

# ZVARTNOTS



A. PILIPOSYAN    L. GEVORGYAN    K. PAHLEVANYAN

# ZVARTNOTS

“Service for the Protection of Historical Environment  
and Cultural Museum-Reservations” SNCO

“Hayrapet” publishing house  
Yerevan, 2019

**UDC 94(479.25):902**

The brochure is guaranteed for publication by the Scientific Council of the Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations, SNCO of RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

Chief editor: Dr. Ashot Piliposyan

Editors: Dr. Karen Pahlevanyan, Dr. Karine Bazeyan

Designed by Simon Sahakyan and Lilit Gevorgyan

“Zvartnots” brochure:/ Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations, SNCO, Yerevan 2019, 48 pages

The brochure is dedicated to the masterpiece of Armenian medieval architecture, Zvartnots Temple Complex. Issues of site discovery, research, restoration and publicity were presented in the following piece. Historical and cultural values of different times excavated in the area have been thoroughly discussed. Particular attention was paid to presenting historical, political, social, economic, and religious panorama of the construction of St. Grigor Church (Zvartnots Temple). The unique role of the structure in the development of medieval Armenian architecture was valued.

The brochure is designed for professionals, comprehensive school teachers, students of humanities departments, tourists, and representatives of various circles interested in historical-architectural facts and heritage of medieval Armenia.

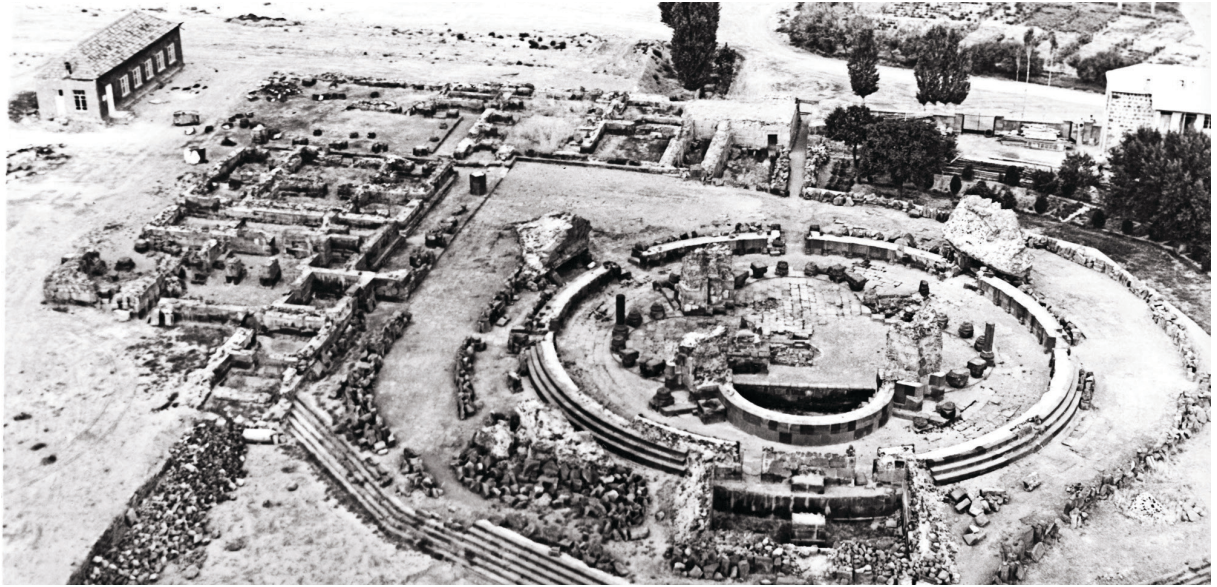
**ISBN 978-9939-867-44-1**

© “Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations” SNCO, 2019

Zvartnots Temple Complex, undeniably, is a masterpiece of early medieval Armenian architecture. It is located about 15km west of Yerevan and 3km south of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the spiritual center of all Armenians. Currently it is included in the administrative territory of Vagharshapat town of Ar-mavir province. Geographical coordinates are the following: 40°9'33.51" north latitude and 44°17'42.5" east longitude.

The preserved complex includes the first preserved and partially rebuilt floor of the main temple of St. Grigor Church, sculpted pieces of its ruined upper floors (more than 2050 fragments), column anchors, eagle-sculptured capitals, Catholicos' palace, monks' chambers, the bathhouse, medieval wine-press, re-mains of secular buildings, etc.





*The general view of Zvartnots Temple Complex in 1940-1950s and now*

Due to excavations in the territory of the archeological site and its surrounding areas, a number of materials related to the centuries of IV-I centuries BC, Antique and Early Medieval period structures were found. This is a piece of evidence showing that the territory of Zvartnots and surrounding areas with their geographical location and climatic conditions, starting from ancient times, was suitable for appropriation and residency.

According to the old legend, a place called Arapar, near Vagharshapat, was chosen as the location of the construction of Zvartnots temple, where, at the beginning of the 4th century, after coming out of Khor Virap, Gregory the Illuminator met the Armenian King Trdat III Arshakuni (288-330) for the very first time. The manuscript masters of the Medieval period of Armenia valued and appreciated the structure. The first information about the temple is presented by historian Sebeos in VII century. He calls the structure Zvartnots. There is an opinion that the name should have meant "a multitude of heavenly soldiers, cheerful spirits, or "zvaltuns", alert, wakeful angels," who appeared in St. Gregory's vision. Sebeos is the only one who calls the temple Zvartnots. By the other historians of Early and Developed Medieval period of Armenia it is known as Vagharshapat or Arapar's St. Gregory's Church. The complex was named like that after Movses Kaghankatvatsi (VII century), Ghevond Priest (VIII century), Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi (IX-X centuries), Tovma Artsruni (IX-X centuries), Stepanos Taronetsi Asoghik (X-XI centuries), Samvel Anetsi (XII century), Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi (XIII century), Kirakos Gandzaketsi (XIII century), Vardan Bardzraberdtsi (XIII century) and others. The construction of the temple was coordinated by the Armenian Catholicos Nerses III Tayetsi (named "Constructor", "Builder") during the times of his leadership in 641-661. The construction process started approximately in the year 643. On the wall of the temple, Nerses III left a Greek-letter inscription which says, "Nerses built this, remember."



*Greek protocol of Nerses III Tayetsi on the construction of Zvartnots*



*Arapar hill including Zvartnots complex before excavations (1890s)*

According to historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the temple was consecrated in 652. During the stay of Catholicos Nerses III in Tayk (652-659) the construction of the complex was continued by his deputy Anastas I Akoretsi. In the following years, other spiritual and secular institutions were also constructed.

Some scholars believe that the temple of Zvartnots became more famous in the Middle Ages by the name of St. Gregory Church as it was transformed into a temple-martyrion (memorial tomb) for some time, where the relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator's body were relocated and reburied. According to the accepted opinion, Zvartnots survived until the 10th century before its destruction because of an earthquake. Gradually, the soil and dust covered its ruins with a thick layer, transforming the area into a vast artificial hill and making people forget about the location of the temple. Moreover, for the needs of the residents of nearby settlements of Vagharshapat, for a very long time, the place served as a unique quarry of polished construction materials.

