

# Historical and Cultural Monuments Located on the North - South Highway



Editor: Candidate of historical sciences - Karine Bazeyan  
English translation: Satenik Harutyunyan  
Design by: Simon Sahakyan

Historical And Cultural monuments Located On The north-south Highway - Yerevan, RA's ministry of culture, "Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations" NCSO, 2018. - 96 pages.

The monuments in the adjacent territory of "North-south" highway with brief historical information, as well as general descriptions of compositional, artistic and constructive-structural principles are presented in the catalogue. It is addressed to both Armenian and foreign wide circle of public.

ISBN 978-9939-867-22-9

© RA's ministry of culture  
© "Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations" NCSO

# SHIRAK

THE MONASTIC  
COMPLEX OF  
MARMASHEN

YERERUYK

ST. GEVORG CHURCH  
OF ARTIK

LMBATAVANK

THE MONASTIC  
COMPLEX OF HARITCH 10

THE CHURCH OF  
PEMZASHEN



# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF MARMASHEN



The monastic complex is located about 2 km south-west of Vahramaberd village in Shirak Province, 8-9 km north-west of Gyumri, on the left bank of Akhuryan River. There are different assumptions about the name “Marmashen” which are not justified.

The complex consists of 2 groups of monuments: Big and Small (Upper).

According to the inscription on the southern wall of the main, Katoghike Church, the monastery was founded in 988-1029 by Prince Vahram Pahlavuni.

The monastery was considerably destroyed during invasions by the Seljuk Turks in the XI century. According to the inscription on the northern wall of the Katoghike Church (1225) the grandsons of Vahram Pahlavuni, Archbishop Grigor and his brother Prince Gharib reconstructed the destroyed churches. During the Mongol-Tatar invasions in the XIII century it was again destroyed and abandoned.

The Big group of monuments was protected by a circular fence, which stretched to the edge of the river and included four churches, a gavit-chapel and a graveyard. The Katoghike Church is situated in the central part of the complex. It is a domed hall with two pairs of pilasters (20m x 12.8) with an eastern cut-cross. Due to its close-

ness to the apse and under-dome area of the adjacent sacristies, the dome occupies the central position in the outer space of the building. The pylons of interior walls are designed with slender columns and the facades are decorated with pairs of semi-columns, an arcade connecting them and triangular niches. The central arch lintel, which is larger and higher than the lateral ones, includes one window (arched on the southern facade and rectangular on the others). The entrance of the church is on the west side, and the dome is crowned with a 12-faceted drum and fan-shaped spire. The facets of the drum are decorated with bunches of semi-columns and small frontons.

It is one of the best monuments of Armenian architecture, the masterpiece of the heritage left by Pahlavuni. It is also assumed that the author was Trdat, the architect of the Mother Temple of Ani.

The second church is located to the north of the Katoghike Church and is almost adjacent to it. By the composition, architectural details and decorations, the church is a small (15m x 9,5m) copy of the latter one. Probably, they were built at the same time. The northern and eastern walls and some parts of the roof have remained preserved.

The third church is located on the southern side. It is an internally cross-shaped and externally rectangular (9m x 7m) central-domed structure with sacristies on the four corners.

The fourth is on the south-western side of the complex and was discovered during excavations in 1954-1956. It is an externally round, domed structure with four altars and sacristies. The bases and lower rows of walls have preserved.

The structures were built of red polished tuff stones. The gavit (narthex) adjoins the Katoghike Church from the western side. It is a four-column structure with centralized composition and dimensions of 13.3 m x 12.6 m (the lower rows of northern and western walls, four anchors and fragments of octangular columns). It served as a mausoleum, where the Prince Vahram Pahlavuni was also buried (the gravestone was erected in the XIX century). Between the gavit and round church there are the preserved remains of the bell tower.

The graveyard is spread over the southern and eastern sides of the group of monuments. Here you can find the inscribed gravestone of the wife of Vahram Pahlavuni, Sophia (it was transferred from the graveyard of the monastery of Verin).

The Small (or Upper) group of monuments is situated about 200m north of the Big group of monuments, on a hillock. It is a central-domed structure with a cross-shaped plan, the northern wall of which has been preserved. The architect Shnavorik was buried in its nearby graveyard.

The monastery of Marmashen was a prominent religious and cultural center. Due to its artistic and constructional features, the monastery is considered to be one of the most magnificent monuments of medieval Armenian architecture. It monastery was repeatedly reconstructed: in 1870 by Mkrtych Jalalyan and in 1900 by Catholicos Mkrtych I Vanetsi (Khrimian Hayrik). Since 1950s it was also regularly renovated. With the support of the Italian benefactor Gayane Kaznati, Katoghike Church was also renovated in 2001.

#### **Bibliography:**

T. Toramanyan, "Materials of Armenian Architecture History", vol. 2, Y., 1948.

H. Yeghiazaryan, "The monastery of Marmashen and its lithographs", Etchmiadzin, 1957, N

H. Balasanyan, "The architectural complex of Marmashen and lithographs", Etchmiadzin, 2008, N 7-8.

N. Tokarsky, "Armenian architecture of the IV-XIV centuries", Y., 1961.

# YERERUYK



The architectural complex of Yereruyk is located in the western part of the Shirak Province of RA, on the right bank of the Akhuryan River, on the eastern small hill of the village of Anipemza. In the written sources and professional literature, the architectural complex of Yereruyk is mentioned as “Yereruyk Basilica”, “St. Astvatsatsin of Yereruyk” and “Yererouk”. The complex was built in IV-V cc. According to the X c. inscription (deciphered by N. Mar), Yereruyk was called “St. Karapet Chapel”. In the Late Middle Ages, it became a monastery-church and was named “St. Trinity”. The monument is one of the achievements of not only Armenian classical architecture, but also of early Christian constructive art. The architectural complex of Yereruyk was built of light orange tuff stones from Ani. The structure is framed with six-sided perimeter pedestal and is based on a six-level pedestal. The prayer hall was divided into three naves by two-row pillars. The middle nave ends on the eastern side with the semicircular apse of the main altar. In the four corners of the composition (out of the main space), there are double-storey sacristies. The excavations, carried out by A. Sahinyan in 1958 about 200m to the south-east of the basilic church, revealed a 120m long and 4m thick dam of an artificial small lake built in the IV-V centuries.

Yereruyk was founded much earlier as a pagan temple. According to the description of Toros Toramanyan, the reconstructions and additions made to the monument at different periods are clearly seen. During different periods, the narthex on the western side, lateral rooms, external halls adjacent to the southern and northern facades and the current multi-level base were added to the initial building. All that was executed with great skill and artistic taste, thereby



creating a new, more complex structure, in line with the architectural spirit of that time. The western and two southern portals, monolithic lintels, windows, fractured and toothed cornices, capitals and anchors of pilasters were artistically designed. There are also traces of preserved frescoes.

In 1928-1929 the monument was renovated: the missing parts of the southern frontal wall, aperture of the eastern wall and some parts of the walls were reinforced. A number of small-scale reinforcement and conservation works were also undertaken in 1948. In 1958, the southern and eastern base-stairs were renovated. However, renovation works, restarted in 1964-1965, were left incomplete. During the recent years (1980-1990), with the participation of some Italian specialists, there were carried out a number of works on the preservation and partial reinforcement of the walls by placing steel triangular sloping trusses on the south-western and south-eastern corners of the structure. In addition, an attempt was made to add an anchor to the upper corner of the southeastern cornerside.

**Bibliography:**

- T. Toramanyan, "Armenian Architecture History Materials", vol. 1., Y., 1948.
- A. Sahinyan, "Yereruyk", Y., 1984.
- Yu. Tamanian, "New life to monuments", Y., 1988.
- N. Marr, "Yereruyk Basilica", Y., 1968.

# ST. GEVORG CHURCH OF ARTIK



St. Gevorg Church of Artik is a magnificent and valuable monument. It is not known exactly when and by whom it was founded, however, according to the researchers, the church was built in the middle of the VII c. The church has a cross-shaped plan, central-domed structure and it looks similar to Mastara Church. In the middle parts of all the sides of St. Gevorg Church there are semicircular apses with domed roofs. On the both sides of the eastern apse there are square-based altars with apse-shaped small niches. The prayer hall is covered with a broad dome, which has reached us ruined. It has two entrances: the main entrance is on the western side, and the other one is in the southern side. The northern cross is semicircular from inside and outside, while others are semicircular from inside, and multifaceted from outside. The three-faceted apse on the eastern side is illuminated by three windows. The surface of the eastern facade of the church is decorated with two pairs of semi-columns and two niches. The northern and western facades (the corners of the facets of which are highlighted by a pair of decorative semi-columns) are quite similar to each other. Inside the wall of the northern crosswing there are stairs. St. Gevorg Church was built of massive polished pink Artik tuff stones. There are no written records preserved on the stones. The capitals of pillars and the “crowns” of the windows are decorated with various ornaments (grape cluster with leaf, pomegranate and palm leaf, and etc.).

#### **Bibliography:**

Toramanyan T., “Materials of Armenian Architecture History”, Yerevan, 1948

Harutunyan V., “History of Armenian Architecture”, Yerevan, 1992

Eghiasaryan, H., “Historical monuments of Shirak Valley”, Yerevan, 1975.

# LMBATAVANK

(ST. STEPANOS CHURCH OF LMBATAVANK)



Lmbatsavank is located 1.5-2 km south-west of the town of Artik in Shirak Province. The church, was built in VI-VII cc. It is an externally and internally cross-shaped, small domed structure with 8-faceted drum and a squinch passage. The peculiarities of the monument are: the northern and southern wings with a rectangular plan and covered with an apse conch; the apse in the eastern part with no windows (the aperture was opened later); the horseshoe-shaped apse and arches. In terms of dimension, it is an architectural cozy building with towering proportions. The monastery was built of massive Artik tuff polished stones. On the walls there are preserved inscriptions dating back to the XII–XIII cc.

On the left and right sides of the main altar apse conch and adjacent eastern wall we can see the depiction of the “Appearance of God” scene, created based on the vision of the prophet Ezekiel. In the center of the remnants of frescoes there is the image of Christ, surrounded with the symbols of heavenly powers on the background of fire tongues, as well as with two horsemen (one of them is St. Grigor), who hold a staff topped with a cross. There we can also find bas-relief frescos, which are distinguished by their harmony. Lambakavank is remarkable for its proportional external shapes and high artistic design.

In 1953-1954, the surrounding areas of the Lambakavank were excavated. During the excavations, there was discovered a khachkar (cross-stones), some pedestals and graves (IX-X cc.), sculptured fragments (VII-XIII cc.), tiles, metal tools and other objects. During 1953-1955, the partially ruined dome, roofs of the cross wings and cornices were reconstructed.

#### Գրականություն

Եղիազարյան Բ., Շիրակի լեռնահովտի պատմական հուշարձանները, Երևան, 1975:

Գրիգորյան Վ., Հայաստանի վաղ միջնադարյան կենտրոնագմբեթ փոքր հուշարձանները, Երևան, 1982:

# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF HARITCH



The monastic complex, which dates back to the VII-XIII cc., is located in Harich village of Shirak Province. The earliest mention of the complex was made by Mkhitar Anetsi (XIII c.). The monastic complex of Harichavank includes the churches of St. Grigor and St. Astvatsatsin built before the XIII c., a half-ruined library-seminary and two chapels. The oldest monuments of the complex are St. Grigor Church and the “Hermit’s chapel”. St. Grigor Church is a structure typical of the VI–VII cc. It is a central-domed structure with a cross-shaped plan and rectangular sacristy on the southeastern side. The church was repeatedly reconstructed, as a result of which the dome lost its original appearance.

Later (probably in the XII c.), Sargis Tchon erected the second-floor chapel on the sacristy, adjacent to the church from the southwest. At the end of the XII c., the Commander-in-Chief Zakare bought

Harich with the surrounding areas and started the construction of the church of St. Astvatsatsin. According to the building inscription, the construction of the church was finished in 1201. At that time, the wall was also built. A small fragment of the wall, which had an arched entrance, has been preserved in the eastern part of the monastery. The church is a domed-hall type structure. The second-floor sacristies on the western side were replaced by columned galleries, which appear rarely in the Armenian architecture. Due to sculptured rosettes, the dome of the church (with a fan-shaped calotte) reached a new level of elaboration, which form a peculiar string-course around the dome. The artistic decoration of the monument is remarkable by a warden bas-relief of brothers Zakare and Ivane on the eastern facade.

The narthex is adjacent to the church of St. Astvatsatsin from the west and includes the apse of St. Grigor Church. It was constructed before 1224 by Prince Vahram Hetchup and belongs to the type of four-apsidal narthexes.

The second (or small narthex) is located on the southern side of St. Grigor Church and was probably built in the XII–XIII cc. Only the north-western part of this construction, with one column and semi-columns adjacent to the northern and western walls, has reached us.

On the south-east side of St. Grigor Church we can see the preserved small north-western part of the monastery library–seminary, which belongs to the four-column type of narthexes. The library-seminary served as a manuscript-writing and miniature painting center.

The “Hermit’s chapel” is located in the south-western part of the complex, on a rock fragment. Over time, along with the rock fragment, it became detached from the site and bent towards the gorge. This structure has a rectangular plan and a vaulted gable roof. The only entrance is from the north.

It is known from historical sources that Harichavank was destroyed in the XI c. by Seljuk invasion and was reconstructed in the XII c. by the leader Grigor. Similar works were carried out also in 1850 by a company “Harich”, established in Gyumri. During 1850–1881, a seminary, cellar-kitchen, dormitory, dining-hall and household structure were built at the site of the ruined wall (to the north of the group of monuments). Later, a second floor was added to the building of the library–seminary. It served as a residence for the Catholicos. At the top of the household building there was built a seminary. The second arched gate of the complex with an adjacent two-storey construction was built in 1883-1884. In 1892, a bell tower was added to St. Grigor Church from the east and, in 1893, a bridge was built in the ravine. After this, the company finished the construction activities.

