

## RE-FUNCTIONALIZATION OF HISTORICAL CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE EASTERN BLACK SEA REGION

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### Abstract

Re-functionalization of the historical buildings, which have completed their service life, but not the structural functions, is done from the past till now at all times. In the past it is seen that tissues of cities changes in time, apart from the natural disasters and wars. Until the industrial revolution it is possible to state that demolition of the buildings by people is nearly not an evident issue. However, this situation has changed in our day, in case of the provision of the economic viability; construction of new buildings instead of the demolished old buildings has become very common. In Turkey; beyond the re-functionalization of preserved historical buildings, this approach covers quite small place inside the whole construction sector. The churches that viewed in the study were chosen as preserved or probable preserved building group. East Black Sea Region is, in the history of Anatolia, the reason why it is affected by the different Christian civilizations of Greek, Armenian and Georgian, a unique place in terms of church architecture. The churches that were constructed by influencing each other from the early Christian Period till the Modern Age, after wars, migrations, and exchanges, have largely lost their congregations. In the study, 169 church structures that have been found to be able to survive today were examined in site, the present conditions were recorded and the possibilities of re-functioning were investigated. It is aimed to construct a base for the further studies and create awareness about the building stock that does not exist in the literature wholly, regarding to their significance in terms of the tourism and history of the region and Turkey.

**Keywords:** East Black Sea Region, Historical Churches Buildings, Re-Functionalization

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## DOĞU KARADENİZ BÖLGESİ'NDEKİ TARİHİ KİLİSE BİNALARININ TEKRAR İŞLEVSELLEŞTİRİLMESİ

### Öz

İşlevsel ömürlerini tamamlamış, fakat yapısal ömürlerini tamamlamamış eski binaların yeniden işlevlendirilmesi geçmişten günümüze her dönemde uygulanmıştır. Geçmişte doğal afetler ve savaşlar dışında kentlerin dokusunun zaman içerisinde değiştiği görülür. Endüstri devrimine kadar binaların insan eliyle yıkımına pek rastlanmaz demekte mümkündür. Ancak çağımızda bu durum değişmiş, ekonomik uygunluk sağlandığı takdirde eski binaların yıkılarak yerine yeni binaların yapılması olağan hale gelmiştir. Türkiye ise; koruma altına alınabilmiş tarihi binaların yeniden işlevlendirilmesi, toplam inşaat sektörü içerisinde oldukça küçük bir alanı kapsamaktadır. Çalışmada ele alınan kilise binaları koruma altına alınmış veya alınması muhtemel bina grubu olarak tercih edilmiştir. Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi ise tarihsel süreçte Anadolu coğrafyası özelinde Rum, Ermeni ve Gürcülerden oluşan farklı Hıristiyan grupların medeniyetlerinden etkilenmesi nedeniyle kilise mimarisi açısından eşsiz bir bölgedir. Erken Hıristiyan dönemden yakın çağa değin bir birlerinden etkilenerek inşa edilen kilise binaları yaşanan savaşlar, göçler, mübadeleler sonrası büyük ölçüde cemaatlerini kaybetmişlerdir. Çalışmada günümüzde ayakta kalmayı başardığı tespit edilen 86 adet kilise yapısı yerinde incelenmiş, mevcut durumları kayıt altına alınmış, yeniden işlevlendirilme olanakları araştırılmıştır. Türkiye ve bölge açısından gerek turistik gerek tarihsel gerekse kültürel bağlamda değer taşımaları nedeniyle büyük bölümü yazınsal literatüre girememiş bu bina stoku hakkında farkındalık yaratmak ve gelecek çalışmalara altlık hazırlamak hedeflenmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Doğu Karadeniz bölgesi, tarihi kilise yapıları, yeniden işlevlendirme

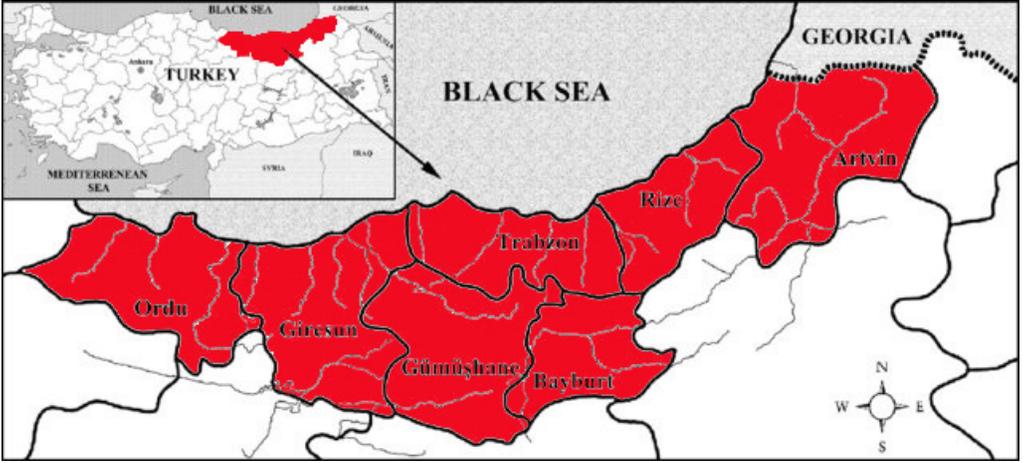
### 1. Introduction

The Eastern Black Sea region involves Ordu, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Bayburt, Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin provinces within the boundaries of today's Turkey in the northeast of the Anatolian peninsula. It is thought that the oldest findings of the people who lived in the Black Sea region that can be reached in historical sources date back to the Paleolithic era (Özsait, 1998, p.35). There were long years of struggles for the Anatolian trade routes between the Romans and the Persians until the establishment of the Byzantine state. The Caucasus and Mesopotamia constantly changed hands and became the battlefield of two

dominant powers. This led to significant impacts on the national structuring of the local community, the Armenians and Georgians. Although Rome showed excellent resistance to Christianity during the first centuries, they liberated Christianity at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. They ensured that it spread throughout the Empire by making it the state's official religion in the following years. Ultimately, the new religion spread rapidly in the Caucasus, mainly Anatolia (Çog, 2015, p. 119).