Many centuries after construction, Zvartnots temple was remembered one more time in the middle of IX century. In 1842, the book "Signature of the Catholic Etchmiadzin and the Five Provinces of Ararat" by Bishop Hovhannes Shakhhatunyants, Echmiadzin Bookstore and Printing House administrator, gives the first description of the place near Vagharshapat where, most probably, Zvartnots temple was located. Interest in the monument grows when in 1890s, Joseph Strzigowski, a young professor of the University of Vienna (1862-1941) visits Armenia to study the oldest manuscript of the Gospel in Armenian. While having a walk in Echmiadzin Strzigowski accidentally spots a basket of bas-reliefs on the wall, and the Greek inscriptions  $N + C$  and  $K + \Lambda$  (Catholicos of Nerses) on them conclude that the latter may have belonged to the former cathedral built by Catholicos Nerses III Tayetsi.



*Old and new photos of capitals of Zvartnots and their Greek inscriptions*



*Views from Zvartnots excavations (the beginning of XX century)*

In 1891, in his article "Ivory Gospel of Etchmiadzin," Strzigowski, one more time, mentions his opinion about the capitals of Zvartnots. The publication triggers the interest of Mesrop Ter-Movsisyan (1865-1939), a young monk from the Echmiadzin congregation who in 1893 undertakes the first excavation work on the hill. During that period, some remains of building layouts and architectural details, fragments of household and church items also get unearthed. Later in 1893, the excavation process stops due to the absence of a permission to carry out such works. They resume in 1900 with direct patronage of Catholicos of All Armenians Mkrtych Khrimyan (Khrimyan Hayrik, 1820-1907), and with the initiative of Father-Superior of Etchmiadzin Archimandrite Khachik Dadyan (Vahan Ter-Grigoryan, 1863-1936). This priest was energetic but lacked of the necessary training. During the process of excavations frame of the Church and its internal divisions, eagle-structured capitals, grape and pomegranate decorative patterns, slender columns, and the Central Holy Table also emerged. Archimandrite Khachik also opened and cleaned the large buildings of the Catholicosate palace near Zvartnots Temple. Underneath the ruins came a variety of church and household items (clay pots, iron pieces, khachkars, lamps of various sizes, small incense vessels, remnants of burnt and dusted church clothes and dresses, oil lamps, special copper hooks for hanging chandeliers, etc.). During the excavations, in the underground chambers of the Catholicosate were found karases filled with crushed stoned grains. One of these karases contained sandy soil, which, according to Archimandrite Khachik, was oil. Witnesses testified that this mass while burning was emitting a sweet aroma.

In 1904, famous architect Toros Torosyan becomes the scientific head of the expedition, who publishes the preliminary results of Zvartnots temple excavation in 1905. In 1908, famous linguist and archeologist Nikoghayos Marr also joined the expedition team, who was also excavating in the capital of Ani at that time.



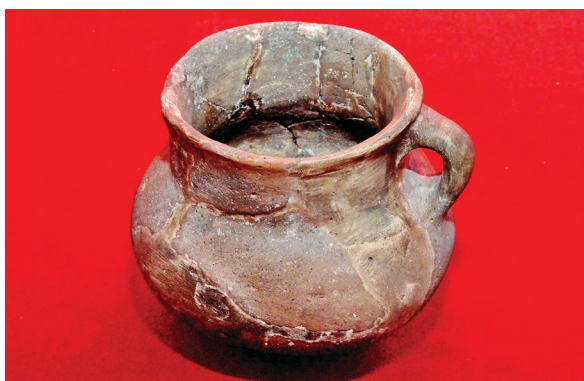
*First researchers of Zvartnots Temple (from left to right): J. Strzigowski, M. Ter-Movsisyan, A. Kh. Dadyan, T. Toramanyan, N. Marr*





The excavation process continues until the 20's of the XX century. Later in the 30's of XX century, the excavation works in Zvartnots and generally in Vagharshapat, and its neighboring territories were resumed. Although the scientific leader of the excavation process was Nikoghayos Marr, he was unable to participate in the work. The general manager of the process was the Chairman of the Antiquities Protection Committee of Armenia, academician Aleksandr Tamanyan. On behalf of Marr and Tamanyan, excavations were headed by Professor Asharbek Kalantar. The expedition members were Toros Toramanyan, Smbat Ter-Avetisyan, Director of Matenadaran Senekerim Ter-Hakobyan, young archeologists Yevgeny Bayburdyan, Karo Khafadaryan, historian Suren Yeremyan, architect Hovhannes Chalpakchyan, geographer Grigor Grigoryan and others.

Later in 1940-1990's, cleaning, examining, and partially rehabilitating works of the territory of Zvartnots were always accompanied by new local excavations. All of those have provided a vast number of factual materials that is necessary to carry out a reliable historical and cultural analysis which is being studied until our days.

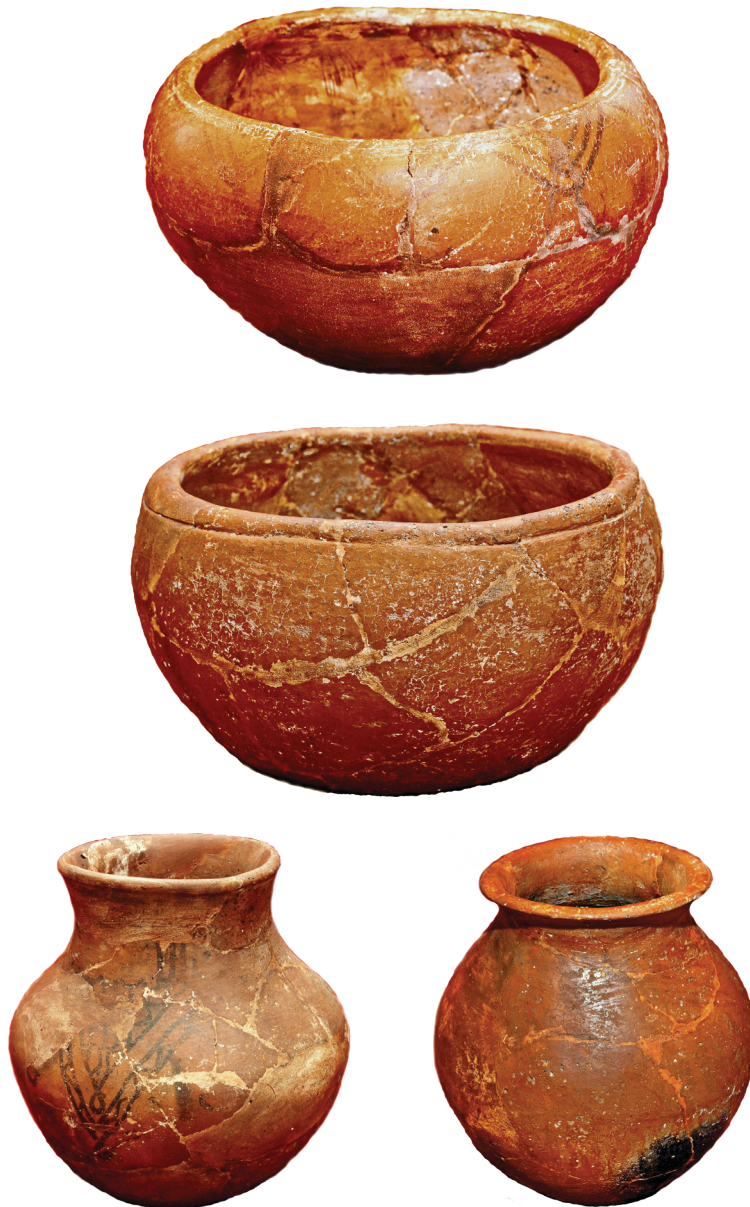


*Materials from Early Bronze Age found in the territory of Zvartnots and its nearby settlements*