With the support of an Armenian benefactor Eduardo Seferian from Argentina, Harichavank was partially reconstructed during 1995-1999. In 2005-2006, under the initiative of Davit Varakyan, there were conducted some reconstruction works. Since 2010, with the support of Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, there have been conducted several reconstruction works.



**Bibliography:**

A. Jalalyan, “The Monument Group of Harich”, “BSS”, 1986, N 2.

O. Khalpakhchyan, “The Architectural Ensembles of Armenia from the 8th c. B.C. till the 19th c. A.D.”, Moscow, 1980.

# THE CHURCH OF PEMZASHEN



Pemzashen is located about 6 km south-west from the town of Artik in Shirak Province of RA. This unique early medieval group of monuments, composed of churches adjacent to each other, is situated in the center of Pemzashen. The central church of the complex (VI c.) is a three-apse, internally cross-shaped, central-domed structure, externally included in a rectangular space. It is the only four-winged domed small structure with a composition externally enclosed in a rectangle. The church was built of massive polished tuff stones. On the stones we can see the symbols of its builders. Its decorative design is typical of the Armenian architecture of the VI-VII cc. Especially remarkable is the sculptured lintel of the entrance with the image of Virgin Mary caring baby Jesus in her hands, a philanthropist with open arms in the foreground and angels at the top. The excavations, carried out in the 1970's on the northern side of this structure, revealed a large single-nave basilica church. Based on the architectural solutions and discovered archaeological materials, it was dated to the V c. The lower rows of the thick walls of massive polished tuff stones and multi-stage anchor of pilaster have remained preserved. The internally horseshoe-shaped absis is externally five-faceted. On the central facet there is an equal-armed carved cross taken into a circle. The entrances are from the south and west. The prayer hall is divided by three pairs of pilasters into four, almost equal, parts.



On the southern side of the group of monuments there is a small, single-nave, vaulted church, dating back to the VI c. The ornament on the frame of the main portal can be found also in the decorations of the churches Katoghike and Hripsimeh in Avan. Its facades have two-sided “swallowtail” ends (which is typical of Roman architecture), several tablets designed for Greek and Latin inscriptions (in professional literature called “tabula ansata”).

Among the two basilica churches there is a cross-shaped domed church built of red tuff polished stones. The cubed space of the church is covered by a dome with 8-faceted drum, which has a squinch passage. Besides the rectangular crosswing on the western side, the other three are semi-circular. Due to its composition, the church is a unique example of the early medieval Armenian architecture. During 1975-1976, the monuments were repeatedly reconstructed and cleaned.

**Bibliography:**

- H. Yeghiazarian, “The historical monuments of Shirak valley”, Y., 1975.
- V. Grigoryan, “The early medieval Armenian small central-domed monuments”, Y., 1982.
- T. Toramanyan, “Armenian Architecture History Materials”, Y, 1948, vol. 2.

# ARAGATSOTN

HOVHANNAVANK

THE MONASTERY OF SAGHMOSAVANK

ST. KATOGHIKE AND ST. ASTVATSATSIN  
CHURCHES OF TALIN

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF  
ASTVATZNKAL

ST. GRIGOR CHURCH OF ARUCH

THE TSIRANAVOR CHURCH

KARMRAVOR ST. ASTVATSATSIN  
CHURCH

AMBERD

THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES

ST. GEVORG MONASTERY OF MUGHNI

THE ST. SARKIS MONASTERY OF USHI

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF THEGHER

THE BASILICA CHURCH COMPLEX OF  
QASAKH



# HOVHANNAVANK

(AMATUNYATS ST. KARAPET, ANAVANK, HANAVANK, HOVANU VANQ, HOVHANA ANAPAT, SYUGHI VANQ)



The monastery is located in Ohanavan village of Aragatsotn Province, on the edge of Qasagh gorge. It was one of the most prominent religious, educational and cultural centers of Medieval Armenia. According to the traditions, St. Grigor Lusavorich (or St. Gregory the Illuminator) founded the monastery and transferred here the relics of St. Hovhannes Mkrtych. It is assumed that this was the main reason the monastery was named Hovhannavank (according to Arakel Davrishetsi, it was named after the leader Hovhannes). Later, St. Grigor Lusavorich designated a man called Syughianos as abbot, after whom the monastery was also called “Syughi Anapat” (Syughi Desert) or Syughi Vanq (Monastery of Syughi). The monastery consists of a single-nave and Katoghike churches, gavit (narthex) and mausoleum.

**THE SINGLE-NAVE CHURCH (V c.)** is the oldest building of the complex. It was a single-nave basilica with a wooden roof, which later was replaced by a stone vault. During the construction of the Katoghike Church, the southern entrance to the church was closed,

and the new one was opened on the western part. The roof, destroyed in 1669 by an earthquake, was replaced (in 1734) with a vault, placed 4m below the previous one and based on arrow-shaped arches. The windows of the initial structure (three western and one southern), which were crowned with horseshoe-shaped arches, remained undamaged. During the construction of the walls, they used the stones of the other buildings of the monastery. The church is devoid of ornaments. The exception is the XIII c. tribal symbol of the Vachutyan princes (an eagle with a dove in its claws). Several bibliographical sources indicate that on the southern side of the church there was a gavit with wooden roof. The latter was demolished during the construction of the Katoghike Church.

**ST. KARAPET KATOGHIKE CHURCH (1216-1221 cc.)** is the main church of the monastery. It adjoins the single-nave church from the south. The church was built under the support of Prince Vache Vachutyan. Later, after his death, the construction was finished by Prince Qurd Vachutyan. It is an externally rectangular and internally cross-shaped domed structure with two-storey sacristies in the four corners. The only entrance is on the western side and has a portal. It was richly designed with semi-columns, decorated with octagonal braided star ornaments. On the lintel above the entrance we can see the depiction of the evangelical parable “Wise and Foolish virgins”. In the center of the bas-relief there is an image of Christ, blessing the “wise virgins” with his right hand and pushing the “fool virgins” with the left one. The bas-relief differs from the iconography by the fact that, instead of virgins there were depicted men. The front of the church stage was also richly decorated with the combinations of five-wing stars, polygons and rhombuses. The building is “crowned” with a 12-faceted massive dome.



**THE GAVIT (1243)** was built by Prince Qurd, the son of Vache Vachutian. It adjoins the Katoghike Church and the single-nave basilica. It is a spacious four-column hall with a square plan. Different parts of the roof have various design solutions (stalactites, crossed lines, stone flat ceilings). The central part of the building is “crowned” with 12-faceted rotunda with an “erdik” (a hole in the roof). Among the similar structures in Armenia, it has the largest erdik - 6.5 m in diameter. The western facade of the gavit has unique design. Above the sculptured portal of gavit there is a two-sided window divided by a middle-column with an aperture, taken into an arched lintel and decorated with stalactites. On the two sides of the portal there is a slender arcade based on pilasters. The arches (each with one span) stretch along the northern and southern facades. The interior was enriched by thoroughly designed high artistic khachkars (cross-stones) erected on the pedestals.

**THE MAUSOLEUM** adjoins the gavit from the north and the single-nave basilica from the west. It is a structure with irregular plan, created by the combination of two buildings of different periods. In the XVII c. it was called a mausoleum. It is assumed that the western part of the building belonged to an older building, which was partly demolished during the construction of the gavit at that place. Later it was repaired and connected to the single-nave hall. The most remarkable lithographs of the XII-XIII cc. are the inscriptions of Princess Shushanik (1176) and princes Zakare and Ivane (1200) of Syunik, preserved on the walls of the building.

The group of monuments is surrounded by a wall, built at the end of the XII c. Near the entrance of the wall there is a remarkable early medieval monument erected on a pedestal (was reconstructed in the XIV c.). In the territory of the complex there are also numerous gravestones and khachkars. At the beginning of the XIX c. the monastery was abandoned. In 1918, the Katoghike Church and gavit were severely damaged by an earthquake. As a historical and cultural memorial, in 1923 Hovhannavank was taken under state control. During 1938-1954, the monastery was reinforced and reconstructed by the architect N. Toraski. The reconstruction of the Katoghike Church was completed in 1993 by the architect H. Gasparyan. By the decision of the RA Government, in 2001, Hovhannavank was transferred to the control of Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

**Bibliography:**

- Z. Sarkavag, "Historiography", vol. 3, Vagharshapat, 1870.
- K. Ghafadarian, "Hovhannavank and its inscriptions", Y., 1948.
- V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.
- "Christian Armenia" Encyclopedia, Y., 2002.
- Jakobson A., Ghafadarian K., Curatola G., Kasakhi Vanker, V., 1986 (Documenti di architettura armena, 15).

# THE MONASTERY OF SAGHMOSAVANK



The monastery of Saghmosavank is located in the east of Saghmosavan village in the Aragatsotn Province, on the edge of the right bank of the Qasagh River. It was one of the most prominent religious, scientific, educational and cultural centers of Medieval Armenia. The etymology of the name «Saghmosavank» is related to the psalms of friars. According to traditions, the monastery was established by St. Grigor Lusovorich. There were no traces of an early medieval structure found in the surrounding areas, however, it is not to be excluded that the tradition of its construction has a real basis and the monastic complex was built at the site of an ancient church.

In 1255, Prince Qurd Vachutyan and his wife Khorishah built the manuscript repository of the monastery with a chapel in memory of their daughter Mamakhatun, who passed away at a young age.

The complex consists of two churches, gavit, manuscript repository and a wall surrounding the group of monuments. There are also several large and small cemeteries spread around the territory of the complex.

**The church of St. Zion (1215)** is the main church of the complex. It was erected by Vache Vachutyan in 1215. It is a rectangular outside and cruciform inside, domed hall-type structure with two-story sacristies in the corners. The facades were designed with «Ar-



menian niches». The only entrance to the church is on the west side. The floor is paved, which gives the church a slender appearance. The drum of the dome gives a towering symmetry to the structure.

**The gavit (narthex) (first quarter of the XIII c.)** It adjoins the church of St. Zion from the west. The gavit is a four-column, spacious structure with a square plan. The central square space is covered with twelve-faceted tent-like stone ceiling. The zone of transition from the under-cupola square to the base of the twelve-faceted tent-like ceiling was made of a “belt”, composed of triangular stones. The ceiling has a circular roof with an elegant rotunda. The structure of the roof is one of the unique examples of Armenian architecture. Especially impressive are the two large windows of the southern facade and rich decoration of the high entrance.

**The small church (XIII c.)** It is situated near the church of St. Zion (2m to the south). It is a single-nave, vaulted structure with a semi-circular apse. Archb. Hovhannes was buried under its northern wall. According to several architectural records, the church was called St. Astvatsatsin and dates back to 1235.

**The Manuscript Repository (1255)** is located on the southern side of the group of monuments. It adjoins the single-nave church (in the western side), as well as the church of St. Zion (in the southern side) and the gavit (in the south-eastern side). The “crown” of the southern wall of the church was engraved with the name of the architect - Mkrtych. Due to the complex location and combination with the small chapel, it has a unique composition. In the eastern side it ends with a chapel altar and two-storey adjoining sacristies. It

**Bibliography:**

- H. Shahkhatunyants, “Description of five provinces of Echmiadzin and Ararat”, volume 2, Echmiatsin, 1848.
- K. Alishan, “Ayrarat, Venice”, 1890.
- H. Yeghiazarian, Saghmosavank, “Echmiatsin”, 1961, N 6.
- V. Petrosyants, Saghmosavank, “Echmiatsin”, 1981, N 3.
- A. Jacobson, Saghmosavank, Y., 1984.
- A. Jakobson, K. Ghafadian, “Kasakhi vanker, Milano”, 1986 (Documenti di architettura armena, 15).

is assumed that the upper floor, as well as the vaulted space above the apse, served as hiding-places and repositories for manuscripts. The structure also impresses with relief sculptures. The ceiling was decorated with sculptures of the sun, moon and five-pointed stars. The vault of the apse was decorated with two angels, carved in the form of a human being and an eagle. On the walls of the apse we can notice several frescos, which are now hardly visible. The floor of the structure is paved. The sophisticated system of roofing was made up of crossed arches. It also has a towering rotunda with eight columns. In front of the entrance to the library there was built a vestibule. Unfortunately, only its bases have remained preserved.

The repository of manuscripts and the gavit are one of the high artistic structures of Armenian secular architecture of the XIII c. The group of monuments is surrounded by walls fastened with semi-circular pyramids. The residential buildings of the monastery were also situated within the fenced area. They were destroyed, but the traces are still noticeable. The small cemetery of the monastery of Saghmosavank extends to the northern side of the monastery. There we can find an ornamented khachkar, carved out in memory of Pontiff Hakob (1421). In the second cemetery of the monastery, about 200m north of Saghmosavank, were remained several "vormnapak" (embedded) and ornamented khachkars, dating back to the XIII-XIV cc.

In 1890, on the initiative of Khrimian Hayrik, there were carried out several reconstruction works. During the Soviet period (in 1977-1978), the ceiling of the gavit was reconstructed. With the support of the organization «Country and Culture», since 1998, there were carried out a number of renovation works: the gavit was renovated (1998), the church of St. Zion and the chapel were reconstructed (1999) and the reconstruction of the repository of manuscripts was completed (2000).



# ST. KATOGHIKE AND ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCHES OF TALIN



The churches are located on the northern edge of the city, in the historical Aragatsotn Province of RA. There are no lithographic and bibliographic records about the construction of the Katoghike Church. The earliest wall inscriptions, dating back to 783, refer to the process of bringing water to Talin.