Along with the wars, invasions, and colonization efforts experienced for thousands of years, many tribes in the Eastern Black Sea region struggled to dominate. However, the period in which Christianity began to spread in the region area was the Roman Empire period. The area site came under the domination of the Roman Empire after the death of King Mithridates VI of the Kingdom of Pontus, which was founded in 298 BC; in 150 BC, the region that was governed as a vassal kingdom for a while was directly connected to the center in 64 AD. The area, which was plundered by the invasion of the Goths in 255, was reconstructed by the Roman Empire in 284 (Albayrak, 2010, p. 83). The problem of designing a type of building suitable for public worship both from functional and symbolic aspects emerged because Christianity became a free religion with the Declaration of Milano in 313 AD in the Roman Empire. The Christians needed indoor spaces to accommodate the large masses who accepted this belief, and they could perform religious ceremonies (Helvacı, 2013, p. 50).

For this reason, many churches, large and small, were built in the region by different cultures. Then, after the 11th century, the Turkish-Islamic civilizations started to dominate the area, and the decrease in the number of church construction and Christian communities after the conquests became more evident after the Declaration of the Republic. As a result, considering the historical processes in the Eastern Black Sea Region, it is inevitable that historical church buildings will remain dysfunctional due to the loss of congregation in the region. This situation makes it possible for historical buildings to be evaluated in terms of reuse. The study aims to determine this building stock formed by hundreds of church structures mentioned in the region and to assess the old buildings in terms of new function selection criteria.



**Figure 1.** Eastern Black Sea Region

In the study, it was determined that 169 church buildings, including provinces, districts, and villages, still exist after the research conducted in the region, including Ordu, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Bayburt, Trabzon, Rize, Artvin, which are named as the Eastern Black Sea Region, shown in figure 1.

**Ordu:** 13 church buildings were determined: Taşbaşı, Düz Mahalle (Düz Neighborhood), Mesudiye Merkez, Samuga, Muzadere, Yason, Yalı, Bolaman, Doğançam, Gököy, Kuşluvan, Yavşan, Şaphane.

**Giresun:** 24 church buildings were determined: Gogora, Catholic, Asarcık, Lice, Göynük 1-2, Turpçu, Evcili, Kamışlı, Çakrak 1-2, Yavuzkema, Kırkharman, Şadı, Erköy, Eserli, Gebe, Ada, Güdül, Maden, Kayacık, Fatih neig., Tamzara, Balcana.

**Gümüşhane:** 97 church buildings were determined: İmera Monastery, Demirkaynak, Binatlı, Vank, Alikinos, Atalar, Hıdırellez, Ünalın, Gümüştüğü, Güzeloluk, Hozevrek, Hutura Hagios, Hutura, Çamlıköy, Dörtkonak, Çınganlı, Çakallı, İşhanlı, Piştov, Terzili, Zurnacılı, Güzeller, İkisü, Kale, Kocapınar, Sidas, Mescitli 1-2, İmera 1-2, Livoba, Mandırđ, Olucak Merkez, Metropolitik (Metropolitan), Hagios Ionies, Aktutan, Aktutan Orta, Hagios Stephanos, Hagios Theodoros, Surp Karabet, Işıkdere, Kayaüstü, Karaağaç, Gavalak, Kayaaltı, Kopmuş, Livana, Lorya, Mancandanos, Mohara, Nanak, Orta yayla, Sarıoğlu, Şamanlı, Zemberek, Ziganetli, Soğuk Pınar, Viranköy 1- 2, Yoğurtlu, Sığırılı, Götürmez, Yaylım, Monastery Meryemana Orta Mahalle, Çevrepınar, Erenkaya, Alınyayla, Alancık, Gorgodos, Verodon, Arılı, Papavere, Panagia Theotokos, Cebeli, Argıt 1-2, Çengelli, Kayadibi, Avcılat, Manat, Baş Mahalle 1

-2, Başhaviyana, Vartlı Karel, Kotanis, Mesehor, Kalis, Uğurtaş, Emir, Manatlı.

Bayburt: 1 church building was found founded under the name of Söğütlü Armenian Church.

Trabzon: 24 church buildings were determined: Hagia Sophia, Pagan Chrysokephalos, Kindinar, Kaledibi, Kaymaklı, Üstündal, Küçük Ayvasıl, St. Andre, Ocaklı 1-2, Çömlekçi, St. Maria, St. Michael, St. Eugenios, Altındere, Aya Gorgor, Cida, St. Philip, St. Elefterios, Kemer kaya, Aşağı temelli, Bağışlı, Aya Yannis, Paparza.

Rize: 2 church buildings were found, including Ocak and Ardeşen.

Artvin: 8 church buildings were found, including Aydın, Barhal, Dolishane, İşhan, Söğütlü, Tekkale, Tibeti, and Porta.

This work continued between 2010-and 2020. More than a hundred of the churches were spotted on-site through fieldwork. The remaining ones were obtained from projects carried out by local administrations, news in the press, scientific studies prepared by official institutions and universities, and sources in the literature. During the process, the situation of all churches continued to be monitored.

Methods such as fieldwork, photographic measurements, and quick evaluation forms were used. Among the historic church buildings to be given new functions, it has been evaluated in terms of function selection criteria suitable for the old facilities listed below.

- Building location / environmental factors,
- Structural status / technical infrastructure,
- Structural size / spatial size,
- Spatial formation / functional arrangement,
- Protection status / legal legislation,

However, among these, the criterion of spatial formation / functional arrangement was not included in the analysis processes in the study since all the structures were church buildings, and the standard of protection status / legal legislation was excluded since all the facilities were under legal protection.

In the study, firstly, the building location analysis was made. It is classified

into three groups urban, rural and uninhabited. Churches that fall into the urban group are located in provincial and district centers. Churches in the rural group are easily accessible by the inhabitants of the villages or around them. The uninhabited group is church buildings far from residential areas and transportation networks.