## TERRITORY OF ZVARTNOTS IN IV-I MILLENNIUMS BC

As a result of excavations in Zvartnots and adjacent areas in the early XX century, as well as construction and fieldwork, a large number of different periods archaeological artifacts have been discovered that allow us to make certain assumptions and historical and cultural reconstructions of the socio-cultural processes that took place in the area thousands of years ago. The existence of artifacts from the Early Bronze Age, which belongs to the Kura-Araxian culture, talks about the existence of ancient settlement and cemetery in VI century Zvartnots and adjacent territories. The existence of a settlement can be proven by the presence of fragments of well-formed hearths with limbs and rhizomes, and in the cemetery complete and incomplete jars and pitchers with one, double and triple handles. Moreover, judging by the details of their shapes, style and ornamentation, it can be concluded that the Kura-Araxian settlement of Zvartnots was formed at the end of IV millennium BC and lasted until the last quarter of the III millennium BC. Most likely, the Early Bronze Age settlement of Zvartnots was part of the sedentary Eneolithic-Early Bronze Age settlement (Echmiadzin's mokhrablur, Aknashen, Aratashen, Teghut, Metsamor, etc.) which occupy a certain sequence of areas in the basin of the Kasakh River and its tributaries during V-III millennium BC.





*Pottery from Middle Bronze Age culture of Trialeti-Vanadzor found in the territory of Zvartnots*

Zvartnots Early Bronze Age cemetery and settlement probably ceased to exist in XXIV-XXIII centuries BC, as a result of the decline of the Armenian Highland Kura-Araxian early farmers culture due to ecological, social, economic, ethnic and other factors.

From this period, for at least 300-400 years, both the main part of the Armenian Highland and the Zvartnots area have apparently become a temporary site-pasture area for the semi nomadic-cattle breeder tribes. This is evidenced by the remains of Middle Bronze Age culture of Trialeti-Vanadzor from Zvartnots and adjacent territories and the painted pottery with geometric motifs made with black paint on orange surface.

No archeological materials were found from Zvartnots and its nearby territories dating back to the XVIII-XVI centuries BC so far but it is undeniable that during this period the territory was also settled. This is evidenced by the examples of pottery belonging to the Lachashen-Metsamor culture of the Late Bronze Age (XV-XIII / XII centuries), which are the result of adopting, imitating, developing and refining the ceramics traditions of the Middle Bronze Age Sevan-Artsakh, Karmir Berd, and Van-Urmian cultures.



*Pottery from Late Bronze Age found in Zvartnots and its nearby territories*

Life in this area continued sequentially during the Early Iron Age (XI-IX centuries BC). This was a period when the early state formations of the Armenian Highland (Hayasa-Atsi, Arme-Shubria, Alzi, Dayane-Diakhi, Etiuni, etc.) entered a new phase of socio-political and ethno-cultural developments, which was accompanied by civilization (urbanization) processes. The process also affected the territory of Zvartnots which should have been in the tribal confederacy named Etiuni in the beginning of I millennium BC according to the cuneiform sources. This is evidenced by the existence of materials of Early Iron Age found in the territory.

Traces of the settlement of this period in Zvartnots and adjacent territories have not yet been discovered. However, the presence of synchronous burial goods suggests the potential of its existence.



*Examples of pottery from Early Iron Ages found in Zvartnots and surrounding areas*



## THE TERRITORY OF ZVARTNOTS IN THE KINGDOM OF VAN (URARTU) AND DURING ANTIQUE PERIOD

The territory of Zvartnots also played a crucial role in the period of VII-VIII centuries BC of the kingdom of Van (Urartu). The central and northeastern parts of the Armenian Highland were included in the Van Kingdom (Urartu) in the first quarter of VIII century BC during the rule of Argishti I (786-764 BCE). It is evidenced by the Urartian cuneiforms and pulusi-monuments of VIII-VII centuries BC found from Echmiadzin (located not far from Zvartnots), Haykavan (historical Armavir), Davti Blur, Bam-bakashat, Sardarapat, Janfida settlements. During the excavations of Zvartnots, in 1900, at the southern entrance of the temple, the cuneiform inscription of Rusa II (approximately 685-645 B.C.) was also discovered. The pulusi-monument is 2.70 x 0.63 x 0.36 m in size, the upper part is semicircular; the lower part is lustrous basalt– with 47-line cuneiform inscription.

The well-preserved text says:

*"The stoned statue of Khaldi God, the owner, was constructed by Rusa, the son of Argishti. With the power of Khaldi, Rusa, the son of Argishti, says: 'The land of Kuarlini -valley was uncultivated, and there was nothing there. I planted this vine as Khaldi had ordered. I created a brand new, fruit-bearing garden. I resettled the city with new people (?). I constructed a canal from the Ildarunia River named "Umeshini". As soon as the Rusa's valley would start to irrigate, we shall sacrifice a goatling in the name of Khaldi; a sheep for a Teisheba, a sheep for Shivini; šehadie (?) for Aniku.*

*Rusa, the son of Argishti, is a powerful king, a great king, a king of the Universe, a king of the land of Biayna, a king of the kings, the lord of Tushpa. Rusa says: "Whoever destroys this monument, whoever breaks, whoever tries to evict it or tries to cover it with sand or throw it into water, whoever tries to say "I have constructed all of this," whoever tires of erasing my name by putting his name instead, be it a biainian or an enemy, shall be punished by Khaldi, Teisheba, Shivini and all other Gods who shall erase his name, his family, and his descendants from the Earth".*

The inscription contains valuable information about Zvartnots and its neighboring territories during the period of half of the VII century B.C. It is clear from the text that there was a settlement in the country called Kuarlini Valley, which was conquered and resettled by Rusa II and brought in from other parts of the country. By the order of Rusa II new fields were appropriated on site, gardens, grapes planted, and irrigated by the waters of the Ildarunia (probably Hrazdan) river and the canal named Umeshin. It is also important to appoint that in two different occasions, local God Aniku was mentioned in the text, to whom a number of sacrifices were made. The latter's name is also known from the cuneiform text found at Karmir Blur. At the same time Aniku's name is missing from a rock called Mheri Dur in Van left by the kings Ishpuini and Menua in the last quarter of IX century BC in the cuneiform list of the Urartian Pantheon, which suggests that this God was included in the Urartian Pantheon after the Ararat Valley's getting included in the borders of the Van Kingdom (Urartu). There is another noteworthy fact. The territory of the Zvartnots Temple Complex, according to Rusa II, was part of a country called Kuarlini-valley (by the source: Kuarlini-hubi). The unusual composition of that place (hubi with the addition of "valley") suggests that the main name of the country is Kuarlin, and the hubi "valley" probably symbolizes the location. In this respect, the name Kuarlini provides another basis for speculation. The thing is that there was an Urartian goddess from the IX century BC called Kuera, who, according to specialists, was the patron god of water, canals, springs. The basis of the first component of the Kuarlin Valley is the word "Kuar-", which is close to the name of that Urartian deity. And, since in the areas adjacent to Zvartnots both ancient and present are abundant spring and water sources (Hrazdan, Kasakh, Metsamor, their tributaries of large and small tributaries and artesian waters), it is not excluded that Cuera's worship could have been widespread in the area under discussion and basis for the design of the territory. Therefore, if the hypothesis is acceptable, the Kuarlin Valley should have the meaning of "River, Water Valley or Watery Valley" in Armenian.