According to the plan, dimensional compositions, architectural-artistic means of expression and construction features, the church dates back to the VII c. Its construction is related to the Kamsarakan noble family. It belongs to the “domed basilica” type of Armenian architecture. The original copy of the church is the cathedral of St. Grigor in Dvin, which was reconstructed in the VII c. and transformed from a three-nave basilica into a three-apse temple. During the construction of the Katoghike Church of Talin that compositional idea was improved and turned into an architectural complete form. The church is a three-nave, domed structure with three apses and main dimensions of 36.7m x 26.7m. The apses are externally polyhedral. On the northern and southern sides of the main apse there are rectangular sacristies, upper floors of which served as hiding places. The prayer hall was divided by a double-row of pylons and

pilasters into central high and wide, lateral, narrow and low vaulted naves. The dome transition is made through pendentives. It has 5 entrances: 2 northern, 2 southern and 1 portal. It is richly illuminated by wide arched and 9 circular windows on 29 facades and 12 high drums. The hall is spacious and solemn. The 4 massive pylons, 8 pilasters, arches, connecting them together, and the vaulted ceilings form a joint, complete structural system.

It was constructed on a three-storey socle of black and red polished tuff. Originally it had a tiled roof, which was later replaced with stone slabs.

The Cathedral is one of the unique monuments of the early medieval church architecture. It is gorgeous, palatial and differs from modern monuments with its restrained solutions and artistically designed external facades. The elements of its design include various “crowns” above the windows, pairs of angular pilasters of the apses and drum facets, as well as sculptured arches resting on them. The impact of decorations in Zvartnots Temple on the design of the “crowns” above the apertures and arch-bows is obvious. Some decorations (separate fragments of the drum and cross wings) were painted white and red. Especially the western facade was designed with great skill. The capitals of the pair of pilasters (on both sides of the portal), embedded into slender niches, probably had monuments or winged crosses. The walls internally were plastered with a thin layer of lime mortar. There we can see the partially remained fragments of the frescoes. In the main altar there is the image of Holy Mother and portraits of saints. The conch of the apse contained a unique representation of the image “Christ in Majesty”: instead of Christ, there was presented only the throne with two evangelists on both sides and apostles below. In the 10 medallions of the arches, leading to the main altar, there are portraits of saints, and in the central medallion - an equal-armed cross. On the southern wall of the altar we can see the composition “Entry into Jerusalem”. The frescoes date back to 80-90s of the VII c. According to the inscription of the sacristy on the left side, the orderer was Movses Yekeghetsapan (churchwarden).

The Cathedral had not undergone any substantial reconstruction (except the replacement of the tiled roof with stone roof). In 1840 it was damaged by an earthquake: the dome and the south-western part of the structure were destroyed. It was partially reinforced in 1947. During 1970-1974 the drum of the dome was reconstructed and the roofs were renovated. In addition, during the excavations the bases of the V c. single-nave church, located in the northern part, were opened. Later, an underground mausoleum was discovered there.

The church of St. Astvatsatsin (or “Kamsarakan’s”) is located about 200m south-east of the Katoghike Church. According to undated building inscription on the western facade, it was built by the owner of Shirak and Arsharunik - Nerses Kamsarakan. According to its architectural composition and lithographic records, it dates back

to the VII c. It is an internally and externally cross-shaped, three-apsed, domed structure. Its eastern and western wings are relatively longer than the northern and southern wings. The under-cupola base is rectangular and elongated along a north-south axis. The cross-wings are connected to each other by arches. The dome transition is through squinches. It is crowned with 12 drums. On the western wall of the northern crosswing there is a small, open altar. The elements of its decoration include the western portal with a sculpted arch based on a pair of pilasters, decorated window frames and toothed cornice-belts. It was built of large red and black polished tuff stones.

**Bibliography:**

T. Toramanyan, "Armenian Architecture History Materials", vol. 1, 2, Y., 1942, 1948.

A. Manucharyan, "Research into the 4th-11th-Century Constructive Evidences of Armenia", Y. 1977.

V. Grigoryan, "The small central-domed monuments of early medieval Armenia", Y. 1982.

The church has remained in a completely intact condition. It was partially renovated in 1947-1948 and 1980. In 1998 the tiled ceiling was reconstructed. In the surrounding cemetery there are early medieval four-faceted monuments with thematic sculptures.



# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF ASTVATZNKAL

The monastic complex of Astvatznkal is one of the most prominent monuments of Medieval Armenian architecture. It is located in the middle of the villages of Yernjatap and Hartavan in Aragatsotn Province, in the Kasagh Gorge, on the triangular high hill on the right side of the river. It was built in the V-XIII cc. The monastic complex consists of St. Astvatsatsin and St. Nshan churches and a gavit (narthex). The Church of St. Astvatsatsin is a single-nave, vaulted, basilica of the V c. It has horseshoe-shaped arches, ancient internal pilaster bases and capitals. The entrances are on the northern and southern sides. On the southern side there is an adjacent chapel with horseshoe-shaped altar and enclosed room. According to T. Toramanaian, it possibly served as a mausoleum-martyrium. In 1207 the church was renovated and a monastic congregation was established there. The Church of St. Nshan (or Katoghike) adjoins the Church of St. Astvatsatsin from the northern side. It was built in 1244 by Prince Kurd Vachutyan and his wife Khorishah. It is a rectangular outside and cruciform inside, domed, hall-type structure with two-story sacristies in both sides of the altar. The doors of the first floor sacristies open up to the hall, and the entries of the second floor sacristies are on the side of the stage. The southern entrance of the church opens up to the basilica church, and the other one is from the western side. The most striking are the bas-reliefs on the front entrance lintel. The gavit adjoins the Church of St. Nshan on the western side. According to the inscriptions preserved inside the church, it was built in the XIII c. by the architect Johannes Vardapet, under the patronage of Prince Kurd Vachutyan and his wife Khorishah. It is a rectangular, four-column, central-plan and spacious structure with a stalactite dome ending with garret-window. The floor of the gavit is completely covered with tombstones. In the territory of the monastery there are several high-value khachkars and grave stones, dating back to the XII-XVII cc. The reconstruction works of the monastic complex were started in 2007 (the author of the project is the architect Suren Saroyan).



## Bibliography:

- S. Barkhudaryan, "Armenian medieval architects and craftsmen", Y., 1963.
- "Christian Armenia: Encyclopedia", Y., 2002.
- V. Petrosyants, "Historick-architectural monuments of Nig-Aparan", Y., 1988.



# ST. GRIGOR CHURCH OF ARUCH

(ARUCH TEMPLE)

One of the most significant monuments of Early Medieval Armenian architecture is the temple of Aruch. It is located in the eastern part of Aruch village in Aragatsotn Province of RA. According to bibliographic records and a building inscription on the eastern facade of the church, the temple of Aruch was built in the 60's of the VII century by Prince Grigor Mamikonian and his wife Heghine. The church belongs to the domed-hall type of structures and is erected on a three-stage socle. It consists of a prayer hall, a dome with a pendentive transition (now ruined) and sacristies with two windows on both sides of the eastern apse. Though the temple does not have a domed roof, it dominates with its majesty over the surrounding vast panorama. St. Grigor church is the largest among the early medieval domed halls. The entrances are from the north, south and west sides. The cathedral is built of black polished tuff stones. It is also remarkable for the unity of its external and internal architectural and stylistic solutions. The external ornaments are done according to the principles of the Early Medieval Armenian architecture: there are many large windows, "Armenian niches" (on eastern façade), arches (decorated with sculptures) and braided-like cornices. The church of Aruch is unique with its frescos, which are one of the best examples of Early Medieval Armenian monumental pictorial art. The big and too bright internal space makes the frescos solemn and majesty. Only several fragments of the rich frescos, which give evidence of the high executive mastery of VII c. painter Stepanos, have been preserved.

During its long history, St. Grigor was repeatedly reconstructed, but maintained its original appearance. The first time, the church was reconstructed in the XV c. by Khachatour Vardapet. Later, in 1946, 1958-1959 and 1964, different parts of the church were also reconstructed and the surrounding area of the church was improved.

The excavations, conducted in 1947-1952 (led by Varazdat Harutyunyan) on the southern side of the temple of Aruch, revealed the ruins of the palace of Grigor Mamikonian (dates back to 60s of the VII c.), and a basilica located north-east of the temple.



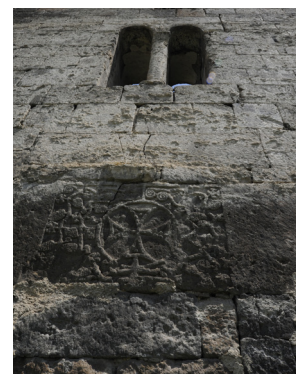
#### **Bibliography:**

K. Matevosyan, "Aruch", Y., 1987.

"Christian Armenia" Encyclopedia, Y., 2002.

V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.

# THE TSIRANAVOR CHURCH



The Tsiranavor Church is located in the town of Ashtarak, the Aragatsotn Province of RA. The bibliographical and lithographic sources, related to its establishment, do not provide any specific information. However, based on its architectural, construction and compositional peculiarities, the church dates back to the IV-V cc. According to existing information, earlier, on the site of the church there was a temple dedicated to the worship of dragons (i.e. Azhdahak). After the adoption of Christianity, the temple suffered the same fate as other pagan temples: it was destroyed and a rectangular-based church was erected on its base.

The prayer hall of the church was divided into one central and two lateral sections by two pairs of piers. The roof of the structure is wooden. In the V c. the church was reconstructed into a triple-nave basilica church. The 2 pairs of piers were replaced by 3 more massive pairs of piers and the original wooden roof was replaced by a vaulted one, thus retaining the original four-pitched composition of the structure. At the same period, two sacristies were built on both sides of the main altar. On the western facade of the church there are windows, and on the southern and northern facades - entrances. In the XI-XII cc., in the period of the liberation struggle against the Seljuks, the Zakarians fortified the northern and western facades of the church by doubling the walls, thus turning it into a powerful defense construction. During the XVIII-XIX cc. the church served as a fortress. In the upper part of the southern wall it has embrasures protected by stone "helmets".

After an earthquake in 1827 the church was partially destroyed. In particular, the roof and northern piers collapsed. In 1962 the ruins were cleaned and preserved. Later, during excavations, conducted in 1988, the double-wall of the western facade was removed, which made it possible to discover the inscription of King Gagik I Bagratuni (990-1020) made in 1013.

#### Bibliography:

- A. Ghanalanyan, "Armenian Traditions", Y., 1969.
- E. Shahaziz, "History of Ashtarak", Y., 1987.
- V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.
- S.Saghumyan, "Ashtarak", 1998.
- "Conservation of ruined monuments", 16-24 x/2002, Yerevan-Byurakan.

# KARMRAVOR ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH



Karmravor St. Astvatsatsin Church is located on the north-eastern side of the Ashtarak town in Aragatsotn Province of RA, on a high hill not far from the old Berdatagh. It is a small building with harmonious proportionality. The date of the construction of the church is unknown. According to its compositional solution and architectural details, it dates back to the VII c. and reached us nearly unchanged. The church is domed, single-altar type structure with four wing plan and one apse on the eastern wing. It was built of brown and red tuff stones. Inside the church was decorated with frescos and Armenian inscriptions. The decorative ornamentation is discreet and is in harmony with the architectural design. The small size of the church (6 x 7,5 m) and the simplicity of the decoration gives us reason to assume that it served as a mausoleum for the royal family. It was also a nunnery monastery and operated until 1813.

The church is surrounded by walls of polished tuff stones built in 1326 by Asnavur and Ghutalchak spouses. The inscriptions have been preserved on the lintel of southern door and on the left wall of the chapel of St. Marine Church (Ashtarak city). Due to partial reconstructions, the walls have preserved up to our days. There is also a medieval graveyard with khachkars and gravestones of the XIII-XVII cc. The oldest khachkar (1184) is of Arkakazmogh. Only the pedestal and five-line inscription have remained preserved.

In 1956, the monument was reconstructed and improved. During those works the tumbledown chapel, adjoining the church from the west, was removed. The latter is an unfinished construction of 1860, which only distort the appearance of the medieval monument.

#### **Bibliography:**

Y. Shahaziz, "History of Ashtarak", Y., 1987.

S. Mnatsakanyan, "Yerevan and Its Surroundings", Y., 1971.

# AMBERD



Amberd (or Anberd) town-stronghold was erected in the historic Aragatsotn canton, about 7 km north-west of Byurakan village in Ashtarak Region of Aragatsotn Province. It is located on the southern slope of Mount Aragats, at the confluence of the rivers Arkashen and Amberd. The exact date of the establishment of Amberd is unknown. Some scholars attribute it to the Cyclopean period, and the others to the Uratian and Early Medieval periods. Based on the results of the excavations and historical-archaeological researches, the stronghold of Amberd was dated to the X–XIII cc. According to several historical sources, the construction of Amberd was started in the VII c. by the Kamsarakan Princes. Since the X c., the stronghold belonged to the Pahlavuni Princes and was one of the important military strongholds of the Bagratid Kingdom. Due to its natural position and defensive structures, it had a reputation of an impregnable stronghold. In the X–XIII cc., the town-stronghold included a number of historical and architectural monuments: stronghold walls, the gates of the Arkashen and Amberdadzor Gorges, a castle, water reservoirs, a bath-house, secret passages, a chapel, residential buildings, the Katoghike Church. At present, we can only find the preserved ruins of the town-stronghold (X–XIII cc.) and its walls, as well as the remnants of the bath-house (X–XI cc.), various buildings and the Katoghike Church (or Vahramashen) (1026). The castle was built in the north-western part of the town-stronghold.

The architectural and archaeological surveys of the ruins of the basalt-built complex allow us to conclude that it was a three-storey (in some parts four-storey) structure with inter-storey overhead covers made of logs. Probably it was repeatedly reconstructed and reinforced. The bath-houses are situated at the castle and at the gate of the Arkashen. It was built of polished stones and had an underground heating system. This remarkable monument has a rectangular plan with a cloak-room, located successively along the longitudinal axis, a swimming-hall and a heating system. On the wall of one of the rooms we can notice the traces of a mural painting. The Chapel is located about 9m of the bath-house. It is assumed that the chapel was built not earlier than X c.

The church of Vahramashen was built in 1026 under the support of Vahram Pahlavuni. It is located near the wall of Arkashen, on the central high-level area of the town-stronghold. The church has a cross-shape domed composition. The praying-hall, along with its main apse on the eastern side and sacristies on the 4 corners, is included in the rectangular plan. The internally round and externally 12-faceted drum was decorated with a pair of pilasters and is covered with an umbrella-shaped calotte. Inside the church, there is an inscription related to the construction of the church.