While analyzing the structural situation of the churches, the quick evaluation form below was used. Especially churches containing one or more collapsed roofs, body wall loss or damage, bearing element loss, vault or dome collapse are named ruins.

**Hızlı Değerlendirme Formu**

Tarih/Yar: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Adı/No: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Adres: \_\_\_\_\_  
 İlçe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 İl: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Durum: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yapı Tipi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılan Bölüm: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Tarihi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Sebebi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Durumu: \_\_\_\_\_

**Kilisenin hâzır veya yokluğunu belirler**

Hızlı Değerlendirme Formu  
 Durum: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Tarihi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Sebebi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Durumu: \_\_\_\_\_

**Kilisenin hâzır veya yokluğunu belirler**

Hızlı Değerlendirme Formu  
 Durum: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Tarihi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Sebebi: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yıkılma Durumu: \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 2.** The rapid evaluation forms

The remaining church buildings were examined in three groups: restored, converted, and neglected.

While determining the structural size, the measurements of the structures were made in the field study, and the other systems were evaluated with the available data and photographic measurement techniques. In the study survey, churches are classified as small, those smaller than 100m<sup>2</sup>, between 100m<sup>2</sup>-200m<sup>2</sup> as medium, and those more enormous than 200m<sup>2</sup> as large to give a general idea. However, small buildings such as rock churches and the Güneşli Chapel measuring 2.5m X 3.2m were excluded from the evaluation.



Figure 3. The Güneşli Chapel and Acısu Rock Churches (Uralı-2)

## 2. Church Architecture in the Eastern Black Sea Region

When the architectural structure of the churches built in the Eastern Black Sea region starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> century during which Christianity was liberated is examined, it is possible to talk about the impacts of different Christian ethnic groups such as Greeks, Armenians, and Georgians living in the region, even Sasanian Zoroasters and Abbasid Muslims in the early period, and the Seljuk and Ottoman Muslim Turks in the late period. However, it is impossible to set clear limits on who was influenced by whom experienced for hundreds of years in the process.

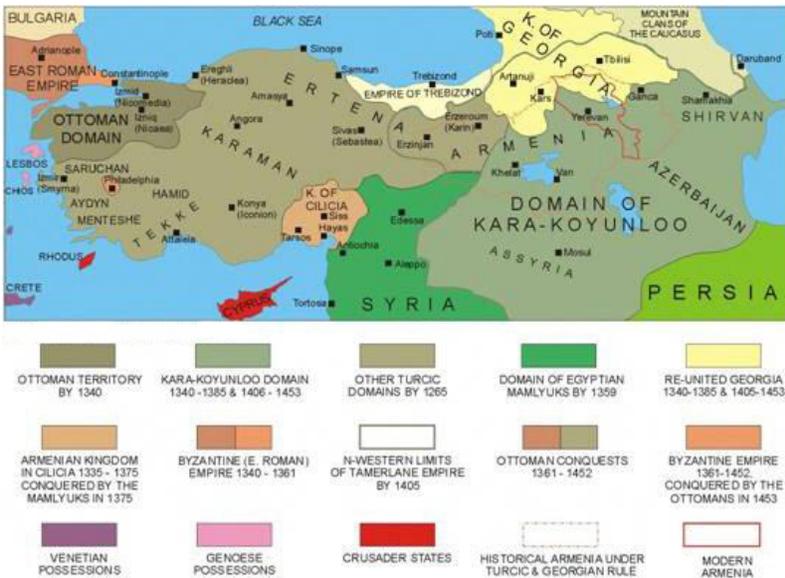


Figure 4. Eastern Black Sea Region Before the Ottoman Period / 14th and 15th centuries (Andersen, 2003)

- Influence of Byzantine Architecture

The religion distinguished the Byzantine Empire, which separated from Western Rome in 395 AD, from the Western Roman Empire. Western Rome continued to have a polytheistic structure for a long time; Byzantine preferred to be an empire dominated by monotheism. Two influential emperors, Constantinus I and Justinianus I, came to the forefront of the early Byzantine religious architecture in Anatolia. The period of Constantinus I constitutes the starting point of Christian architecture because this period witnessed two important critical events. The first is that Christianity was made a free belief in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The second one is that Christianity was made a free belief in the first half of the 4th century, and the second one is that Istanbul (Constantinople) was chosen as the empire's capital.

Along with the liberation of Christianity, religious architecture began to develop in this period. Byzantine Architecture was shaped based on the Christian faith by taking the temple model (Megaron) from Greek Architecture (Basilica). The Byzantine Empire was strengthened during Justinianus I in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It extended its borders from the Caucasus to the North African coasts and Spain, Italy, and the Danube river banks in Europe. The period of Justinianus I was described as the most magnificent and brilliant period of the Byzantine period. During this period, new church constructions continued along with the rapidly progressive religious architecture. Furthermore, some religious buildings were repaired by the architects of the period (Helvacı, 2013, p. 67).

Consequently, Byzantine architecture began with the power of Constantine I in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and simplicity and clarity became the essential virtues while the Byzantine architectural style was trying to overcome everything with space organization, the articulation of interior and exterior surfaces, and finally, the formulation of architectural details-decoration (Buchwald, 1999, p. 121). Byzantine architecture, which lasted for more than a thousand years between the conquest and collapse of Istanbul in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was the creator and practitioner of many new church plan schemes in this process. When Byzantine church architecture is examined, it is possible to classify it as follows.