*The cuneiform monument of Rusa II at the time of its discovery (1900) and its appearance nowadays*



*Tuff press from Zvartnots, the grape crushing device*

Subsequent excavations in Zvartnots and adjacent areas will give an opportunity to speak more specifically about the local pre-Urartu and Urartian settlements, as well as the habits, beliefs, ethnicity, culture, and, of course, the etymology of its inhabitants.

In any case, the unique findings of the Zvartnots period (circular press, handled pitcher with three-limbs, quartzite, sculptured stone, etc.) suggest that life in this area continued after the fall of the Van Kingdom. This is particularly evidenced by the tuff press found in Zvartnots excavations, the circular grape crushing device. Such presses were widespread in the monuments of the ancient Near East, were excavated in synchronous archaeological sites of Armenia and dated back to IV/III centuries BC up to II/III centuries AD.



*Early Medieval wine-pressing hole from Zvartnots*



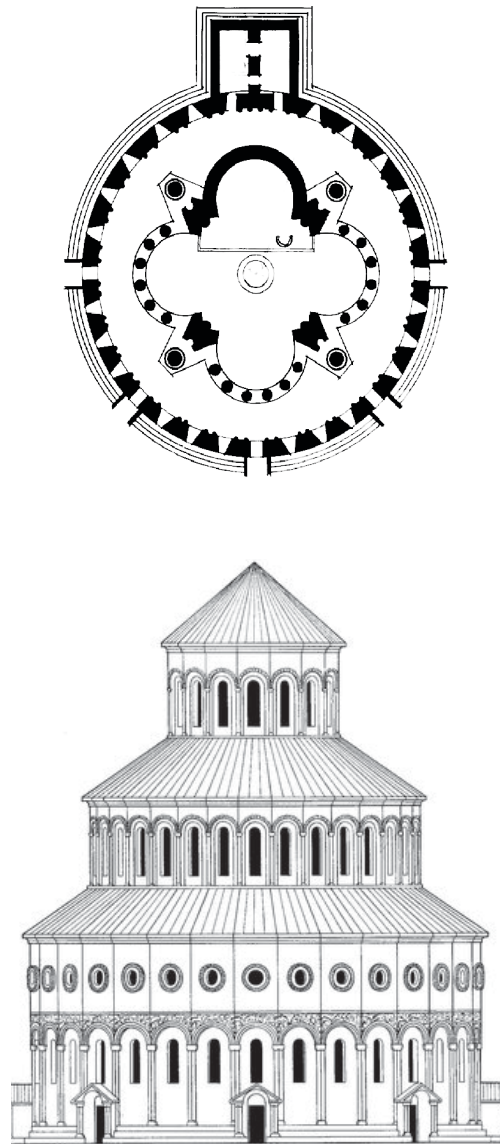
View of the Zvartnots Temple (by T. Toramanyan)

## ZVARTNOTS TEMPLE (ST. GREGORY CHURCH)

IV-VII centuries played a crucial role in the development of architecture and construction of antique period and formation of the early medieval architectural culture of Armenia. One of the masterpieces of the period was the Zvartnots temple, the St. Gregory Church of Arapar.

It shows that the choice of Zvartnots temple's construction place was not accidental or arbitrary. The most prominent building of the historical-architectural complex is the cathedral of St. Gregory's Church. It was constructed during the reign of the Armenian Catholicos Nerses III Tayetsi, in approximately ten years, during 643-652. According to the VII century historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi, the vivid Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator was consecrated in 652. As the legend says, Konstans II, the Emperor of Byzantium (629-668) was present at the ceremony and liked the building so much that he decided to take its architect to Byzantium with the purpose of constructing a similar building there. However, the architect, according to reports, died on the way because of unknown circumstances. Some researchers hold the position that he was poisoned on the way so that the copy of Zvartnots would not appear in Byzantium.

With its sophisticated concept, elegance, grandeur, position, size, architectural-building solutions and exquisite sculptures of human, plant, animal and geometric imagery, it is unique in the Early Medieval Armenian architecture.



*Plan of the Zvartnots Temple (by T. Toramanyan)*



The temple was built in the center of the seven-level pedestal in the form of a three-level, put on one another, successively inclining three-cylindrical architectural volumes. It had five entrances, about 49 meters in height and 35.75 meters in diameter. The thickness of the walls was approximately 1.0 meter. There is an opinion that perhaps the architectural foundation of the temple was the image of God's hand. The chapel and its adjacent pieces are the palm and part of the wrist in the east of the structure, and the fingers are the five entrances in the north, south, and west of the building. At the top, the temple is finished with a sharp velum of dome, covered with red, brick colored tiles in adjoining corners covered with stamps.

The apparently circular structure was actually polygonal. The first floor of the construction has 32 panes, the second one has 16, and the third floor has 8 panes. Each of them has one circular arched opening on the window. The first floor of the temple stands out with its luxurious kits, where its upper part of the facade was decorated with grape vines and rocks, 32 volumetric pomegranates and pomegranate branch, and the connecting part of the arch-shaped frescos designed with high-reliefs of 32 spiritual and secular individuals. Specialists assume that those individuals were the master-constructors of the building. Only nine of the high-reliefs were preserved, on one of which there is a carved name Hovhan ("Ioan"). There is an opinion that he is the architect of the temple.



*Preserved fragments of the roof tiles of Zvartnots temple*



Sundial from Zvartnots

The particular interest is making the sundial at the ruins of the southern entrance of the temple. Churches of medieval Armenia often encounter engravings of semi-circular sundials. Comparably, circular examples are rare. One of such rare instances is the sundial of Zvartnots. For the most part, sundials are directed towards the south. This circumstance seems to make the sundial of Zvartnots understandable. The point is that it was placed on the central surface of the southern facade, just above the main entrance, in a row of circular windows, and the tendency to maintain their sequence dictated the shape of the sundial. In the upper half of the circular panel of the Zvartnots sundial, there is an inscription in Armenian. "Prayer at every holy hour is acceptable to the Lord." In the lower part of the circumference of the clock, from left to right, instead of numbers, the Armenian font equivalents of midday hours from 1 to 12 are given, and, for some time, the exact hour of the day was calculated with the help of a movement of the shadow of a pole that was clipped into the center of the clock.