Over the past decades, there were carried out a number of archeological excavations and reinforcement/ reconstruction works. The first excavations of Amberd town-stronghold were carried out in 1936 by the academician H. Orbeli. Afterwards, in 1963-1972, the excavations were continued by the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the SSRA and under the supervision of N. Tokarski and S. Harutyunyan. During the excavations there were discovered several metal objects, weapons, silver jewelry, pottery, glassworks, golden and copper coins, candle-sticks, a bronze candelabra and other archeological objects.

Based on the measurements of the architects K. Gha-fadaryan, A. Zhamharyan, V. Harutyunyan, S. Kyurkchyan, A. Mirijanyan (1949–1972) and the reconstruction project of the architect Yu. Tamanyan, there were carried out several reconstruction and reinforcement works. In 2005-2007, There also were carried out some works on improvement of the complex.

**Bibliography:**

Harutyunyan S., "Anberd", Y., 1978.

Shakhkhan G., "Lori: the Stone-Sculptured Pages of History", Y., 1986.

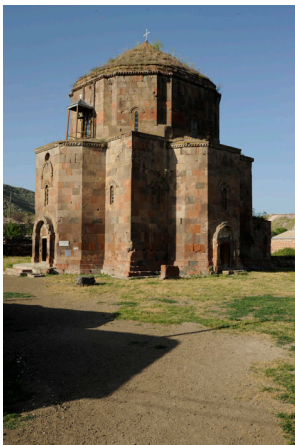
Tamanyan Yu., "Restoration of the Stone Age", Y., 1981.

Amberd, Milano, 1972.

# THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES



The church of St. Hovhannes is located in the center of Mastara village. It is one of the most notable and original distinctive churches of Early Medieval Armenian architecture. According to the building inscriptions on the southern and western facades, the church was built in the VII c. by a monk Grigoras. There are different viewpoints regarding the dating of the church. Some specialists consider that the inscription refers to the reconstruction of the church in VII c., and, based on the architectural-building features and ancient architectural forms of the church, it dates back to the earlier period – the V c. St. Hovhannes church is a center-domed, 4-altar structure. It has a quadrangle prayer hall. Its huge dome with octahedral drum rises on three-level tromps. The three apses are horseshoe-shaped from inside and 5-faceted from outside. There are sacristies on the two sides of the main altar. The entrances are from the western and southern altars. Initially, it was built of brown and violet massive stones, but in the VII c. it was renovated with orange and yellow stones. During the X-XIII cc. the church was repeatedly reconstructed. In the Late Middle Ages the church was surrounded with walls, which were ruined during reconstruction works in 1889.



## Bibliography:

T. Toramanyan, "Materials on Armenian Architecture", vol. 2. Y., 1948.

V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.

Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 7, Y., 1981.

The church of St. Hovhannes is especially remarkable by the perfect solution of its internal space. The harmony of cubage, as well as the large dome and tromps, give the interior space a majestic appearance. The decorations of the church: central-winged crosses of the straight arch, graphic sculptures of the cherubim, a cross sculpture with couple of birds and high-reliefs with pigeons on the vaulted crown are typical of Early Medieval Armenian architecture of the V c.

# ST. GEVORG MONASTERY OF MUGHNI

St. Gevorg Monastery of Mughni is located in the southern edge of Mughni village in Aragatsotn Province of RA. According to the historian Zaqaria Sarkavag (XVII c.), the monastery was founded by Hovhannavank's congregation. Probably, it took place in the 1st half of the XIII c., since in 1278 the manuscript was already copied in St. Gevorg Monastery. In the XIII-XV cc., it became a famous pilgrimage site. The monastery flourished in the XVII c., when the complex was completely reconstructed for the second time. In 1632-1655, Bishop Martiros (the leader of the monastery) demolished the already dilapidated church and other buildings, and instead built new structures: 3 nave basilicas with 2 pairs of pylons, walls and cells. However, in 1664 Hovhannes Vardapet completely demolished it and built a new one of polished tuff stones.

The architect of St. Gevorg Church was Sahak Hizanetsi (1666). After his death his student Usta Murad continued the started works. In the XIX c. St. Gevorg Monastery of Mughni was partially reconstructed. The roof was reconstructed in 1830, and the damaged steeple of the dome - in 1839. In 1870, a school was founded here. In 1895, the second floor of the living room in the northeastern side was built. A small building of the water spring, combined with the reservoir, is situated in the northwestern side of the complex. The vaulted dinning-hall and store-room are adjacent to the eastern wall. In 2000 the monastery was improved and reconstructed by Archbishop Mesrob Ashchyan. In October 8, 2000 it was anointed by the hand of Catholicos Garegin II.

The church of the monastery has a 4-pylon domed basilica structure. It was built of black and red polished tuff stones. There is an opened hall with 3 arches, adjoining the church from the western side, and 12-arched rotunda of the belfry, rising on its middle part. In the center of a large and high prayer hall there is a dome with a cylindrical drum and umbrella-shaped calotte, rising on the cruciform pilasters. On the north-eastern corner of the apse and the hall there are frescos dating back to the XIX c. and depicting various scenes. The colors play an important role in the outward decoration of the church: the bas-reliefs of 4 evangelists' symbols were carved on the dome drum using black and yellow-reddish tuff stones. The southern entrance is remarkable with its uniquely rich and splendid decorations. Due to the high aesthetic features of architectural forms, St. Gevorg Church of Mughni is considered to be one of the best structures of the Late Medieval Armenia.



#### Bibliography:

Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 8, Y., 1982.

# THE ST. SARKIS MONASTERY OF USHI



It is located 1 km north-west of the village of Ushi in Aragatsotn Province of RA, at the southern foot of the hill, where the remnants of the fortress-settlement structures of the II-I millennium BC have preserved till nowadays. According to records, inscriptions and lithographs found during excavations, the monument dates back to the V-XVII cc. The monumental complex includes the church of St. Sargis (V c.), and the main Catholic Church (XIII-XIV cc.). The gavit, bell tower, guesthouse, house-hold and residential auxiliary buildings were also part of the monastic complex. The church of St. Sargis is the only resistant building of the monastic complex and the first church that was named “St. Sargis”. According to several ancient records, Mesrop Mashtots founded the church in the V c. and buried there the relics of St. Sargis Zoravar (the Commander), which he had brought with him. The church is a single-nave, vaulted, rectangular structure with a horseshoe-shaped apse built on the eastern part of the prayer hall. It is located in the northern part of the monastic complex. The only entrance is on the western side. During its existence, the church was repeatedly reconstructed (V, XII-XIII, XVII cc.): particularly, the wall stones and the tile-covering of the stone floor were replaced.

The church of St. Astvatsatsin is the main, Catholic Church of the complex. As was mentioned, it was built by Vache Vachutian in the XIII c. and adjoins the southern wall of St. Sargis Church. Originally, the church was rectangular in plan and had a domed hall. The dome with its under-dome square was based on 2 towering pilasters on the western side of the prayer hall and each sides of the main apse.

It was distinguished by rich decorations, as well as numerous inscriptions. The main western and southern entrances were also richly decorated. The main apse was distinguished by its frescoes. On both sides of the altar there were two-storey sacristies. According to the inscription on the lintel above the main entrance, the gavit was built in 1264 adjacent to the southern wall of the church of St. Astvatsatsin. It is a rectangular structure, with a cross-shaped passage of arches between 4 pylons and 8 pilasters. It has two entrances (western and eastern). Especially remarkable is the window of the southern wall of the gavit, divided into two parts by pilasters.

The bell tower was built in 1311 adjacent to the western wall of the church of St. Astvatsatsin and the gavit. The main walls and some stones of the main entrance of bell tower have remained preserved. The other memorable structures of the monumental complex are the household, residential and auxiliary buildings built in the XVII-XVIII cc. by Voskan Yerevantsi (Voskan Vardapet), as well as the guest house (1654-1662) and round wall with towers.

After the devastating earthquake in 1827 the monumental complex was abandoned and covered with thick layer of earth over several years. Only after extensive excavations, carried out in 1999-2001, it was possible to remove the earth layer and reconstruct the V c. church of St. Sargis (2004).

**Bibliography:**

F. Babayan, "The St. Sargis monastery of Ushi", Y. 2005.

"Christian Armenia: Encyclopedia", Y., 2002.

Conservation of ruined monuments, 16-24 x/2002 Yerevan-Byurakan.



# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF THEGHER



The monastic complex is located in the north of Byurakan, in the village of Tegher, on the right edge of a deep gorge. According to a building inscription on the lintel above the western entrance of the gavit, the monastery was established in 1213-1232 by the wife of Prince Vache Vachutyan, Mamakhatur. The architect of the monastery was Aghbayrik Vardapet. The monument was built of gray basalt stones. It is one of the most significant church buildings of Medieval Armenia. The monastic complex is composed of the church of St. Astvatsatsin and a gavit.

According to an inscription preserved on the southern cut of the dome drum, the church of St. Astvatsatsin was built in 1213. It refers to the type of domed hall churches. It has an internally cross-shaped and externally rectangular structure and two-storey sacristies in the four corners. The church is distinguished by its discreet architectural design.

The gavit adjoins the church on the west side. According to the inscription on the capital of the north-eastern column, it was built by Aghbayrik and refers to the type of four-column gavits. It is notable for its spatial design and occupies a special place among other identical gavits. On the roofs of the northwestern and southwestern corners of the gavit, there are two small chapel-like churches, which



are externally rectangular, central-domed structures with small apses on the eastern side. The entrance from the chapels to the gavit is from the roof. This original compositional solution gives the structure more majestic and slender appearance.

For safety reasons, the monastery was fenced. In 1468 it was rebuilt by Sargis Byurakantsi and renovated in the end of XVIII c. It was greatly damaged by an earthquake in 1949. In 1950-1953 and 1975-1974, there were carried out several reconstruction works.

**Bibliography:**

V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.

S. Barkhudaryan, "Medieval Armenian Architects and Bricklayer Masters", Y., 1953.

# THE BASILICA CHURCH COMPLEX OF QASAKH



This significant monument of Early Christian Armenian architecture is located in the centre of Aparan city. It is considered that it served as the royal chapel of Archakunyats palace. The complex includes the main and ancient church of St. Khach (Cross), later built portico and a single-nave basilica church. St. Khach church is a three-nave basilica with a rectangular plan, the prayer hall of which was divided by two horseshoe-shaped arcades into central big and two small lateral naves, taken under one two-sided roof. The eastern apse is horseshoe-shaped from inside and 5-faceted from outside. The church has three entrances: two on the southern side and one on the western. The sacristy with rhombus plan was built in the north-eastern corner of the church in Early Middle Ages. The monument was built of black and gray massive tuff stones. The ornamental compositions on the lintels of portals of western and southern facades are the best examples of the Armenian sculpture in Early Middle Ages.

The excavations conducted in 1944-1947 by A. Sahinyan revealed the three-storey plinth-wall, remains of the columned hall (adjacent to the temple from north side) and the main walls of the single-nave vaulted basilica with horseshoe-shaped altar (adjacent to the sacristy from the northern side). The numerous details and fragments made it possible to reconstruct the general appearance of the monument and draw up a reconstruction project. One of the valuable ornamented capitals of Qasagh basilica is now preserved in the History Museum of Armenia. St. Khach Church, along with the adjacent sacristy, was completely reconstructed in 1980-1990 and operates since 1996.

**Bibliography:**

A.Sahinyan, "The Architecture of Qasagh Church", Y., 1955.

Toros Toramanyan, "Materials on History of Architecture", Vol. II, Y., 1948.

Varazdat Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y. 1992.



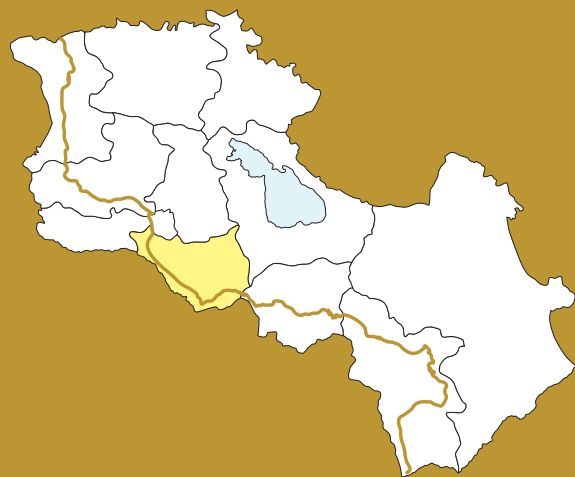
# ARARAT

THE ANCIENT CITY OF  
ARTASHAT

THE ANCIENT CITY OF DVIN

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX  
OF KHOR VIRAP

OVHANNES KARAPET  
MONASTERY



# THE ANCIENT CITY OF ARTASHAT



Artashat was founded by King Artashes and served as the capital of the Kingdom of Armenia. Located in a densely populated and fertile Ararat Valley, at the intersection of trade routes, Artashat became one of the most important and famous cities not only of Armenia, but also the Hellenistic East. There are various preserved noteworthy records about this city. In particular, according to the records of Movses Khorenatsi, in Artashat there were built pagan temples, and the statues of Artemis-Anahit and ancestors of the king were brought there from Bagaran. On the initiative of Artashes there were built various structures, thus Artashat was decorated as a royal city. It became one of the important centers of international trade in the Middle East and played the role of a capital which united Armenian lands for about five hundred years. The Roman general Lucullus regarded Artashat as “Armenian Carthage” disobedient to Rome and threatened to totally destroy it. He didn’t manage to do that, however, 120 years later, in the spring of 59 A.C., Artashat was destroyed and burned by Roman commander Corbulo. In 60-70 Artashat was rebuilt and continued to be one of the important centers of the region. In 116, Roman troops (led by Emperor Trajan) occupied Artashat, however, a year later they had to leave the city. In 163 Artashat was again besieged and occupied by the Romans. In 164 the capital was moved from the partially destroyed Artashat to Vagharshapat. Artashat continued to maintain its role of important trading center until the king Khosrov Kodak (332-338) moved his royal court to Dvin (because of marshes formed around it and bad air). In the 360s, the army of Sassanid shah Shapur II occupied and destroyed Artashat. According to the V c. historian Pavstos Byuzand: “...Then they came to the city of Artashat, captured it, destroyed the walls, took all the treasures and captured the inhabitants of the whole city... they captured 9 thousand Jewish families from Palestine (resettled by King

Tigran) and 14 000 Armenians...They burned all the wooden buildings and completely destroyed the walls...”.