- Single Nave Buildings

- Basilicas

- \* Transverse Nave Basilicas

- \* Tower-Like Raised Basilica

\* Domed Basilica

- Centrally Planned Buildings
- Greek Cross Planned Buildings

Istanbul, which reached the position of the “World Capital” with its economic and social importance during the Byzantine period, was also the center of “Orthodoxy, “ which constitutes an essential dimension in the religious debates in the Christian world. Istanbul gained such importance that it affected the “Holy Rome,” which led to the breakdown of the balance among the Christians. While the Latin invasion in 1204 (Karaca, 2008, p. 96) initiated to destroy the two centralities in the Christian world, the Empire weakened after Constantinople was seized and plundered by the Latins, which led to the emergence of a new Byzantine state on the southern shore of the Black Sea, which would last two hundred and fifty years (Hamilton, 1956, p. 12). In other words, the Komnenos dynasty of the Byzantine heirs who escaped from Istanbul dominated Trabzon and its surroundings with the support of the Georgian Kingdom. It used the name “emperor” by claiming that it had the right to be the Emperor of East Rome (Öztürk, 2011, p. 54). This state, called the Trabzon Empire of the Komnenos, firstly showed commitment to the Ilkhanids and then to Akkoyunlus and maintained its existence in the region until the conquest of Trabzon the Ottomans in 1461 (Umar, 2000, p. 115).



**Figure 5.** Trabzon Haghia Sophia Church / (The Komnenos) Trabzon Empire Period

On the other hand, if the subject is approached in terms of church architecture in the region, the relative position of Armenia in the history of Byzantine Architecture is an issue that causes problems that are not easy to solve. Armenian architecture is not only a provincial branch of Byzantine. However, it is not easy to evaluate the mutual effects they applied to each other. Some experts have argued that Armenian architecture owes a lot to Byzantine, although it was national and individual. Some experts said that the movement progressed in the opposite direction and that Armenia shaped the art of the empire art in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hamilton, 1956, p. 44). For example, Byzantine architecture processed and used the building materials, which were considered the most appropriate everywhere by them, in the most appropriate way. In the eastern part of the Black Sea, only regularly worked face stones in buildings (Eyice, 1988, p. 45) can be associated with the Armenian architecture using only worked face stones in the church's construction.

On the other hand, it has been suggested that Armenian churches from the 7<sup>th</sup> century belong to the same architectural movement as the post-Justinian buildings in Istanbul. Still, there is an uncertain relationship between the two groups (MacDonald, 1985, p. 16). Consequently, the architecture of this period shows the diversity of regional effects that cannot be described in detail here. The Trabzon Empire was stuck between Georgia towards the east and the Turks in the south and exposed different influences in different political configurations. The Venetian and Geneva Latins influenced the region as temporary conquerors bias t also as permanent and fashionable commercial imperialists. Another factor is that the two great cultural blocks of the period, Roman Catholicism, and Islam, had more advanced architecture than Byzantium. Although the influence of the Seljuks on Byzantine architecture is very slight, it should not be forgotten that the Seljuk mosques, madrasahs, and hans in Konya, Kayseri, Sivas, and Divriği in the 13<sup>th</sup> century went beyond many improvements and technical competence made by Byzantine from architectural aspects since the Justinian period (Mango, 1978, p. 77).

- Influence of Armenian Architecture

The Armenians were mainly settled in Armenia, Including the Boston Creek from the Aras River up to the Upper Dicle River in the north, on the eastern border of the Byzantine Empire between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. From the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, the Sasanians wanted to make Zoroastrianism official, while Byzantines wanted Christianity to spread in Armenia. The region was divided

between the Byzantines and the Sasanians at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the conflicts between the two forces continued until the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the region fell under Abbasid domination during the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, the Armenians protected their limited feudal structure attached to the great empires. As of the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century, the pressures increased, and disturbances emerged in the region. During the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, the Byzantine emperors connected with the Armenian principality families and slowly moved toward the East. The region area, which was kept under control by the Byzantine Empire in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, came under the domination of the Seljuks in the second half of the same century.

Along with the power of the region by the Byzantines, the Armenians began to spread in Central Anatolia, and the Cilicia region and established. They establish the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. They kept living as independent beyliks until the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century (Sağır, 2014, p. 183).

In the Early Medieval Armenian Architecture, vaulted basilica, centrally planned domed church, and cross-planned church plans with three abscissas were applied. While single nave and simple vaulted basilicas are observed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, domed basilicas are found in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. A significant revival was experienced in the Armenihed, along with the initiation of centrally planned domed churches in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the use of central space, dome, and vault. Wealthy landowners and faithful authorities initiated this revival; rich landowners and proper authorities began this revival with high dignity and bishops and princes. Centrally planned domed churches were also applied in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, and cross-planned churches with three abscissas were also built in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sağır, 2000, p. 21).

The end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries were great centuries in the Armenian church architecture. It is highly productive with many buildings and is incredibly rich in terms of the diversity of the central church plan. However, as has been previously stated, it is still difficult to define the place of this architecture within the Roman, Early Christian Syria, Early Byzantine, and Sassanid buildings (Krautheimer, 1996, p. 12). In the Late Medieval Armenian architecture, single-nave domed churches were found in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the four-leaf clover plan type was. The four-leaf clover plan type observed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century was frequently applied from the early Christianity period to the end of the Middle Ages (Sağır, 2008). In Armenian church architecture, rectangular face stones were used in buildings. Rectangular face stones were used in Armenian church architecture until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. After this century, smooth

stone blocks were shaped with the dynamism of facades, and stonemasonry gained importance (Sağır, 2000). Consequently, although there is not too much work or information left from the churches and monasteries built or used by the Armenian society in the Eastern Black Sea region, the Armenian church architecture had considerable influence on the Byzantine Georgian church architecture.