The second and third floors have repeatedly reconstructed the architectural form of the structure as well as the logic of the composition, and, at the same time, had a more discreet decoration, by mainly providing the building with a sublime and slender appearance.

In terms of interior, the temple is a cross-shaped, center-domed construction with four equal cross-wings. The eastern wing is solid and includes the stage, and the remaining three are separated into six columns through semicircular arcades. Particularly magnificent are the eagle-sculptured capitals which connect eight arch-bows' cylindrical columns on the four corners of chancels. Frescoes of the eastern altar, inner chancels, lintels, all decorated with sculpture gave even more pomposity and majestic appearance to the construction.



*Interior and Exterior parts of Zvartnots temple*







Medieval Armenian historians remember the Zvartnots (St. Gregory) Temple with a special pride and praise. Movses Kaghakatatsi calls it "... a radiant church ...", Sebeos presents it as "... amazingly beautiful, worthy of the honor of God ...", Samvel Anetsi in praise: "... a beautifully lit St. Grigor ... ", Stepanos Taronetsi Asoghik describes it as " a ... miraculous church ... ", and Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi describes it as " ... St. Gregory that astonishes the universe..." The temple was, indeed, so perfect, beautiful, magnificent, and impressive, that in the following years similar temples were built in a number of places in medieval Armenia.

In the VII century already, with an external round plan, with a cruciform base, central dome churches were built in Garni (St. Sion), Irind (St. Astvatsatsin), Aragats (St. Trinity), Yeghvard ("Zoravar" by St. Theodoros), near Banak settlement in the Historic Armenian Tayk Province of Berdatspor region (now Penak, Turkey). In the IX-XI centuries, Bagaran (Shushanik), Marmashen (Klor), Ani (Hovvi, Abukhamrens - St. Gregory, the Prkchi, Gagkashen - St. Gregory), Khzkonk (St. Sargis), Makaravank (St. Astvatsatsin), Sanahin (St. Gregory) churches were added.



*Collected fragments of the first floor walls of Zvartnots*

Under the influence of the architectural peculiarity of the Zvartnots cathedral, similar churches appeared in Transcaucasia in the Middle Ages. One of them was the Lycaite Temple (VII century) in historical Aghvank (northeast of present-day Azerbaijan) and the ruins of the Samtzeris Monastery Complex (X-XI centuries) near the village of Nogikhevi in Megrelia (west of present-day Georgia).

Zvartnots has survived for more than three centuries and collapsed in the XX century. It was already in ruins when Stepanos Taronetsi (Asoghik) wrote his "Universal History" and reported on Zvartnots Temple, not mentioning the reasons of its destruction. This fact has, until now, been the subject of controversy.

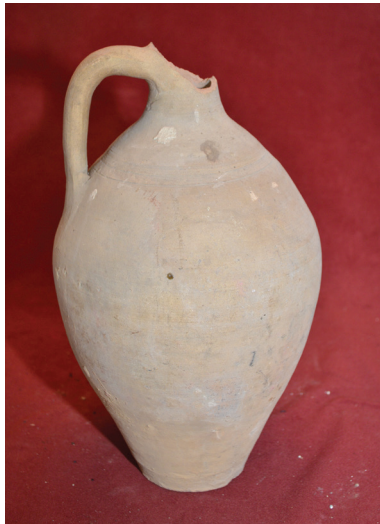


*St. Gregory of Ani (Gagkashen, X-XI centuries)*

There are two main hypotheses for the destruction of the temple: Arab invasions or devastating earthquakes. Most probably, the reasons for the damage was the earthquake, although during the process of construction Nerses III Tayetsi was more than sure that the structure would remain standing for 1.000 years until Christ's second coming to the Earth. During the excavations, traces of great fires were found on the territory of the site, which can be considered as evidence of early experiments on destroying the temple. There is also an opinion that the Arabs have removed some of the cornerstones bearing the weight of the structure, which, over time, resulted in the monument gradually losing its strength and collapsing during an earthquake. For about 1000 years after the collapse, the temple complex of Zvartnots has remained in oblivion and obscurity.



*Ruins of Banak in Tayk (VII century)*



*Early medieval artifacts' fragments from Zvartnots spiritual and secular buildings' excavations*



*Water clay pipe fragment and household items (earthenware pot, oil lamp) from medieval Zvartnots*

## OTHER SPIRITUAL AND SECULAR CONSTRUCTIONS OF ZVARTNOTS

During the excavations carried out at the beginning of the XX century in the territory of Zvartnots, other constructions such as Catholicos palace with its buildings (bathhouse, chambers), basis of one-nave church from the IV-VI centuries, materials from medieval times were also discovered.

The Catholicos palace is a rectangular building constructed with a polished adamantine tuff. It completes the yard of the temple with from the south and west by volumes of cross-sectional structures. The plan of the building is almost square. The Catholicos Nerses III Tayetsi lived and worked in the palace which, for a period of time during his life, was turned into a residence of the Catholicos. The western wing of the building, which served as a banquet hall of the palace, had adjacent summer hall covered with wood and an arched winter hall. The eastern wing was composed of living rooms, a bathhouse, monumental church of IV-VI centuries, and a pillared hall with a view to the temple. The throne hall of the Catholicos was located between the residential and the housekeeping parts of the latter. In the construction process of the building counter, forts were used that had a mission of preserving the arched covers, through which the arch-form niches were constructed. The throne hall was mainly intended for important meetings for Catholicos and national spiritual holidays. During the construction of both the temple and the palace tuffs of different colors and sizes were used; pumice-stone, trachyte, obsidian, etc. According to the historians Sebeos and Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi by the order of Nerses III Tayetsi, the surroundings of the palace have been improved; garden and flower beds have been planted. This structure is the most extensive civil construction ever known from medieval Armenia. Part of the materials such as spheroconic vessels, mosaics, various pots, as well as many metal objects (iron knives, daggers, plowshares' parts, needles, chandeliers, door locks, bronze keys, etc.) are most likely from this area unearthed during the excavations.

The bathhouse was located at the end of the eastern wing of the Catholicos Palace, and, compared to other secular structures, was the closest to the temple. It consisted of public (common) and private rooms; most probably, first ones were created for secular individuals and lower-level clergymen, and second ones were kept for high-ranking officials. Just like the old bathhouses of Artashat and Garni, this house has also repeated the hypocaust structure well known in Greece and Rome. The stove was beneath the pavement, from where the heat gradually spread through the bathrooms: from the wardrobe to the cool bathroom, than to warm bathroom, and finally to lukewarm room and sauna. The bath water was brought with clay pipes from the springs of nearby hills. The remains of some pipes have been preserved on the eastern side of the Catholicosate.

During the excavations, at the western entrance of the Zvartnots Cathedral, a cylindrical well made of chiseled stones, with a depth of about 49 m, was opened, which is now parched. There are stories that during the excavations of the well, with a tied rope Kh. Dadyan got to the bottom and extracted the remains of human bones from there. In any case, the explanations concerning to the well are different. Some scholars do not exclude that it may have been built before the construction of the temple and relates to the Kingdom of Van (Urartu), when the canal of Rusa II was built there. Meanwhile, the well has been filled with dust and soil; its depth nowadays is only 40 meters.