In the VII c., on the place of the city there was a small castle and a settlement, the inhabitants of which were engaged in the production of a dyestuff called “vordan karmir” (“red worm”) and the craft of dyeing threads and fabrics. Artashat disappeared from the stage of history. During a long period its location was unknown, since the Metsamor River, included the waters of the Metsamor (Sevjur), Qasakh, Hrazdan and Azat rivers and joined the Araks River near Artashat. Later it changed its course and mixed with Araks, joining only Qasakh. During the installation of water supply pipelines in the village of Poqr (Little) Vedi (1967), there were found several Latin inscriptions engraved on five stone tiles. It was a good opportunity to start excavations of the ancient capital. In 1970, an expedition of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography AS Armenian SSR began conducting excavations. The excavations revealed that the citadel and central districts of the city were situated on nine rocky hills of Khor Virap, thus forming a huge group of hills. 350-400m to the south-east of that group of hills there are two more hills with preserved traces of walls, and, on the plain in front of them, there were districts of the city spread to northeast and south. Artashat occupied enormous areas, including the current Lusarat, Poqr Vedi, Sovkhoz (Soviet Farm) after Kirov, New Life and Shirazlou villages with their field plots. In the mentioned villages there were carried out exploratory excavations, which revealed numerous valuable samples of material culture. In the villages Sovkhoz after Kirov and Shirazlou there were found several tombs, and in Poqr Vedi - an inscription, which belonged to Trajan. The diversity of the revealed cultural layers and the datings of the materials prove that the life on the territory of the ancient Artashat lasted from the III millennium BC to the early Middle Ages, and the city was in the most prosperous state during the antique period – the II century BC. – the II century AD. The excavations were centered on the citadel, which covers the hills of the Khor Virap. At present, there are 12 hills: the hills # 1,4,7 were excavated; the hills #5 and #8 are being excavated; on the hill #2 there were carried out exploratory examinations. The other hills have not been studied yet. The excavations revealed fragments of the walls, industrial and public buildings, workshops, public baths. The city had well-built roads. Especially noteworthy is the defensive system of the city: all the hills of Khor Virap were surrounded by walls, which formed a large and powerful and joint defense system. The walls, surrounding the nearby or adjacent hills, were joined together by passages formed with parallel walls. Around the hills we can notice the partially preserved traces of the walls. The walls were built of local hard red stones, raw marble and raw bricks. The walls were strengthened by retaining walls and semi-circular towers. The thickness of the wall in different parts varies from 2,80m to 4,80m. Artashat also was protected by a moat filled with water. The main road laid directly opposite the town (with the Taperakan Bridge built





over the Araks River) and was directed to the south-west – to Tigranakert. From the north-northwestern direction the road-bridge of the Metsamor River led to Vagharshapat, and from the south-eastern - to Persia. Artashat was distinguished by the high level of the three main branches of urban economy (agriculture, craft production) and trade. The urban population formed an autonomous community, which owned lands around the city and in its settlements (farms). There are various informational sources on the architecture of the city. Most of the buildings were built of local red, cracked rough-hewn stones and have timbered flat roof, covered with canes and earth. There are also buildings of light-colored, fine-grained polished limestone. The fragments of columns cylinders, anchors and toothed cornices prove that there was a significant number of columned, gabled and tiled-roof luxurious buildings, plastered with lime mortar. The interior decorations of the buildings are also noteworthy. The walls were decorated with colorful plasters and frescoes. Besides stones, raw and thin bricks with lime mortar were also often used. Baked bricks were used for public baths, which had double-heated floors. Despite the fact that only a small part of the big city was studied, the excavations confirmed the glorification of Artashat in the historical sources which have preserved till nowadays and discovered the glorious image of the ancient Armenian capital.

**Bibliography:**

- B.N. Arakelian, "Ancient Artashat", Y., 1947.
- Zh. Khachatryan, "The mausoleums of Artashat" 4, Y., 1981.
- "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1996.
- B.N. Arakelian, "Preliminary results of excavations of ancient Artashat", 1974, #4.
- F. Ter-Martirosov, "Antique terracottas of Artashat", Y., 1976, #1.
- J. Khachatryan, D. Kanecian, "The stratigraphy of the 7th hill", 1975, #11.

# THE ANCIENT CITY OF DVIN



One of the capital cities of medieval Armenia – Dvin (which was the major administrative-political, defensive, trade-economic and cultural center of the country for more than a thousand years (IV-XIII cc.)), is located in the northern part of Ararat Valley, at the southern foot of Geghama mountain range, on the left-side hill of Azat River. There are several Armenian, Greek, Arabic, Assyrian and Georgian sources providing information about Dvin. According to the historian Movses Khorenatsi, the word “dvin” is of Persian origin and translates as “hill”. Due to their naturally appropriate location and surrounding irrigated and fertile lands, the hill of Dvin and its surrounding areas were inhabited as early as in the III millennium BC. The city was founded in the 30s of the IV c. in the Vostan Canton of Ayrarat Province of Mets Hayk (Greater Armenia), when the Armenian king Khosrov II Kotak transferred the Arsacid (or Arshakuni) Dynasty palace from Artashat to Dvin (the canton was named after the city, Vostan Dvin). In 470 (or 471), the Catholicossal See was also transferred from Vagharshapat to Dvin. After the fall of the Arsacid Dynasty (428), Dvin became the major political, economic, educational

and cultural center of Marzpanate Armenia.

The city was repeatedly subjected to attacks and destructions by foreign invaders. In 640, the Arab troops captured, destroyed and robbed Dvin. They slaughtered over 12,000 of its inhabitants and pressed 35,000 people into slavery. Since the end of the VIII c., (when Dvin became the province of Arminiya of the Arab Caliphate), as a result of heavy Arab tax policy, many Armenians left the city and its surrounding areas. After the establishment of the Bagratuni Dynasty (862) and reestablishment of Armenian independence (885), Dvin again experienced a great economic rise. Due to frequent incursions of foreign tribes and neighboring powers, as well as the relocation of craftsmen and merchants of Dvin to Ani, during the XI-XII cc. the city gradually lost its role. In 1203, it was liberated by the Armenian-Georgian joint troops (led by Zaqaryan princes). Dvin was finally destroyed as a result of invasions by the Khwarazm-shah Jalal ad-Din (1225) and Tatar Mongols (1236). During the following centuries several villages were formed in the territory of the ancient settlement.

During its existence, the city developed and expanded along the river to the south. The remains of the city walls and archaeological cultural layers can be noticed on several hundred hectares of fenced and cultivated lands of nowadays Dvin, Upper Dvin, Upper Artashat, villages Norashen, Berdik, Hnaberd and Aygestan.

The study of the ancient settlement was started in the XIX c. In 1850 the ancient settlement was studied by an official from the office of the governor of the Caucasus, Tokarev. There were also conducted several exploratory excavations (led by N. Mar (1899) and Khachik Vardapet Dadian (1904-1907)). The regular excavations started in 1937-1939 by S. Ter-Avetisian and were continued after World War II by K. Ghafadarian. Since 1977 the excavations were led by A. Qalantarian, and in 2010 - by H. Melkonian.

During the period of early feudalism Dvin was the center of cultural and economic life of Armenia and had more than 100,000 inhabitants.

The city was one of the “Silk Road branches”. It was connected (by improved “caravan highways”) to the neighboring and distant countries. Dvin produced and exported high-quality cotton textiles, metal and ceramic goods, glazed ceramics, carpets and paints.

Dvin had a very dense layout and three-part structure composed of a citadel (acropolis), the city itself (“Great Capital”) and suburbs. The top of the hill was occupied by a citadel surrounded with a moat and double defensive walls. The city itself was surrounded by fortified walls, spread around the citadel. During long-term excavations



there were discovered ruins of structures of great historical and architectural significance.

The excavations in the citadel and central district revealed numerous archaeological values (ceramics, statues and etc.), referring to the Bronze and Early Iron ages. Especially significant are the preserved bases of ancient monumental structures and the architectural fragments, partly used in the constructions of the early Christian structures.

A more extensive study of the premedieval construction of Dvin is impossible, since it is conditioned by the need to remove the upper (and important for this monument) medieval layers.

The citadel: during the foundation of the city they fenced only the top of the hill, as well as an area of 0.5 ha, where the palace and administrative buildings of the Arsacid Dynasty were built. Subsequently, in order to expand the citadel, the whole hill, along with its bottom borderline was fenced and partly included a part of the northern plain. The fence had at least 44 semi-circular pyramids in its base, the ruins of which remained in the form of hills with a height of 5-6m. The corner entrances (probably with gates) had the largest diameter. The lower parts of the walls were made of about 1m high rough stones, while the upper parts were built of raw and externally lined baked bricks.

**The citadel** was surrounded by a moat dug filled with water. Beyond the moat (on the western side, there spreads the so-called central district, which served as the spiritual center of the city. It had

walls and gates facing the citadel and was connected to latter by a bridge, thrown over the moat. During the excavations, water pipelines coming to the central district were also found in that part.

The archaeological excavations carried out in the citadel and central district revealed a number of buildings of great historical and architectural value, which include: the Cathedral of St. Grigor; the single-nave church; the first Catholicossal palace; a residential complex (adjacent to the first Catholicossal palace); the second Catholicossal palace; the Throne Hall of the Citadel and the main city market.

**The Cathedral of St. Grigor** was built in the eastern part of the central district (near the entrance to the citadel). According to original historical sources and constructional stratigraphy, it was founded at the end of the IV - and beginning of the V c. During the existence of the church the plan and dimensions were changed several times. Originally, the church was a triple-nave, internally semicircular and externally seven-nave basilica, with an apse on the eastern side, seven pairs of columns and pilasters supporting the wooden ceiling. It had external dimensions of 52.3m x 22.5m and was the largest among the Early Medieval Armenian church buildings. It was built of polished sandstone fastened with lime mortar. In the 60-70s of the V c. the church was radically reconstructed: in the northern, western and southern parts of the church there were added columned (and probably arched) open halls; on both sides of the apse there were built sacristies, and the wooden ceiling of the church was replaced by a stone vault.





In 572 the church was destroyed by the Persians. In 607-608 the second major reconstruction of the church started (finished in 618): the length of the church was diminished; a new apse with sacristies was built on both sides; the external portico was eliminated and the internal columns and pilasters were replaced by 4 massive pylons and pilasters, symmetrically constructed around the central part of the prayer room (which carried the arches supporting the dome and vault). The church turned into a domed basilica. Later, several internally semicircular and externally multi-pillar lateral apses were added to the northern and southern outer walls of the structure, which visually extended the inner space of the temple. The local gray and red tuff stones (fastened with lime mortar) were used during the reconstruction of the church.

The church remained stable up until the earthquake in 894, after which it was completely destroyed and never reconstructed.

According to several historical references and researches, the Cathedral was built at the site of a pagan temple, the main walls and building materials of which were partly used during the construction of the new structure.

**The single-nave church** was built in V-VI cc. and located about 20m north of the Catholic Church. The church has a rectangular plan, a vaulted hall with external dimensions of 24.5m x 10.7m and three pairs of pilasters. On the north-eastern side of the church there was an externally convex sacristy (however, only part of its eastern wall has remained preserved). According to some researchers, on the northern side of the church there was an external portico, however, after additional excavations, that assumption was refuted. Instead, it turned out that the church was built on the ruins of another structure dating back to I millennium BC. The excavations also revealed the remains of the main wall and karas (a clay storage vessel) burials of the Hellenistic period.

There is no doubt that the previous building was a pagan temple, since under the apse there were found two painted clay statues and remains of the old, semicircular apse (typical for pagan temples). Such statues were also found in other cultural layer of the IX-VIII cc. BC., situated in central part of the city.

At present, only the main walls of the single-nave church and the lower parts of the facade walls and pilasters have remained preserved. The width of its

The bases of the church exceeds 2m. Some researchers attribute it to the width of the wall, without taking into account the fact that the base also covers the width of the socle (typical for medieval church buildings). The state of its preservation does not allow us to determine unambiguously the location and dimensions of the church entrance. Based on the construction fragments and scanty remains of the walls found on the spot, it can be assumed that the church was also constructed of polished gray red tuff stones and had a vaulted ceiling with gable tiled roof.

**The first Catholicossal palace.** The excavations carried out in the central district of Dvin revealed two Catholicossal palaces belonging to different periods. The first palace was built in 470-480 (when the seat of the Catholicosate was transferred from Vagharshapat to Dvin). The second palace was established in the second decade of the VII c. (after the destruction of the first one) and was located about 20m southwest of the Catholic Church. The first palace was a columned, three-nave solemn hall with dimensions of 21.7m x 12.2 m and two adjoining large rooms. Later, there were built 2 auxiliary rooms and a square, four-columned hall with sides equal to the width of the previous one. All the 3 pairs of polished tufa column bases (with a base of 1,08 x 1,08m and a height of 0.7m) and the 0.5-1.5m high and 1.5m thick raw brick walls with stone ground



bases have remained preserved. The floor and walls were plastered with clay. The excavations also revealed the lower parts of 5 door apertures communicating with the outer adjacent rooms of the hall (two on the northern and eastern walls of the hall and one in the southern corner of the western wall. The large sizes of the column anchors indicate that the column trunks (not preserved) about 0.8 m in diameter also were made of stone. The burnt remnants of the roof wooden were discovered during the excavations. Probably it had the traditional “hazarashen” (“thousand pieces”) type of structure, and was illuminated by erdik (a hole in the roof). The stonemade socles of the great hall were constructed using the architectural figured fragments of monumental buildings belonging to earlier period.