**Figure 6.** Bayburt Varzahan Armenian Church / 12<sup>th</sup> (Url 3)

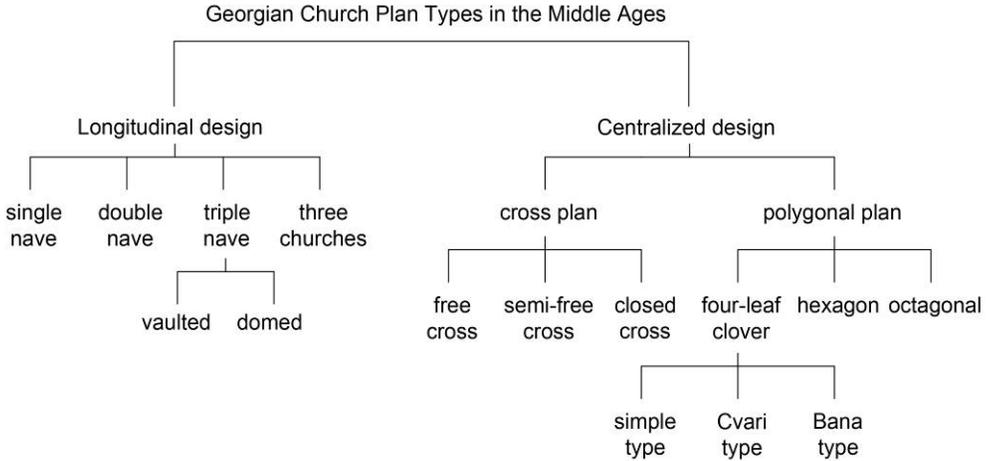
- Influence of Georgian Architecture

The Georgian beyliks-kingdoms that had constantly changing historical geography and boundaries, sometimes had warlike and sometimes peaceful relations with their neighbors and strong powers but that always stayed faithful to customs, first met with Christianity through the Antiochian clergy members of the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Christianity spread among the Georgians with the incitement of Emperor Constantine I. Then, the Georgians established their church organizations (Çog, 2015, p. 132). In general, researchers have discussed Georgian religious architecture within three periods. They called the period from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century the “Early Period,” the period until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the “Transition Period,” and the period that lasted until about the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century “Golden age.”



**Figure 7.** Artvin-Yusufeli İşhan Church/10<sup>th</sup> century Transition Period

The spatial organization of the Medieval Georgian churches, the great majority of which belonged to monasteries, was based on two general principles; spaces were planned longitudinally in one of them. They were placed around a center in the other one. The first attempts of the longitudinally developed basilica plan type may have been made by trying to comply with the examples in the Holy Lands. However, they have some characteristics different from those in Syria, Anatolia, and the West, and it is observed that they could not fully implement the “longitudinal” development. The variations of the basilica plan type in which the spaces are planned longitudinally are grouped by internal segments. Based on the basic principle of placing the areas around a domed center, the primary preliminary plan type develops in two different ways, including a cross-plan and a polygonal plan (Kadiroğlu and İşler, 2010, p. 57). It is possible to classify the Georgian churches built in the Middle Ages.



**Figure 8.** Georgian Church Plan Types in the Middle Ages (Kadiroğlu and Isler, 2010)

However, just as the fact that the political histories of the Armenians and Georgians went parallel as a result of staying in the same geography and being exposed to the same external influences, the cultural interaction also went parallel during the relevant centuries. The relations between the Armenians and the Georgians gained a new dimension along with the spread of Christianity. The Armenians considered themselves the religious leader of the Caucasian Christians led to problems among the Georgians. On the other side, church architecture became widespread. Many churches were built in the two countries, and a unique church architecture developed in the Caucasus and the Byzantine influence. It is accepted that this style of Georgian and Armenian architecture with a complex architectural plan, in which geometric elements, conical or pyramidal dome shape come to the forefront, has Helen, Sassanid, and even Sumerian reflections as Byzantine influences. However, this has led to debates regarding the ownership of some churches and monasteries that have been ongoing between the two communities since the Middle Ages. In particular, to whom the religious architectural works built in the region in the upcoming years during which great invasions and intense migration movements caused cohesion between the two communities have often been an issue of conflict (Çog, 2015, p. 122).

Consequently, the Georgian population living under the dominance of the Georgian-origin theocratic Tao-Klarjeti Beylik, which was primarily established around Artvin in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and built more than ten large-scale monasteries and churches in the region, largely abandoned the area with the withdrawal of

Tbilisi from the Arab Emirates in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the monasteries were able to continue their activities until the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Bayram, 2005, p. 42). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greeks were the most crowded Christian community. However, the Greek population in the area tended to decline. As a result of the internal migration movements, the migration in the Caucasus region, and some social, political, and economic developments, along with the fact that the regional area is coming under the governance of the Ottomans. The Armenians constituted the second crowded Christian community after the Greeks within the demographic structure of Anatolia. However, their situation in the region was more fragmented than the Greeks. These Armenians were also divided into different sects such as Gregorian, Catholic, and Protestant among themselves, although they were Christians like the Greeks. This situation emerges as an issue that makes it challenging to address them compared to other religious communities (Kuş, 2016, p. 16). After the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the Christian population in the region further decreased, and many churches in the area were abandoned to their fate due to the loss of community and function.

### **3. Refunctioning of the Churches in the Eastern Black Sea Region**

Like many other religious buildings, Church buildings have repeatedly lost their functions for centuries by losing their communities for different reasons, such as wars, migrations, religious and sectarian divisions, or the construction of newer and larger churches. In 1980, for example, 1000 churches out of about 18000 Anglican churches in England failed to function due to the population change experienced towards the industrial centers in the country (Cantacusino and Brandt, 1980, p. 80). Regardless of the reason, historical churches, which have lost their function, can be re-functionalized as other structures and brought into daily life. In this field, it is possible to find examples of churches that have been functionalized in a broad framework from private houses to the contemporary art center in different parts of the world. For example, the Gothic-Romanesque style San Martino Cathedral located in Lucca, Italy, with ongoing construction activities with fittings-decorations for more than 1000 years, was functionalized as a museum where religious works were exhibited in 1992 (Powell, 1999, p. 111).

