for him. They attracted local masters to the construction of the temple, who, while maintaining the layout of the sample, erected the volume in the structures available to them. In the second construction period (10th- beginning of the 11th centuries), the temple underwent some restructuring - it turned into a hall church. The temple of Albi-Erda was built a little later, perhaps when the Georgian church strengthened its position here. The temple, judging by the structures, was built by a multinational construction team of qualified master temple builders. The reference point for him was an unknown Georgian sample, which underwent significant changes, and, possibly, the planning scheme of Thaba-Erda.

The constructive system made in Albi-Erda did not gain further distribution in temples of a later period, due to its difficult feasibility for local masters, and also possibly because the temple of Thaba-Erda had acquired great sacred significance by that time. Judging by the commonality of the structural systems of Tkhaba-Erda and the temples of Ingushetia erected in the subsequent period (13th-14th centuries), in Tkhaba-Erda there was a development of the local structural system of false-vault lancet arches - stiffening ribs, already tested in house-building architecture. Subsequently, this structural element, which may have acquired a sacred meaning (a similar design was used in the completion of pillar-shaped pagan shrines and crypts), begins to be repeated in the pediments of small crypts, where it no longer has a constructive, but decorative and symbolic meaning.

With a high degree of probability, one can assume the participation of Armenian masters in the construction of both churches, as well as the constant exchange of experience in temple construction throughout the North Caucasus during this period, which occurred as a result of the creation of international construction brigades. V.A. Kuzmin, for example, notes the fact of adding whey to the solution (a technique common in Eastern Christian architecture), the uniformity of the tiles of Thaba-Erda and the Musser Church in Abkhazia, the processing of wooden parts with high quality tools. At the same time, the addition of dried hemp as a reinforcing material is a purely local technique.

To the least extent in the considered temples, following samples in terms of architectural decoration is noted. Thrones, obstacles, ku-sang, pilasters and capitals, although in general they corresponded to the models of confessional centers, nevertheless, in each case they differed in originality and local flavor. For example, the temples of Thaba-Erda and Albi-Erda had sintrons. Sintron is considered a part of Byzantine temple building and does not agree with the liturgical situation of the Armenian and Georgian churches of the 10th-12th centuries.

The most important trend of this period in the North-East Caucasus is the beginning of the formation of new typological schemes of basilical churches based on samples introduced from various centers of Transcaucasia, the introduction of regional color in their external forms, structural solutions and details, which indicates the beginnings of the formation of the local architectural direction of Christian architecture.

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