In the 60s of the VI c., the Persian marzpan (regional governor) of Armenia turned the palace into his own residence. He placed in the small hall a fire-altar and turned the building into a fire-temple (the remnants of the fire-altar were found in the center of the hall). In the 70’s of the VI c., the Armenian rebels completely burned and destroyed the desecrated structure.

**The second Catholicossal palace** was built on the northern side of the Catholic Church, to the west of the single-nave church (accordingly, about 8.0m and 5.0m far from them). It dates back to the beginning of the VII c. It is a rectangular (almost square) structure



with external dimensions of 32.0m x 29.3m. During its existence, the structure had undergone number of internal changes, which were revealed by further thorough archaeological stratigraphy studies.

Originally, the structure had a cross-shaped composition placed into a square base and 4 large corner rooms (9.2m x 7.8m) symmetrically placed between the adjacent cross wings. The cross-wings together composed the central three-nave large hall of the palace (26.8m in length and 10.5m in width). The wooden roof was based on edge walls and 4 pairs of columns made of tuff stones (of which only the toroidal anchors with a base of 0.8m and a one ornamented capital were preserved). The apertures of the cross wings in the center of the southern and western facades served as entrances. The hall is illuminated only by a *erdik* (hole in the roof), which probably was in the traditional form of “*hazarashen*” (“thousand pieces”). Originally, the floors were covered with clay. The structure was built of polished tuff stones plastered with lime. The interior reconstruction of the palace was probably carried out in the 40s of the VII c. (after the Arab invasion). The four corner rooms were divided by thick partitions built of stone into two approximately equal parts. In the same way, the northern cross-wing was separated and turned into a room. At the beginning of the X c. the Arabs turned the half-destroyed palace into a mosque. The anchors of the columns were taken into pylons made of baked bricks. Between them there were placed smaller, probably arched, columns (the anchors have remained preserved). The floor also was covered with bricks. The central square of the new arched hall was covered with a dome based on 4 pylons and 4 intermediate columns. It is assumed that the structure was preserved this way until the final “decline” of the city.

**The Throne Hall of the Citadel** was revealed during excavations conducted on the eastern edge of a relatively flat peak of the hill. It is an east-west oriented, separately standing three-nave hall with a rectangular plan, interior dimension of about 23.0m x 12.5m and four pairs of intermediate wooden columns. The layer, immediately preceding the throne hall, belongs to the ancient era. There are only preserved decorations of a dense residential construction and architectural fragments. During its existence, the structure, at least once (possibly in the VI-VIII cc.), had undergone radical internal reconstruction. The walls and columns, resting on an unstable layer of previously built ruins, were probably decayed or destroyed as a result of uneven residues. That made it necessary to build platforms (1-2 sq. m.) under the column anchors. During the construction there were used polished tufa building stones, which remained from a de-



stroyed early medieval structure. Some of those stones have decorative ornaments typical of that period. During the reconstruction the new floor of the hall was raised by 25-30 cm. and, after the reinstallation of the central column anchors, it was completely flattened and covered with a delicate lime plaster. One of the 8 polished and sculptured tufa column anchors was preserved in a ruined state. However, on the preserved 6 platforms we can notice the exact outlines of the anchors. Due to this, it was possible to reorganize the internal plan of the second phase of the hall construction. The external walls had not undergone any structural changes. Probably, only the effects of uneven residues were repaired and eliminated.

The part of the western wall lies under the wall of an Arab palace (built in the VIII c.), during the construction of which that part of the hall floor, as well as the two edge column anchors, were demolished and deepened. However, the northern corner of the western entrance aperture has remained preserved. The eastern wall, erected on the edge of the hill slope, was destroyed by landslides.

After the excavations, the preserved north-eastern corner was measured and the exact length of the hall was determined. In the



central part of the hall, between two opposite columns, there was a platform, built with its longitudinal axis. It was built of stone and lime mortar and had dimensions of about 3.0m x 3.0m and semi-oval plan. It served as a throne pedestal. In line with this argument, the hall was named the Arshakuni throne palace. However, the fact of absence of directly communicating rooms (which is not typical of palace complexes) and the similarity of this hall to the religious structures of northern Syria, give grounds to assume that it also served as a church with the features of Armenian-Syrian architecture. The undeniable evidence of the second version could be only the existence of an alleged apse (in the eastern side) with a semicircular or rectangular plan.

**The main market of the city** was discovered at about 800m of the citadel, in the south-eastern part of the city. It is a multi-column huge hall with a rectangular plan and surface area of about 1200 sq.m. (40m x 30m). The wooden roof of the structure rests on the outer walls and 36 tufa massive intermediate columns. The latter are placed in regular rows in the longitudinal direction – 9, and linear direction - 4. The contouring walls of the building are completely destroyed. There are preserved fragments of the floor tiled with polished tuff, toroidal column anchors (mostly displaced), fragments of stone column axis and high artistic sculptured capitals. Based on the study of those architectural details, the building was dated to the V-VI cc. According to the chronology of the archaeological findings, it was destroyed in 893 by an earthquake. During the reconstruction (X c.), the stone columns and floor slabs were replaced by constructions built of baked bricks. The building was completely destroyed during the collapse of the city in the middle of the XIII c. There were also administrative buildings, bridges, squares, caravanserais, guest houses, booths, bath-houses discovered in different parts of the city. There were also water supply systems and water springs. Besides local Armenians, the city was inhabited by Persians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Arabs, who lived in different districts of the city. However, the Armenian population always constituted the majority.

Bibliography:

K.G. Ghafadarian, "About the time of the founding of the city of Dvin and the pagan temple of the citadel", "Historical-Philological Journal", 1966, № 2.

K.G. Ghafadarian., "The city of Dvin and its excavations", vol. 1, Y., 1952, vol. 2, Y., 1982.

V.M Harutyunian., "Architectural monuments of the V-VII centuries of Dvin", Y., 1950.

K.G. Ghafadarian., A. A. Kalantarian., "The city of Dvin and its excavations (1973-1980)", Y., 2002.

K. Kh. Kushnareva., "The Ancient Monuments of Dvin", Y., 1977.

Kalantarian A, Dvin. Histoire at archeologie de la ville medievale (Civilisations du Proche-Orient, hors serie 2), Neuchatel, Paris, 1996:

written by C. Ghafadaryan, N. B. Hasratyan

# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF KHOR VIRAP



The monastic complex of Khor Virap is located 1.5 km west of the village of Lusarat in Ararat Province. It was established on the left bank of the Arax (or Yeraskh) River, on the eastern slope of one of the hills in the historical capital of Armenia, Artashat. It is one of the most sacred sanctuaries of Armenia: the famous pilgrimage site related to the conversion of Armenia and the name of Grigor I Parthev “Lusavorich” (the Illuminator). The monastery of Khor Virap was a prominent cultural, educational and manuscript-writing center.

The monastery built on the site of the royal prison. According to the historian Agatangeghos (V c.), at the end of the III c., during the persecution of Christians in Armenia, the king of Arsacid Armenia - Tiridates III the Great, after long-lasting tortures, threw Grigor Lusavorich into the dungeon for the prisoners sentenced to death (it was called «Artashat’s Virap (pit)»). Grigor Lusavorich was kept there for 13 years. In the V c., above the pit there was built a monastery and established congregation. However, after the death of Grigor Lusavorich (325/326) Khor Virap became a pilgrimage site. According to the historian and Catholicos Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi of (the X c.), in 642 Catholicos Nerses III (the Builder) Tayetsi built a “sanctuary temple” above the pit. It was the oldest structure of the monastic complex, but was destroyed later. Because of the difficult economic and political situation in Armenia (XVI-XVII cc.), the structures of the monastery were damaged. During 1666-1669, the long-term leader



of the monastery - David II Vardapet Virapetsi (Tpkhisetsi), reconstructed the structures of the monastery and revived the monastic life. The monastery was surrounded by a wall with seven round pyramids and adjacent-built structures (residential cells, dining hall, abbot's room and household buildings). The monastery was turned into a fortress, which was one of the best examples of a combination of worship and fortification structures. In March 1669, (under the patronage of the brother of the merchant and historian Zakaria Aguletsi's, khoja (teacher) Shmavon), the Lusavorich's prison cell was renovated. After the reconstruction Virap became a cylindrical stone-made structure with vertical walls, apsidal niches on the eastern side, a diameter of about 4.5m and height of 6.5m. This III c. building was the oldest structure in Armenian architecture, which had a stone dome.

During the same year the construction of the vaulted, hall-type and gable church of St. Grigor on the site of the XIII c. chapel was started. According to the chronicler Zakaria Aguletsi, the church, built by Catholicos Nerses in the XIII c., was replaced by a small, vaulted chapel of polished stone. In the XVII c. on the site of the chapel was built a new larger church, which had the same structure. The latter's construction was finished in 1669. The church was solemnly consecrated in 1670. On the right side of the small St. Grigor Church's altar there is an entrance with vertical metal stairs leading to the deep pit. On the eastern part of its ceiling, there is the preserved hole, through which a pious widow was bringing water and bread to St. Grigor every day.

The renovation works of the monastic complex continued until 1672. In the center of the yard was built the main St. Astvatsatsin Church. The church of St. Astvatsatsin and other monastery buildings were destroyed by a strong earthquake in Ararat Valley (1679). In 1680-1695, they also were reconstructed by David Virapetsi. In 1703 the thorough reconstruction of St. Astvatsatsin Church was completed. It got a structure of a dome-shaped hall with rectangular plan, a pair of pylons and vaulted sacristies on the right and left sides of the altar. The dome is high, internally cylindrical and externally with 12-faceted drum. The entrance is on the west side. It is illuminated by windows opened on the facades and the dome. The church was built of red and black polished tuff stones.

The eastern facade of the church of St. Astvatsatsin is covered with a multi-figure sculpture depicting the victory of Christianity in Armenia. It depicts Grigor Lusavorich, King Tiridates III (Trdat the Great) and Queen Ashkhen surrounded by angels.

In 1765, the monastery was reconstructed by the Catholicos of All Armenians Simeon Yerevantsi. At the end of the same year, the three-arched hall, built adjacent to the west side of the church of St. Astvatsatsin, was demolished. At the beginning of the XX c., a columned bell tower was built on the site of the hall.

Over the last decades, the monastery of Khor Virap was repeatedly renovated. During 1959-1961, all the buildings of the monumental group were renovated (particularly the roofs and monk cells). The area of the monastery was paved. In 1970-1980, on the initiative of Catholicos Vazgen I Paltchyan, the dilapidated buildings of the monastery were reconstructed; the "house of matagh" (sacrifice) was built; the roof of the arched basement (with an amazing view to Biblical Mount Ararat) adjoining the southern wall was turned into an observation deck. In 2001, on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia, there were carried out several renovation works.

#### **Bibliography:**

"Agat'angelos' History of the Armenia", Ed. G. Ter-Mkrtschian and S. Kanianian, Tiflis, 1909.

"History of the Armenia by Catholicos Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi", Tiflis, 1912, p. 83.

Gh. Alishan, "Ayrarat, Venice", 1890, pp. 435-440.

"Zakaria Aguletsi Travel Diary", Y., 1938.

"Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia", vol. 5, Y., 1979, p. 84.

Yu. Tumanian., "Restoration of Stone Chronicle", Y., 1981.

K. Matevosyan, "Khor Virap monastery and its manuscript-writing center", Echmiatsin, 1997, B-G, pp. 174-178.

"Christian Armenia" encyclopedia, Y., 2002, pp. 438-440.

M. Hasratyan, The sanctuary of the Conversion of Armenia Khor Virap monastery", "Armenian saints and sanctuaries", Y., 2001, pp. 183-191.

# ST. HOVHANNES-KARAPET MONASTERY

This medieval architectural complex is located in Ararat Province of RA, on the right side of Vedi-Lusashogh Road. According to one of the few epigraphic inscriptions of the monastery, it was founded by Orbelians at the beginning of the XIV c. It served as patrimonial sepulcher.

The monastery complex of St. Hovhannes-Karapet consists of the Spitakavor St. Astvatsatsin Church (1301), a fore-church (XIV c.), a two-storeyed mausoleum, buildings of the order (1896) and a wall (1897).

According to the epigraphic inscription on the southern wall of the church, St. Astvatsatsin Spitakavor Church was erected in 1301 by the architect named But by the order of Princess Gomtsa. The latter was the wife of Prince Jalal (the son of Prince Tarsayitch from the dynasty of the Orbelyans). The church is a domed hall-type structure with a pair of pylons and two-storeyed rectangular sacristies on both sides of the altar. The dome of the hall with an up-soaring cylindrical



drum, was “crowned” with an umbrella-shaped roof. There are highly-artistic bas-reliefs carved on the lintel of the western portal and above it. The bas-reliefs were executed by the painter Archimandrite Sargis. Inside the church, there is a high-relief of the Proshyan’s family coat of arms carved on a big stone. The coat of arms depicts an eagle with spread wings, keeping a ram in the claws.

The fore-church was erected on the south-west side of St. Astvatsatsin Church. It dates back to the XIV c. The church is a vaulted structure with a rectangular plan. Currently, it is ruined. The two-storey church-mausoleum is adjacent to the fore-church from the west. The rotunda of its belfry is ruined. The buildings of the order were erected adjacent to the wall of the monastery and date back to 1896. In the graveyard of the monastery there are preserved cross-stones with fine ornaments and gravestones with daily life images.