The foundations of the one-nave Basilica Church of IV-VI centuries were discovered on the southern side to the bathhouse. The excavations were carried out in the 1930s. Alongside with the ruins of Basilica Church of Zvartonts, anchors of three burnt columns were also found. Not far from it, two high-reliefs created on rectangular stones with secular scenes were also discovered. With their shape and the details of processing, both the high-reliefs and the anchors are not similar to the Nersesyan Temple or other structures of the time. Apparently, the structure was a part of an old building which was destroyed in V century before the construction of Zvartonts. This fact allowed K. Khafadaryan to conclude that in IV-VI centuries, in addition to the Basilica Church, there was also another building with secular high-reliefs, the role and the function of which is still unknown.

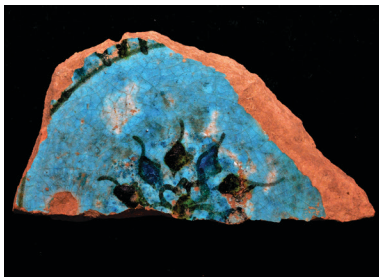
The IV-VI centuries Basilica Church was of small size, and there is an opinion that its first wooden example was constructed right after the adoption of Christianity in the IV century, on the place of the ruined pagan temple. During V-VI centuries the building was reconstructed with polished stone. Only the eastern part of the building was preserved with its sacristy, and the western part was utterly demolished during the construction works initiated by Nerses III, when monastic cells were built there.

In the southern direction from the church's foundation a wine-press of the temple complex is located. It was unearthed in 1931 by T. Toramanyan, who was unable to complete the excavations due to his illness. They were continued in 1958 by S. Ter-Avagyan. The director of Zvartnots museum V. Harutyunyan completed the excavations in the 1980s. At the time, the wine-press was made of polished stones, with thick walls, rectangular layout, with a surface of 19.0 x 32.6 m, covered with wood. The wine-press was a three-nave construction, consisting of two large sections and a long corridor between them. It had five large wine-pressing holes and seven platforms for grape squeezing. There was a time when they were plastered with timber. At the same time, the platforms had some slopes towards the wine-pressing holes. The grapes were trampled on the platforms, and the resulting juice flowed into the wells. Additionally, deep-frozen floorings of the latter have been added to the floor, where the sedimentation of the sweet wine was collected during the wine-making process. The total capacity of the wells is about 22.000 liters. Taking into consideration the fact that the wells do not have the same shape and size, it should be assumed that they were constructed for making wines of different tastes and strength from a variety of grape types. Experts believe that at the western part of the Palace, at the cellarage, there was a wine shop where hundreds and thousands of wine big storage jars (karas) with a capacity of 500-600 liters were kept.









## ZVARTNOTS TEMPLE COMPLEX AFTER THE DESTRUCTIVE EARTHQUAKE OF THE X CENTURY

Specialists who study Zvartnots Temple Complex's architecture and general history have always been interested in the status and fate of the monument in the X century after the earthquake. In this respect, the medieval Armenian historians (Samvel Anetsi, Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi, Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Vardan Bardzrabetsi, and others), even 2–3 centuries after the destruction of the cathedral, still admired its once grandeur and magnificence, didn't give any information about the protected habitat of the settlement or the visible ruins. And the existence of such a long period is simply a reminder of the development of late Zvartnots and surrounding medieval material culture. Judging from the findings of the Developed Middle Ages (VIII/IX-XIII/XIV centuries), the area has always been active both during its existence and during its destruction and subsequent times (even during the dark years of the Mongol invasions); aa active social settlement used shining faience bowls and glazed plates, pitchers, bowls and their lids with stamp, glass cups, colored glass bracelets, etc. from capitals of medieval Armenia Dvin and Ani.

Judging from the excavated and Late Medieval (XV-XVII centuries) materials (parts of blue, green and turquoise glazed vessels, fragments of clay pipes, copper pitchers, etc.) in Zvartnots territory, the settlement in question is also concerned to the period of Timur (the end of XIV century – beginning of XV century), Turkmen karakoyunlu (1410-1467) and Akkoyunlu (1467-1502) invasions of nomadic tribes and even XVI-XVII centuries to the Turkish-Persian wars.

From the devastating Turkish-Persian invasions and the territory of Armenia between these powers in 1555 and 1639 created extremely difficult conditions after two divisions and like many prosperous Armenian settlements, probably during the XVII-XVIII centuries Zvartnots came to its fall. The ruined settlement and remains of the medieval temple complex were gradually covered with dust, and the site of the once magnificent complex was forgotten.



*Developed medieval lids, glazed pottery and faience from Zvartnots*

# RESTORATION WORKS OF ZVARTNOTS TEMPLE COMPLEX

Zvartnots Temple Complex was in a state of oblivion and forgetfulness approximately for 1,000 years after its fall. Excavations started in the early XX century not only unearthed the ruins of the magnificent temple, but also brought new problems to the specialists. Although Armenian historians of the time showed praising and admiration towards Zvartnots temple, as surprising as it may seem, they forgot to describe it with simple sentences. Although the excavations had opened the area of the temple and its associated structures, thousands of architectural pieces and fragments, the data they provided for accurate restoration of the temple's overall appearance were not comprehensive. Therefore, as an overwhelming divine grace, architect Toros Toramanyan was given the opportunity and the mission to understand the magnificent embodiment of Zvartnots, to measure the details, to try to understand its mystery, to try to restore the pomposity of the building in 1905. Toramanyan proved the reality of his idea a year later, with the help of stone miniature from the excavations of Gregory the Illuminator's Temple (Gagkashen), built by King Gagik I Bagratuni (945-1020) in the medieval Armenian capital Ani.

More than a century had passed from the day when many architects, both Armenians and foreigners, and their upcoming generations tried to get involved in the process of restoration of the temple by measuring its details and trying to bring them together in order to rehabilitate the monument. The list of the specialists includes: T. Toramanyan, Y. Strzigowski, N. Tokarski, A. Jacobson, A. Kuznetsov, N. Buniatyan, V. Harutyunyan, T. Marutyan, L. Sadoyan, S. Mnatsakanyan, Y. Klebauer, D. Onofrio, P. Cuneo, H. Gabrielyants, G. Mandinyan, G. Vardzigulyan, G. Ter-Mikaelyan, T. Gevorgyan, M. Danielyan, G. Nalbandyan and others.

During this time, by relying on newly emerging materials, written initials, and personal studies, a number of experts have come up with their own opinions and observations about the height of the temple's fuselage and floors, its forms and the layout, the height of the beam, the significance of the surrounding structures and the important functions they carried out. Nevertheless, Toramanyan's reconstruction was considered to be more or less acceptable, according to the principles of which, during the 40s of the XX century, in the territory of the monument, a number of events have been organized.

In 1945 already, under the supervision of architect L. Sadoyan, during the renovation and reconstruction works of Zvartnots, western facades of the stage were strengthened, the central stage and the stairs were fixed, the eastern wall of the temple was erected with rough stones, the frontal parts of the southern wall and stairs were filled up. With a special mortar injection, the posterior wall of the eastern apse was also strengthened, and new stones were added to the floor of this part of the temple. At the same time, the missing round stones of the tribune were also reinstalled.