Similarly, the Santa Monica La Real monastery, built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Najera, Spain, began to provide service as a religious works museum and library in 1987 (Robert, 1991, p. 65). St. George's church, built-in 1814 in Edinburgh, Scotland,

was transformed into a research center where important documents were stored, preserved, and exhibited in 1970 (Cantacusino, 1975, p. 59). In another example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baptist Church, designed in 1807 in Boston, USA, became a structure including meeting houses, offices, and apartments. However, these buildings are large-scale, structurally well-established facilities in city centers. St. Oswald's church in Fulford, England, can be shown as an example of the re-use of small-scale historic churches in rural areas. The church built before the 13th century was functionalized as a private house after it became out of use in 1973 (Cantacusino, 1989, p. 21). Nevertheless, the old church buildings in rural areas are pretty disadvantageous compared to buildings in urban areas because they are not used for a long time, are open to external destruction, and lack resources (Cantacusino and Brandt, 1980).

The situation shows similar characteristics when it is examined explicitly in terms of Turkey. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the conquests, wars, migration, and early events that took place for a long time and the loss of the Balkan and Caucasus geography, the Christian population in Anatolia significantly decreased. The Anatolian peninsula churches lost their communities and functions, especially in Istanbul. The churches that have remained relatively solid in city centers in time among these churches have been used for many different public requirements such as cinema (Burdur-Kavaklı Greek Church-in past), prison (Giresun-Gogora Church), fire department (Ordu-Düz Mahalle Church), especially mosque. In the period after 1990, cultural uses like museums, meeting rooms (Gaziantep-Kendirli Church), and culture centers (Ordu-Taşbaşı Church) came to the forefront (Alan, 2007, p. 116). In terms of church structures and architecture, the Eastern Black Sea Region is one of the most significant geographical regions of Anatolia. In the region, which remained under the influence of the Byzantine, Armenian, and Georgian church architecture due to its geographical position, numerous church structures have survived to date.

Refunctioning old buildings are different from classical intervention forms. It includes an existing building in the architectural design process again, and it is applied differently from the usual architectural design process. Instead of the function-based environment-building-space design, a search arises for a function suitable for the existing space, spatial organization, environmental factors, urban requirements, social and economic factors, restoration principles, and laws/regulations (Aydın and Yıldız, 2010, p. 10). However, it is impossible to precisely determine the criteria for selecting an appropriate

function for old buildings. The difference of buildings from each other with unlimited probability inhibits making clear judgments because functioning projects are building-specific as in other processes of architectural project development. It is impossible to set forth clear methods and put them into practice within certain rules. The criteria for selecting an appropriate function for old buildings stated among the historic church buildings to be functionalized below can be gathered under the following headings:

- Building location / environmental factors,
- Structural status / technical infrastructure,
- Structural size / spatial size,
- Spatial formation / functional arrangement,
- Protection status / legal legislation,

However, among these, the criterion of spatial formation / functional arrangement was not included in the analysis processes in the study since all the structures were church buildings, and the standard of protection status / legal legislation was excluded since all the facilities were under legal protection.

### **3.1. Building location/analysis of environmental factors**

The location of the building to be functionalized affects the selection of the function directly. The variety of users in urban areas and their excessive number multiply the functional alternatives. While functioning buildings in rural areas are relatively more difficult to access than buildings in urban areas, it is important who will be users and which function they will prefer the building for. On the other hand, whereas any environmental data is significant for selecting the process, ecological problems decrease when rural areas are approached, and ecological factors increase in urban areas. The church structures examined in the Eastern Black Sea Region were classified into three urban, rural, and uninhabited groups. Churches in the urban group are those in the centers of provinces and districts. Churches in the rural group are easily accessible by the settled public in villages or their vicinities. The uninhabited group is the church buildings far from settlement areas and transportation networks.



**Figure 9-10-11.** Giresun Catholic, Gümüşhane Yağlıdere, and Gümüşhane Karmut Churches

The Catholic Church used as a library for children in the center of Giresun today in Figure 9, the church in Yağlıdere village of Merkez district (Central district) of Gümüşhane in Figure 10, and the uninhabited church, which had been named as Karmut before, near Kocapınar village of Merkez district (Central district) of Gümüşhane in Figure 11. were given as examples for a better understanding of this classification. As a result of the field study, 21 church buildings in urban areas, 37 church buildings in rural areas, and 111 uninhabited church buildings.

**Table 1.** Churches, according to their locations

Region	Urban	Rural	Uninhabited
Ordu	5	1	7
Giresun	2	10	12
Gümüşhane	0	17	80
Bayburt	1	0	0
Trabzon	13	3	8
Rize	0	0	2
Artvin	0	6	2

### 3.2. Analysis of Structural Status

The structural status of the building is essential in terms of the primary goals of reuse due to construction costs. Especially for the building stock, apart from historic buildings under protection and buildings with socio-cultural values, the completion of economic life is the primary condition for functioning. Functioning cannot be mentioned if the building is structurally damaged and the rehabilitation cost is higher than the reconstruction cost (Haştemoğlu, 2013, p. 98). In historic buildings under protection, the structural status directly affects the functioning process since it influences the size of the required

economic source and supply duration. The church structures examined in the study were structurally classified into four groups as follows: restored, transformed, neglected, and ruined. While making this classification, rapid vision assessment methods were used because quick vision assessment was designed to use the skills and experiences of other people with experiences similar to civil engineers. It aims at examining and assessing buildings in the area rapidly and with minimum human power (Toker, vd., 2006).

In the study, buildings that especially have one or a few damages, such as roof collapse, the loss or damage of the main wall, the loss of the bearing element, vault or dome collapse, were determined through the forms prepared for each church. Below, Zuvaklı Church in Gümüşhane province was given as an example of the loss of the main wall in Figure 12, Zemberek Church in Gümüşhane province was given as an example of the roof collapse in Figure 13, and Uğurtaş Church in Gümüşhane province was given as an example of the loss of the dome in Figure 14.



**Figure 12-13-14.** Zuvaklı, Zemberek and Uğurtaş Village Churches

The remaining 50 church buildings were examined as restored, transformed with structured change, neglected restored, transformed with structured change, and failed in three groups. Below, restored Düzmahalle Church in Ordu province in Figure 15, St. Philip Church in Trabzon province transformed with structural change in Figure 16, and neglected Olucak İmera Church in Gümüşhane province in Figure 17 are presented.