**Bibliography:**

H. Yeghiazaryan, “Hovhannes Karapet Monastery and its lithographic inscriptions”, “Etchmiadzin”, 1962, N1.



# VAYOTS DZOR

ARENI - 1 CAVE

NORAVANK

THE MONASTERY OF ARATES

ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF  
ARENI

THE MONASTERY OF GNDEVANK

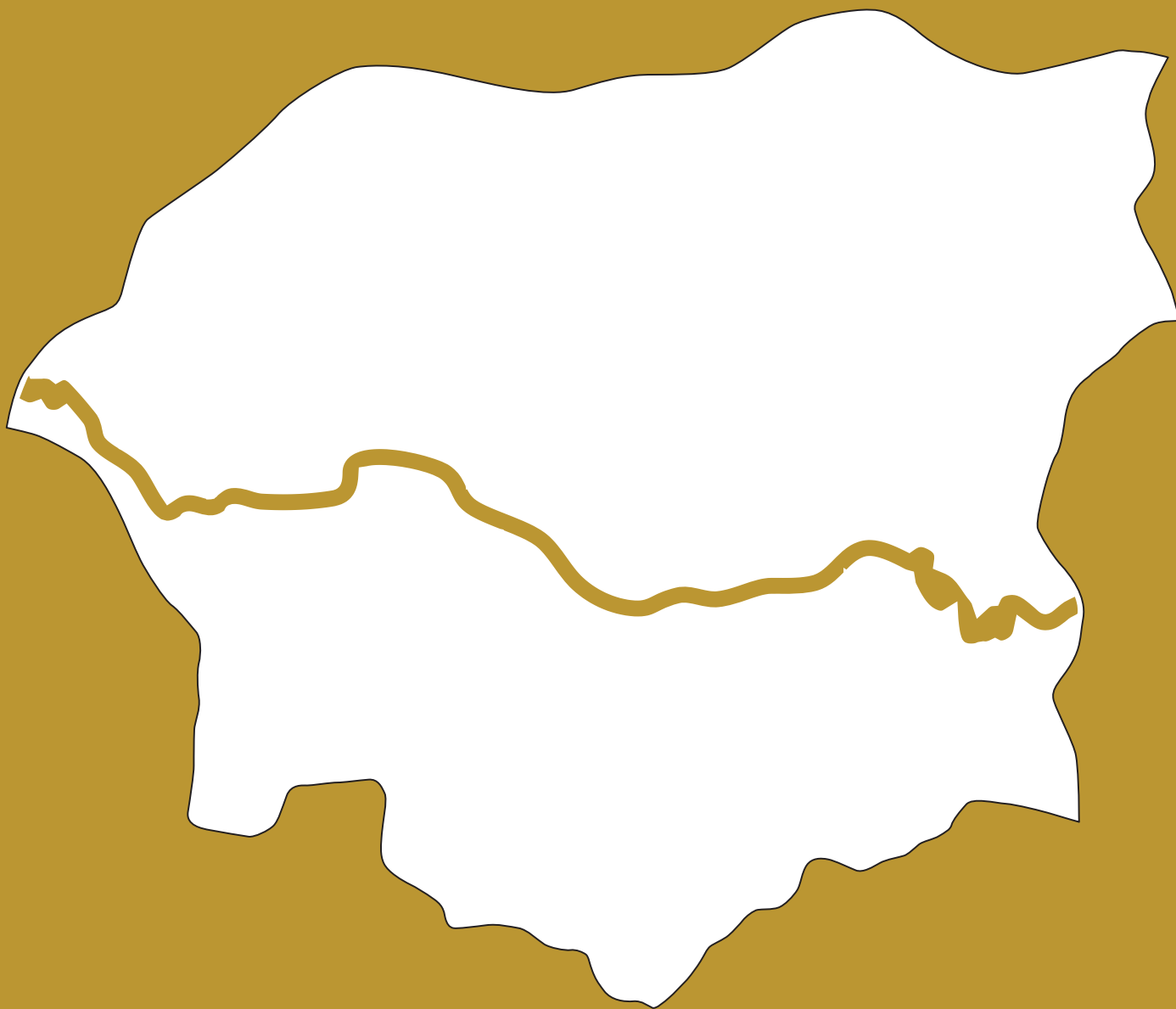
THE CARAVANSERAI OF SULEMA

ZORATS CHURCH OF YEGHEGIS

SMBATABERD

SPITAKAVOR MONASTERY

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF  
TSAGHATS KAR



# ARENI - 1 CAVE

(“BIRD’S CAVE”)



It is located about 2 km north-east of the Areni village of Vayots Dzor Province, on the right side of the Yerevan-Yeghegnadzor Highway, at the top of the road leading to Noravank. The name “Bird’s cave” is connected with the fact that it served as a dwelling for many species of birds.

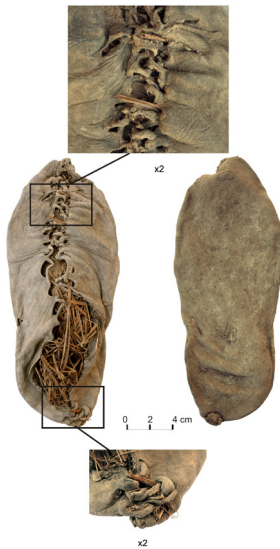
It was discovered and examined 1982-1983 by a cave expedition of the Geographic group of Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences. Since 2007, several archaeological excavations were conducted here by joint expeditions of the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography NAS RA, Los Angeles Institute of Archeology at the University of California and Cork University (Ireland) (led by B. Gasparian). This cave belongs to clastoclastic caves, as it originated in limestone conglomerates. The total area of the cave is about 500 sq. m. It consists of three halls, two of which - the first and the second, were connected to each other by passages. The entrances of the first and second halls open to the north, and the third one - to the north-east. The second hall (which is the smallest in size) was completely cov-

ered by large rock fragments scattered as a result of a collapse. The third hall was damaged during the attempts to turn it into a restaurant: the upper cultural layers were removed, the floor was covered with concrete and the passages were blocked.

The excavations were concentrated on the first, largest hall. Various studies documented the existence of the following cultural layers: Lower Paleolith, Neolith (third quarter of the VII mil. BC.), Eneolith (last quarter of the V mil. BC - 1 half of the IV mil.), Early Middle Ages (VII c.), developed Middle Ages (XIII-XIV cc.), late Middle Ages (XVI-XVIII cc.). The stratigraphic observations, examination of the material culture remnants and radiocarbon analysis revealed that during the medieval period the cave was used as a temporary shelter or protective hiding place (later also as cattle shed). Based on rock tools (found on the front slope) and fossilized bone remnants of animals, it was assumed that there was a Lower Paleolithic station.

The most significant and expressive of the aforementioned phases of cave use is the Late Enolithic period (4300-3300 BC.) with several horizons containing material culture remains. The latter are represented by reinforced floors, pits associated with them, as well as clay structures of industrial-economic and ritual significance. Among them, special attention should be given to the unique wine-producing complex (the beginning of the IV mil. BC.), which is the oldest in the world. There was discovered a wine press and buried huge clay pitchers. One of the clay pitchers contained grape seeds and cored stalks of a reed. This discovery reminded B. Gasparyan of the evidence of the Greek historian Xenophon (V-IV cc. BC.) mentioned in his work called "Anabasis": talking about Armenian winemaking, the historian mentioned that Armenians were drinking wine from the buried clay pitchers, using cored stalks of a reed for that. According to the researcher, wine production and consumption were rituals and were accompanied with sacrifices. The above stated assumption is





based on the presence of remains of adults and children preserved in clay pots in the depths of the cave (near the food storage tanks), three of which were teenage girls with traces of truncheon blows.

The materials of organic and herbal origin inside the cave, in the conditions of specific and stable microclimate, remained quite well preserved. The most unique discovery was the oldest shoe in the world, dating back to the IV mil. BC. It was made of one piece of cow-hide and has a length of 24.5 cm (now kept in SHMA). One of the most valuable discoveries was a woman's skirt dating back to the same period. The examination of the rich collection of material culture (leather, wooden, bone, metal, clay objects), as well as archaeobotanical and anthropological remnants, makes it possible to form a clear idea of the agricultural and various industrial-economic activities, crafts, arts, ritual ideas and worldview of ancient inhabitants of the cave. In addition to the objects dating back to the late Eneolithic period, among the findings (belonging to different periods of the Middle Ages) of particular interest are the remnants of fabrics and carpets dating back to the VII-VIII cc.: Areni - 1 cave is a monument with exceptional scientific value, a comprehensive study of which will allow to clarify the socio-economic and cultural developments of the V-IV mil. BC. not only in the territory of Armenia, but also throughout the entire region. In this regard, the monument is of great scientific significance in the study of the ancient eastern societies. In 2016, there were carried out several works to reinforce the open clay structures and construction of passages.

#### Bibliography:

- D. Zardaryan, B. Gasparyan, Late Eneolithic pottery of the Areni-1 cave, Traditional international scientific conference "Archaeology, Ethnology, Folkloristics of the Caucasus" (Tbilisi, June 25-27, 2009), Collection of summaries of the reports, Tbilisi, 2010, pp. 154-156.
- Pinhasi R., Gasparyan B., Areshyan G., Zardaryan D., Smith A., Bar-Oz G., Higham T., First direct evidence of Chalcolithic footwear from the Near Eastern Highlands, PLOS ONE, 10.1371
- Barnard H., Dooley A.N., Areshian G., Gasparyan B., Faull K.F., Chemical evidence for wine production around 4000 BCE in the Late Chalcolithic Near Eastern Highlands, Journal of Archaeological Science, 38, 2011, pp. 977-984;
- D. Zardaryan, B. Gasparyan, About two varieties of ancient shoes from Armenia, "New materials and methods of archaeological research", The theses of the reports of the scientific conference of young scientists, Moscow, March 15-17, 2011, Moscow, IA RAS, 2011, pp. 8-9.

# NORAVANK

(AMAGHVA NORAVANK, AVAG ANAPAT, KHORADZOR ANAPAT, ST. KARAPET, KARMIR MONASTERY, ST. NAKHAVKA MONASTERY)



Noravank Monastery is located 3 km north-east of Amaghu village of Vayots Dzor Province of RA, on the steep slope of the left-sided Amaghu tributary gorge of the Arpa River. It was one of the most prominent religious, scientific, educational, cultural and “nation preserving” centers of the Medieval Armenia. The exact date of its foundation is unknown. According to the XIII c. historian and Metropolitan of Syunik St. Orbelian, it was founded on the territory of the early medieval church of St. Karapet and Chapel of Phokas. In the fenced yard of the complex are situated the mausoleum-church of St. Grigor Lusavorich, St. Stephanos Nakhavka Church, gavit and St. Karapet and St. Astvatsatsin churches.

**ST. KARAPET CHURCH (IX c.)** is the oldest structure of Noravank. It is located in the southern part of the main group of monuments. The ruins of the church were revealed by the excavations carried out in 1982-1983. It is a single-nave hall with horseshoe-shaped altar with the entrance on the western side. On the southern side of the church there is a vaulted sacristy with a rectangular plan and horseshoe-shaped apse. The latter has an adjacent small room located on the west side. It was built of rough-hewn massive stones.

**ST. STEPHANOS NAKHAVKA CHURCH (1216-1221)** is the main church of the monastery. It was built by Prince Liparit Orbelian and Bishop Sargis. The church is an externally rectangular and internally cross-shaped domed structure with two-storey sacristies in the four corners.

**THE GAVIT (1223 -1261)** adjoins the church from the west. It served as a mausoleum for the Orbelian Princes and bishops of Syunik. It is a spacious building covered with interlaced roofs, which is not typical for identical Armenian structures. The gavit is distin-

guished by its highly artistic and original decorations. On the facade stone of the main entrance you can see the iconography “Sitting Odigitria”, which is common in medieval Armenian art. It depicts the Holy Mother of God with baby Jesus on her the left knee, sitting on a carpeted throne in the center of the background decorated with gorgeous herbal ornaments. On the left side of Holy Mother of God is Hovhannes Mkrtych, on the right - Esai Margare. Above the entrance, on the facade stone of the window there is a high-relief with unique content: it depicts God the Father in human form, as well as Holy Spirit, Adam, Crucified Lord, Holy Mother of God, Hovhannes Avetaranich, Daniel Margare. Those sculptures carved on the facade stones of the entrance and a window of the gavit were executed by the highly talented Momik. Especially remarkable are the high-artistic khachkars (cross-stones) erected inside the building.

**THE MAUSOLEUM-CHURCH OF ST.GRIGOR LUSAVORICH (1275)** adjoins St. Stephanos Church from the north. It was built by Tarsayich Orbelian and served as a mausoleum for his brother Prince Smbat, who died in 1273. It is assumed that the architect of the building was Siranes.

**ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH (1331-1339)** was built by Momik (by the order of Prince Burtel Orbelian). It is located about 30m south-east of the main buildings of the group of monuments. It is a two-storey mausoleum-church. On the rectangular mausoleum of the first floor there was built a cross-shaped prayer hall (the second floor) with a semi-circular altar on the east side and vaulted sacristies. It was “crowned” with columned rotunda. On both sides of the entrance to the first floor (from outside) there are wall-mounted cantilever stairs leading to the second floor. Especially remarkable



are the sculptures carved on the building. On the lintel above the entrance to the first floor you can see a carved image of Holy Mother of God sitting on the throne with baby Jesus in her hands and Michael and Gabriel Angels in a standing position. On the facade stone of the entrance to the upper floor there are sculptures of Christ and Apostles Poghos and Petros. The columns of the church dome are also covered with sculptures.

Outside the fenced area of the group of monuments there are the preserved remnants of chapels and oil mills. Under the eastern wall of one of the chapels there are traces of a dried water source. Thus, it can be assumed that the chapel probably was the church dedicated to the Pontiff St. Pokas, under which (according to Stepanos Orbelian) flowed water and oil.

The complex of Noravank also is remarkable for its memorial monuments. Several records confirm that several prominent figures in the history of Armenian Church and culture were buried in the territory of the monastery. The gravestones of the monastery are mostly flat with inscribed slabs. The gravestones of Elicum and Sargis are decorated with sculptures depicting lions.

On the territory of the complex there are numerous high-artistic cross-stones (among which a special place is occupied by the creations of Momik (XIII-XIV cc.). After an earthquake in 1840, the monastery complex was destroyed and abandoned. It was reconstructed in 1984-1999 by the contributions of RA Department of protection of monuments of history and culture and Diocese of Syunik of Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

**Bibliography:**

S. Orbelian, "History of Syunik", Y., 1986.

Gh. Alishan, "Sisakan", Venice, 1893.