Restoration works in Zvartnots and its neighboring territories were also carried out in 1952. Based on the project of architect H. Hakobyan, with the purpose of preservation and popularization of the monument, a two-story building was constructed, the first floor of which serves as a watch-house nowadays, and the second one was transformed into a unique and symbolical territory with the name "Arvestageti Tun" (House of an artist), where regular discussions are carried out on issues and topics related to Zvartnots temple.

Under the supervision of architects G. Tonoyan and A. Harutyunyan, in the next phase of the renovation, restoration and conservation of the temple during 1958-1961, the remaining parts of the temple walls as well as the multi-stage stylobate, were reconstructed. Moreover, the external walls of the temple were also filled up with newly hewed stones. During the reconstruction works of 1962, the western wall was raised with brand new stones. The lower rows of the half-staying columns were also partially restored. The pavement of the temple complex was also reconstructed. Under the supervision of architect A. Harutyunyan, the eagle-sculptured columns with capitals were renovated as well.

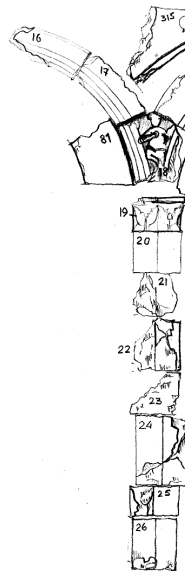
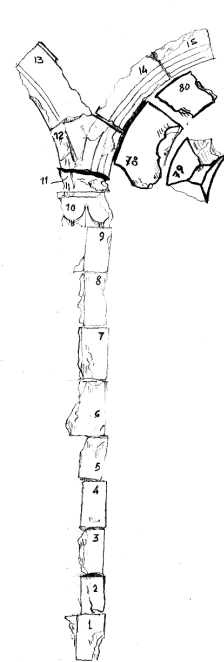
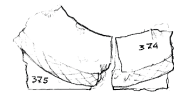
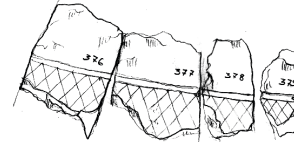
The works aimed at the improvement of the monument also continued in 1963-1965. During the process, under the supervision of architect V. Baboyan, the leading road and the entrance to the temple were fully repaired and laid with asphalt. During the same period, the ruins of the monument were partially taken out of the territory, and the lands of northern and eastern parts of the temple were demolished. As a result, the green zone of the territory expended, which made its priceless and unique contribution to the process of both preservation and reservation of the land. During the works carried out in 1966-1967, under the supervision of architects A. Harutyunyan and Y. Tamanyan, the southeastern and northeastern counterforts of the temple were wreathed. At the same time, the stage of the temple, halls, and the living rooms of the clergymen were restored, the walls of the bathhouse were strengthened, and the wine-press was partially recovered. Based on the project of architects K. Hovhannisyan and Yu. Tamanyan, the pavement of the throne hall was fully repaired. In 1967, reconstruction works of the northwestern facade and fillings of pilasters' bases were also initiated. In 1969, the renovation works of the wine-press were already completed, and in 1970, a special cover was placed over it, with the purpose of preservation. Large-scale restoration works also started from 1986 to 1992 with the initiative of L. Barseghyan, the head of the Department of preservation and use of historical and cultural monuments of USSR. During this period, basket capital and eagle capital colonnades, the Great altar, the inner pavement, and many other architectural details were also repaired. Between 1992 and 1995, the restoration and research works of the temple were fully supervised by architect G. Nalbandyan, and in 1995-1998, architect T. Gevorgyan headed reconstruction works of first floor pilasters in western, southwestern, and southern entrances of the temple.

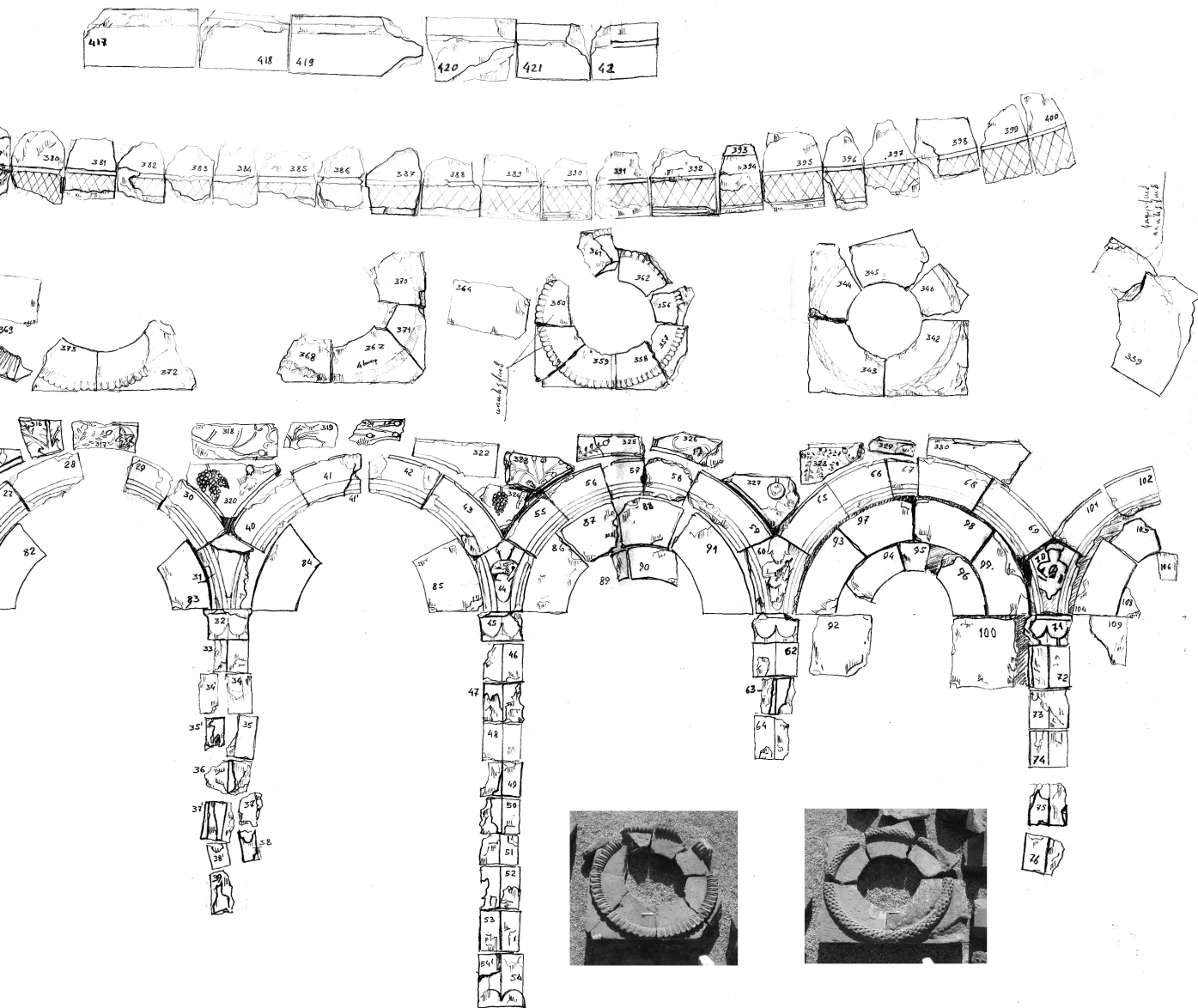
With the support of the Cultural Projects Implementation office of "Linsy" foundation in 2001-2002 under the head of architect M. Danielyan's reconstruction of the complex territory and restoration of its customer service facilities have begun. During the same period, research and restoration works were carried out on the western entrance of the temple, the southern altar, and the outer pavement.