**Figure 15-16-17.** Zuvaklı, Zemberek and Uğurtaş Village Churches

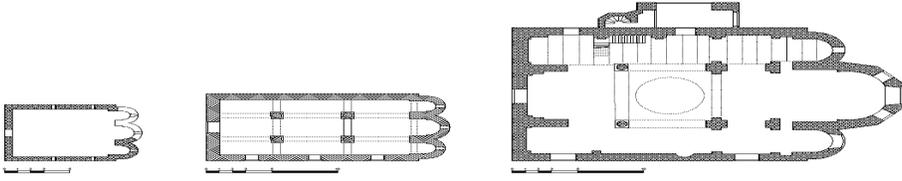
As a result of the examination, 119 church buildings were characterized as ruins. Eighteen church buildings were restored by preserving their unique qualities, six church buildings that lost their exceptional architectural quality during functioning, and 26 neglected idle church buildings were determined.

**Table 2.** Churches, according to their structural status

Region	Restored	Converted	Neglected	Ruin
Ordu	4	1	2	6
Giresun	2	2	4	16
Gümüşhane	0	0	12	85
Bayburt	0	0	1	0
Trabzon	10	3	6	5
Rize	0	0	0	2
Artvin	2	0	1	5

### 3.3. Analysis of Structural Size

Size can be another criterion to be considered while functioning old buildings. What is tried to be explained with the concept of size is both the total size of the building and the size of the spaces. The need for the size of the new function to be attributed to the old building must be as appropriate for the existing building as possible. On the other side, the desire to look for new closed spaces and obligations resulting from roaming lead to the closure of open and semi-open areas, and size differences are tried to be eliminated in this way. However, it may result in the loss of the spatial qualities of the building (Madran and Özgönül, 2005, p. 50). When the church structures included in the study were examined, the structures smaller than 100m<sup>2</sup> were considered minor, the arrangements between 100m<sup>2</sup>-200m<sup>2</sup> medium, and the systems larger than 200m<sup>2</sup> large; the classification was made accordingly.



**Figure 18.** Gümüşhane Zembelek, Gümüşhane Atalar, Trabzon St. Eugenius Churches

It was aimed to show the structural size classification in a better way by presenting above the plans of Zembelek Church in the Krom Valley of Yağlıdere village of Gümüşhane, Atalar Church in Aydınlar Neighborhood of Atalar village of Torul district of Gümüşhane, and St. Eugenius Church in Yenicuma Neighborhood in the center of Trabzon in Figure 18. After the field study, when the churches in the region were examined, 17 large, 48 medium, and 104 small church buildings were determined.

**Table 3.** Churches, according to their structural sizes

Region	Big	Medium	Small
Ordu	1	6	6
Giresun	1	9	14
Gümüşhane	2	23	72
Bayburt	1	0	0
Trabzon	6	8	10
Rize	0	1	1
Artvin	6	1	1

#### 4. Research Findings

When the existing church structures in the Eastern Black Sea Region were examined, the results showed how determinative the criteria of location/ transportation / environmental factors, structural status / technical infrastructure, and structural size/spatial size were in terms of functioning.

**Table 4.** The Refunctionalized Churches

Region	Church	Date of Cons.	Size			Structural Situation			Location		Current Func.
			Big	Med	Small	Res.	Con	Neg	Urb.	Rur.	
Ordu Merkez	Taşbaşı	19.cent.	x			x			x		Cultural Center
Ordu Altınordu	Düz Mahalle	19.cent.	x			x			x		Cultural Center
Ordu Mesudiye	Merkez	20.cent.		x		x			x		Cultural Center
Ordu Mesudiye	Doğançam	?			x		x			x	House
Ordu Ünye	Yalı	19.cent.		x		x			x		Cultural Center
Giresun Merkez	Gogora	18.cent.	x			x			x		Museum
Giresun Merkez	Katolik	19.cent.				x			x		Library
Giresun Ş.karahisar	Turpçu	19.cent.		x			x			x	Mosque
Giresun Ş.karahisar	Evcili	19.cent.		x				x		x	Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	Ayasofya	13.cent.	x			x			x		Museum
Trabzon Ortahisar	St.Andre	11.cent.			x		x		x		Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	Kindinar	6.cent.	x				x		x		Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	St. John	13.cent.	x			x			x		Cultural Center
Trabzon Ortahisar	Çömlekçi	14.cent.		x		x			x		Executive
Trabzon Ortahisar	St.Maria	19.cent.	x			x			x		Church
Trabzon Ortahisar	St.Elefterios	15.cent.	x				x		x		Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	Büyük Fatih	12.cent.	x				x		x		Mosque

Trabzon Ortahisar	St. Eugenius	13.cent.	x		x	x	Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	St. Philip	13.cent.		x	x	x	Mosque
Trabzon Ortahisar	St. Anna	9.cent		x	x	x	Executive
Trabzon Sürmene	Cida	19.cent.	x		x		x Mosque
Artvin Yusufeli	Barhal	9.cent.	x		x		x Mosque

Only St. Maria Church in Trabzon maintains its unique church functionally in the region. St. Maria Church in Trabzon supports its particular church function in the area. Ten out of 21 functionalized churches are used as mosques, seven are used for cultural purposes, two are used as administrative buildings, and one is used as a house.

In the process, starting with the conquest of the region by the Turks, the function mainly attributed to churches is their use as mosques due to the conquest tradition and the need for praying space, which emerged immediately. However, this approach, which was applied in both urban and rural areas, was relatively temperate and in favor of protecting the unique structure in some examples. Still, the impressive church architecture became fully unidentifiable in other models. Contrary to church buildings which were placed in the East-West direction in line with Christian beliefs, the positioning of mosques in the order of the Kabaa led to a change in the entrance of the buildings; in some churches, the main gate was closed by walling, and a gate was opened by enlarging the window gaps if no gates were available on the lateral facade. Spaces such as lee and narthex were added to these areas.

Contrary to urban areas, it is common to put up a wall by demolishing apses in rural areas.