In 2002-2004 again with the support of the Cultural Projects Implementation office of "Linsy" foundation, under the supervision of architect G. Nalbandyan, a project aimed at restoration, partially renovation, exploring, and conservation of Zvartnots Temple Complex started. At this stage, based on the project initiated by architect M. Danielyan, the western front door and the southern arcade were restored as well. As a result of the work carried out within the framework of the project, the ruins were partially restored, and the three-story building of the entire temple became visible: outer walls with two stones high (2.0-3.0 m), cross-stone wings of 4.0-5.0 m high and dome carrying pillars of 5.0-7.0 m high. However, these characters are not widespread, but according to preliminary reconstruction they gradually rise to the north and south, creating a sequential image with the background of Ararat. According to architect G. Nalbandyan, in the future, the domed pillars, other porches, exterior walls, the stage and the eastern structure would also have to be partially restored.

All the architects involved in the various stages of Zvartnots Temple complex restoration works have strived to intervene in the historical-archaeological authenticity of the monument possibly as little as it was possible, to consolidate and transmit all the preserved material facts as they were. During the restoration works, first and foremost, those architectural details of Zvartnots were put into their places that gave an opportunity to visualize the original image of the temple, and, thereafter, recreate such details as the general appearance, volume, size, architectural details, outlines, and the view of the construction.

As a result Zvartnots archaeological site was included in the UNESCO's World Heritage Register.







Ancient Armenian Architecture, IV-VII centuries

Informational text panel with a logo at the top and several columns of text.

## ZVARTNOTS HISTORICAL-CULTURAL MUSEUM-RESERVATION

In 1900 in Zvartnots, periodical excavations revealed not only the ruins of the magnificent cathedral and adjacent buildings mentioned by a number of historians, but also a large number of important archaeological artifacts of different periods which maintenance, restoration, conservation and display were already in the focus of attention by specialists and responsible state authorities. This was the time when one of the most crucial issues the country's governing officials and the public was facing was the livelihood of the Armenian population, somehow escaped from genocide in Western Armenia in 1915, restoration of extremely corrupt economy of the country, strengthening of defense capacity and formation of educational system. And even under these difficult conditions, the problems of the country's historical and cultural heritage were not pushed into a second plan. In 1923 already, on March 20, the Zvartnots Archaeological Site was established by order N 1138 of the USSR Lightning Committee, from which the discovered historical-cultural values were already placed in a temporary "museum" in one of the monumental-built rooms, with 6 storage rooms and 8 open-air storefronts. Architect T. Toramanyan, on April 11 of 1924, report on this museum stated: "... The first time we went into the museum, the impression we had was very unfavorable. There is almost nothing extraordinary left in the place, everything is shattered, crushed and lost in the dust. In order to preserve all the fragments from eventual lost, it is necessary to transfer them to a safer place from destroyed building of the museum, as there is a chance that the raining period may finally destroy the remains within some weeks. The ceiling is damp and up to came down, gypsum is already falling from the walls, the windows are broken, most of the lower part of the northern wall was collapsed, causing the upper part of the walls to crack and open..."



In 1924, on April 17, by order N 141, Zvartnots archeological site was included in the Committee on the Protection of Armenian Antiquities. The collections were moved to St. Hripsime Church, where they were exhibited with special testimonials, photos and drawings, before the construction of a special museum building in Zvartnots. In 1937, based on the project of N. Buniatyan and by the initiative of T. Toramanyan, A. Tamanyan, and K. Khafadaryan, the Zvartnots Museum was founded. At first, it had a small exhibition in a single hall (70m<sup>2</sup>). In 1988, based on architect L. Sadoyan's project, began the expansion of the museum building. It almost quadrupled in size, in 1995–2003 it increased and the preparatory works were completed with the support of the "Lincy" Foundation, and supervision of A. Hovsepyan, M. Danielyan and G. Toramanyan.

In 1924-1944 the reserve served as the archaeological site of Zvartnots, in 1944-1986 as Zvartnots Monument Museum, in 1986-1989 as Zvartnots Historical-Architectural Museum, in 1990-2003 Zvartnots Historical-Architectural Museum-Reservation. Starting from 2003, it operated under the supervision of the "Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations," SNCO of Ministry of Culture of RA, under the name of "Zvartnots" Historical-Cultural Museum-Reservation branch. Nowadays, it is one of the most famous and beloved monuments for both Armenian and foreign citizens. Taking into consideration the requirements of museum visitors with limited abilities, by means of the SNCO, in 2010, separate road was constructed for the people on wheelchairs, and in 2012, on April 18, in the framework of the International Day for the Protection of Monuments and Sites, daytime lighting was installed in the complex and landscaping works were carried out. In the future it is planned to make metal stands for several hundred open-air architectural fragments, as well as to create an illusory panorama of the temple with 3D modeling program.



*Zvartnots museum building*

"Zvartnots" Historical and Cultural Museum-Branch is included in republican and international tourist routes and over the past 3 years around 150,000 local and foreign visitors have come to Zvartnots for over 1400 excursions and about 40 events, conferences and temporary exhibitions.

Taking into consideration needs of visitors with optical problems, on 11 December 2009, in Zvartnots, installation of panels with Braille alphabet was carried out. One of the most important events was an event organized on January 29, 2009, with the help of British Embassy, called "Dialog between two cultures" dedicated to Parkapzuk musical instrument. During the event, cooking of Scottish dish "Hagis" was organized as well, which was handed to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.



*Open air exhibition of the ruins of Zvartnots Temple*

For several years, UNESCO's annual PatrimoniTO program has been implemented in partnership with the Armenian Student Brigades in the Museum-Reservation, with many young volunteers from Russia, Spain, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Canada, U.S., and other countries. In 2010, in the territory of the reservation, "I can feel the spirit of time" event was organized for people with limited abilities, and in 2012, large-scale events were organized here to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Armenian publishing and Yerevan was declared as the World Capital of books by UNESCO.

Nowadays as well, research, study, reconstruction, popularization works are still being carried out in the territory of Zvartnots temple. A monument that was forgotten by everyone 100 years ago, today, as a phoenix, has fallen from the ashes, raised its shoulders, spread its wings as a reminder of ancient Armenian history and culture, a memory of past achievements and the eternal guardian of future reforms and successes.



*Events carried out at the territory of Zvartnots*

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT, RA  
SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT  
AND CULTURAL MUSEUM-RESERVATIONS



9 789939 867441