**Figure 19-20.** Gümüşhane-Kürtün Baş Neighborhood Primary School/Mosque

The population and economic status of the village also caused these buildings, which had been used as mosques for some period, to be abandoned over time. Furthermore, architectural elements such as minaret, minibar, and mihrab added to churches over time were up to the applying person. However, it was observed that functioning as a mosque enabled the oldest historic church structures in the region to survive to date.



**Figure 21-22.** Trabzon Ortahisar Church/Mosque and Artvin-Yusufeli Barhal Church/Mosque

On the other hand, legal legislation-protection status and source supply were determinative for quality applications in the city centers. The second refunctioning primarily observed in the region is cultural use. The benefits of service ices such as museums, cultural centers, art centers, and libraries have accelerated, especially in the 2000s, with the efforts of local administrations and the Ministry of Culture. The everlasting steps of functioning towards the need only for using the structure as a prison and fire station have been replaced by the restoration with contemporary restoration techniques and selecting the appropriate function with minimum structural intervention. Activities that

have increased in urban areas have not been initiated in rural areas yet.



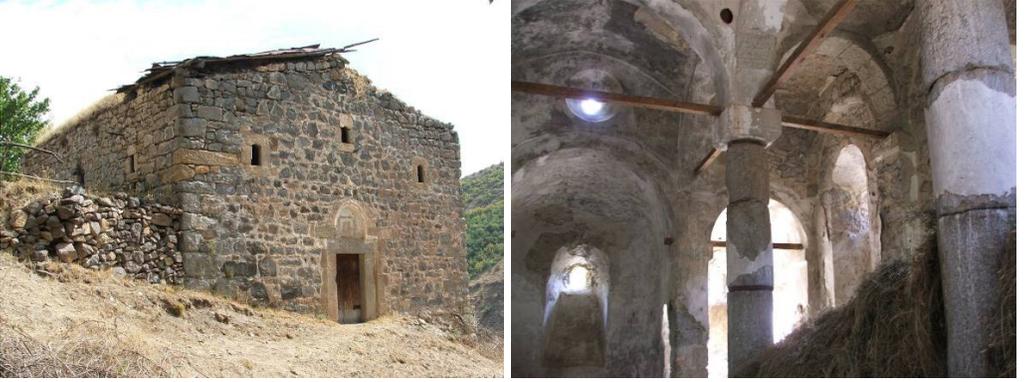
**Figure 23-24.** Giresun Gogora Church/Museum Ordu Taşbaşı Church/Cultural Center

In the region, two church buildings were restored and began to be used for administrative purposes. The first one is Küçük Ayvasıl Church, which is located on Kahramanmaraş Street in Trabzon; it is a Byzantine basilica with three naves and three apses, affiliated to the Museum Office today. The other one is a Byzantine basilica covered with vaults and has three cores and three apses dating back to the 14th century (Horuloğlu, 1983, p. 68); it is located in Merkez (Center), Çömlekçi Neighborhood of Trabzon and used as the mukhtar's office and a reading hall today.



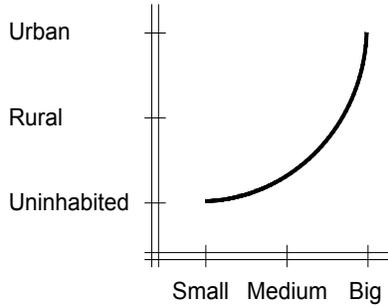
**Figure 25-26.** St. Anna and Çömlekçi Churches in Trabzon

Under the title of other uses, the church buildings, especially in rural areas, can be mentioned. A part of these buildings had been used as primary schools before initiating mobile teaching in the region. Then they remained functionless again when the need for them disappeared. In some examples of private property, church buildings were used as houses. These abuses led to the complete loss of unique qualities of the buildings with the additions constructed. In many samples, these neglected buildings were used as warehouses and depositories in agricultural activities. However, none of these uses were the applications to be considered functioning.



**Şekil 27-28.** Gümüşhane- Gülaçar Village Ekmekçili Neighborhood / Barn

As a result, location/transportation/environmental factors and factors such as structural status/technical infrastructure and structural size/spatial size were determinative in terms of quality applications in refunctioning. From rural areas to city centers and from small church buildings to large church buildings, quality functioning applications are observed to increase.



**Figure 29.** Location / Structural size relation

Moreover, the primary preference for relatively and structurally better buildings (mostly buildings with newer dates, 19-20th centuries) in functioning puts forward another research question regarding the concept of functioning for protection. Almost all tiny, little church buildings in relatively non-usable conditions in abandoned areas are still idle.

## 5. Conclusion

Most of the church buildings in the Eastern Black Sea geography that started with the liberation of Christianity by the Roman Empire century that century that were that were influenced by the Romans, Latins, Persians, Arabs, and Turks

from social, cultural, and architectural aspects, and the Greek shaped that, Armenian and Georgian Christian societies have been able to reach the present day after a process of about 1600 years. The wars, invasions, and conquests in this period led to constant dissolution and merger of the population in the region through migrations, exiles, and exchanges. At the point reached nowadays, it is observed that few examples of these buildings, which have largely lost their communities and have become nonfunctional, in city centers have been primarily. However, facilities located in rural areas and constitute a significant part of the existing building stock have been abandoned to their fate for hundreds of years. Many buildings used for mosques, primary schools, or agricultural purposes have not been repaired or restored. On the other hand, the fact that buildings that are relatively more solid from the structural aspect (mostly newer buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century) are primarily preferred in functioning exposes a separate research question regarding the concept of functioning for protection.

In conclusion, the expansion of qualified restoration and functioning efforts in a way including rural areas that started after the 1990s in the region called the Eastern Black Sea region that involves Ordu, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin provinces, will contribute to the region's alternative tourism potential and regional economy, as well as contributing to the cultural and folkloric structure of the region. The use of the resources to be provided by the revival of tourism in the region for restoration and refunctioning projects is of great importance in transferring this rich cultural heritage to the next generations.

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