E. Lalayan, "Vayots Dzor, famous monasteries", "Ethnographic Review", book 26, Tbilisi, 1916.

S. Orbelian, "History of Syunik", Y., 1986.

H. Yeghiazaryan, "Noravank of Amaghu", Echmiadzin, 1972, N 1-2.

G. Grigoryan, "Syunik in the period of Orbelians", Y., 1984.

M. Hasratyan, "Newly erected monuments of Armenian architecture and sculpture in Noravank", Journal of Social Sciences, N8., 1984.

"Christian Armenia" Encyclopedia, Y., 2002.

Alpago Novello A., Jeni G., Amaghu Noravank, Milano, 1985 (Documenti di architettura armena, 14)



# THE MONASTERY OF ARATES



This monastic complex of the medieval Armenian architecture is located in Arates village of Vayots Dzor Province of RA, on the bank of the Rivulet Arates of the Yeghegis River, on the top of a hill. The half-ruined group of monuments consists of several chapels, the churches of St. Zion (X c.) and St. Astvatsatsin (XI c.) and two gavits (narthexes) (XIII c.). It is assumed that the original building of the monument is a VII c. structure (the oldest written record refers to the IX c.).

The church of St. Zion is a single-nave, vaulted church with three sacristies built on both sides of the altar and adjoining the northern wall.

The church of St. Astvatsatsin is located on the southern side of the church of St. Zion. It is a domed hall with a pair of pilasters.

The first gavit is the most remarkable structure of the complex. It was built in 1270 by the architect Siranes. The structure adjoins the western facade of St. Astvatsatsin Church. The roof was constructed in a peculiar way of using intercrossing arches. At the center of the pair of arches there was a stalactite dome with a circular base. Currently, it is ruined.

The second gavit was built in the XIII c. it is situated between the churches of St. Zion and St. Astvatsatsin. It is a square structure with a pair of sacristies built on the eastern side.

The monastery complex also includes five chapels, khachkars (cross-stones) and gravestones dating back to the X-XVII cc. It was surrounded by a wall, which was destroyed in the XVII c. At present, only the part of the northern wall has remained preserved. In 1959-1961, one of the crossing arches of the narthex was reconstructed under the immediate supervision of K. Ghafadaryan.

#### Bibliography:

Lalayan E., "Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review", book 26, Tbilisi, 1916.

Toramanyan T., "Materials for the History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1948, vol. 2.

Harutyunyan V., "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.

Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, Y., 1981, vol.7.

# ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF ARENI

St. Astvatsatsin Church of Areni is located near Areni Village of Vayots Dzor Province of RA, on the left bank of the Arpa River. According to the inscription on the west entrance, it was built in 1321 by archbishop of Syunik Hovhannes Orbelyan. The architect was Momik. It is a central-domed church built of brown tuff stones. During the construction, the master refused to use traditional forms of worship of that era and installed the dome on two separate pillars.

St. Astvatsatsin Church is distinguished by the very harmonious proportions. The apse has a pair of originally designed cross-shaped windows. One of the creations of Momik was the magnificent high-relief “Holy Mother holding Baby Jesus in her arms” carved on the lintel of the west entrance to the church. It realistically depicts Holy Mother sitting on a throne in the clothes typical of that period. The whole surface of the lintel was covered with ornaments of wine grapes. The interior is marked by a towering dome resting on two pilasters and columns, which is not typical for Armenian churches. The drum pendentives were decorated with carved symbols of the four evangelists. After the construction of St. Astvatsatsin Church, by the instruction of Orbelian Princes, Momik started the reconstruction of the western gavit (which was later destroyed by an earthquake). Actually, Momik built a new gavit and decorated it with various sculptures. At the west entrance of the gavit you will face the frescoes and sculptures created by Momik. The most popular is the high-relief of God the Father carved on the entrance lintel: he was portrayed as an old man with a long beard, big oval eyes, curly hair with right hand raised for blessing, and keeping a head of a human in the left hand. The iconography of God the Father in human form is also unprecedented and emphasizes the unique talent of the sculptor. Below the beard of God there is the symbol of Holy Spirit: a dove with cross-shaped aureole and head directed downwards, whose beak touches the lips of Adam held in the hand of God. On the right end of the sculpture there is an angel facing God the Father. On the left side, under the right hand there is the crucified Christ, to the left of which is the Holy Mother, and to the right - Hovhannes Avetaranich (the Evangelist), below there is the Prophet Daniel, lying and directed his hand directed toward the crucifix. On both sides of the head of Christ there are the symbols of the sun and the moon. The sculpture depicting the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ descending from

God the Father to Adam embodies the idea of the inseparability of the Holy Trinity.

In the yard of the church there are several gravestones and cross-stones dating back to different periods. The dome of the church was destroyed by an earthquake in 1840. During 1967–1972 the walls and the roof of the church were reconstructed. In 1998, with the financial support of Artashes Tyuzmechian, the dome of the church reconstructed its original appearance.

**Bibliography:**

E. Lalayan, "Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review", book 26, Tbilisi 1916.

S. Barkhudaryan, "Set of Armenian inscriptions", vol.3, Y., 1967.



# THE MONASTERY OF GNDEVANK



The monastery of Gndevank is located on the left bank of the Arpa River in Vayots Dzor Province. It is situated on a high hill (about 1 km west of the village of Gndevaz). According to the historian Stepanos Orbelian (XIII-XIV cc.), the monastery of Gndevank was founded in the X c. by the princess of Syunik Sephia (Sephi) and served as a hermit monastery. It was named after Fr. Supan Gnduni. The group of monuments is a X-XVII cc. structure, including the church of St. Stepanos, gavit (narthex), a dining hall, a graveyard, residential and household buildings and a canal (which belongs to the monastery). It was fenced with walls. In 1604, the monastery and the village were destroyed by Persian Shah Abbas.

The church of St. Stepanos was built in 936 by the princess of Syunik Sephia. In the building inscription (on the western wall of the church) Princess Sephia noted: "Vatoits Dzor was a ring without a jewel but I built this monastery as the jewel for the ring". The church was built of polished basalt stone. According to the plan, the church

is an externally cross-shaped, central-domed structure with four altars and a pair of eastern sacristies. The cross-wings were designed with “Armenian niches” of triangular cut. The dome pendentives were covered with carved symbols of the four evangelists. There were also frescos executed by the painter Yeghishe Yerets (X c.). In the main apse there is a small fragment of the image of Christ. The figures depicted above the entries of the sacristies were created in the later period. On the wall of the northern sacristy there is a fresco of Holy Mother of God. It is considered one of the best works in the fine arts of Medieval Armenia. Unfortunately, during the last decades, the frescoes have decayed because of dampness.

The gavit is a vaulted hall adjoining the western side of the church. It was built in 999 by Abbot Christopher. The dining hall is situated on the southern side of the group of monuments. It is a large rectangular vaulted hall (4.11m x 7.62 m) with a basement, auxiliary rooms and a fireplace.

Along the northern wall of the gavit there are two rectangular rooms (the western one probably served as a manuscript-writing center). Along the southern and western walls there are vaulted rooms, which were built in the XVII cc.

The walls surrounding the monastery were built in 1691 by the abbot of the monastery Petros Vardapet. In the yard of the monastery there is a graveyard with cross-stones and cradle-shaped gravestones dating back to the X- XVI cc. In order to irrigate the monastery lands, the leader of the monastery Fr. Sargis built a canal with the length of 24 km (1008).

The monastery of Gndevank was repeatedly reconstructed: in 1309 by Grigor (Grigores) and in 1691 by Petros Vardapet, whose inscription have preserved on the western wall of the church. In 1875, Hovhannes Vardapet Ter-Harutyunyan cleaned and improved the territory of monastery. Later it was renovated by the abbot of Tatev Monastery Petros Vardapet. In 1968, on the initiative and support of the Organization of protection of Armenian monuments, the reconstruction works of the group of monuments (church, gavit) was started and completed by 1971.

**Bibliography:**

- Gh. Alishan, “Sisakan: Topography of Syunik”, Venice, S. Ghazar, 1893.
- M. Hasratyan, “Syunik monastery-fortresses of 17-18th centuries”, “Journal of Social Sciences”, Y., 1969, N 2.
- E. Lalayan, “Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review”, book 26, Tbilisi 1916.

# THE CARAVANSERAI OF SULEMA

In medieval Armenia, along with the development of trade in caravans, roads were expanded and improved. In stopping points there were built caravanserais, guest houses and inns. Due to its geographical position and architectural solutions the caravanserai of Selim (Suleiman) had a special importance. In comparison with other monuments of medieval Armenia, it is probably the best preserved structure. The caravanserai of Selim is located on the road connecting the Gegharkunik canton of the historic Syunik Province to Vayots Dzor on the southward slope of the Selim (Suleiman) Mountain Pass (in the territory of Agh njadzor village).



The caravanserai consists of three halls. The hall of the main entrance has a length of 9m and a width of 5.3m, the second (essentially the main) hall has a length of 26m and a width of 13m, and the third hall has separate entrance and adjoins the northern wall of the first hall. It has a width of 2.4m and a length of 3.1m (excavations carried out in 2012 revealed a door between the walls adjoining the halls). On the main entrance, there is a large inscription, according to which, in 781 of Armenian chronology Prince Chesar Orbelian and his wife Khorishah built this unique structure for the salvation of the souls of their parents and children.

On the left side of the facade of the caravanserai there is a carved lion with tied tail turned toward the head from the back. On the right side there is a massive bull.

The caravanserai was built of gray polished basalt. The walls (the thickness of which is 1.1-1.2m) do not have any embrasures. From inside, the building is illuminated by three erdiks (holes in the roof) opened in the central arch ceiling. There is also one erdik in the first hall. The ceiling of the caravanserai consists of three transverse arches (the middle one is higher). On both sides of the hall there are 8 lime columns, erected at an equal distance from each other. Between the pillars there are 16 stone “boats”, which were used as horse stalls. The roof was covered with wide polished slabs, each of which has a length of 2m.

The caravanserai was completely reconstructed in 1956-1959. However, after partial excavations carried out in 2012, it again requires reinforcement.

#### **Bibliography:**

S. Barkhudaryan, “Set of Armenian inscriptions”, vol.3, Y., 1967.

Kajberuni, “Travel notes”, Y., 2003.

V. Harutyunyan, “Medieval Armenia bridges and caravanserais”, Y., 1968.

H. Eghiazaryan, “The monuments of Azizbekov region history”, 1965.

# ZORATS CHURCH OF YEGHEGIS



Yeghegis was one of the most prominent medieval settlements of the Syunyats World. In the eastern end of the village (on a hill facing the river) there is one of the unique monuments of medieval Armenian architecture - Zorats Church. It was built by the Metropolitan bishop of the province of Syunik Stepanos Tarsayich Orbelian (1324-1331). Among the Armenian architectural monuments Zorats Church is distinguished by its unique composition. Besides the vaulted or closed domed hall, the church does not have

any inner hall. This extremely interesting structure is an open church with wide aperture, two columns, an eastern altar (divided into three parts) and two adjacent sacristies. The church also is remarkable with its altar (which is higher than usual) placed at a height comfortable for warriors to dismount from a horse. The rare form of the monument dictates that it was created so that warriors sitting on their horses could receive the sacrament and the blessing of the Church before going to battle.

The blessing of troops and their horses before battles was commonplace. However, there is no other church in Armenia built for that purpose. This idea, according to which the mounted soldier entered into the outdoor area for prayer when warriors stood outside in front of the church, was unique. Hence the church was named “Zorats Yekeghetsi” (literally, Around the hill, on which the church stands, there are remnants of the walls built of massive basalt stones and the gate made of polished stone. Around it there is a graveyard with various cross-stones and gravestones. The excavations recently carried out on the territory of the church revealed three rooms connected with each other along the north- south axis. The walls of the rooms were built of double, massive basalt stones. It is also noteworthy that there are niches with shelves embedded into the eastern and southern walls of the building. The existence of shelves and cabinets in the newly opened rooms gives grounds to conclude that it was a medieval manuscript-center and Matenadaran (book-depository).

#### **Bibliography:**

Lalayan E., “Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review” book 26, Tbilisi, 1916.

S. Barkhudaryan, “Set of Armenian inscriptions”, vol.3, Y., 1967.

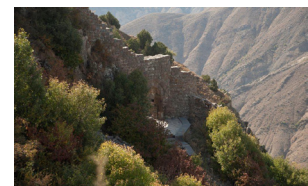
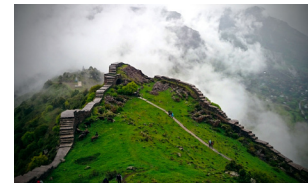
# SMBATABERD



Smbataberd is located on a hill in the eastern side of the village of Artabuink (the old Yeghegis. The hill is surrounded by gorges and (on the northern side) connected with the mountain range via an isthmus. It is protected by natural impregnable stones of the gorge. However, that circumstance did not prevent it to be strengthened by double high and wide walls. The northern side is accessible, but also was reinforced by a wall. The walls were built of wedge-shaped polished basalt stones and lime mortar. Their thickness reaches 2-3 m. From inside, there are residential buildings (currently are ruined), which stretch along the entire length of the walls. The main entrance to the castle is on the northern side, and the other two open to the eastern and western sides. The northern and eastern entrances are halls built of polished basalt stones.

On the roofs of the halls there are guardrooms and watch-towers (which also are ruined). The castle was divided by a common wall into northern and southern parts. In both parts there are citadels, water basins, residential buildings (the number of which reached 123). Water was delivered to the fortress from the monastery of Tsakhats Kar. Smbataberd was one of the largest and inaccessible fortresses of Vayots Dzor Province and generally in Syunyats World. It existed even before the V c. After the Vasakians turned the village of Yeghegis into their administrative and political center, the fortress was further strengthened. It became stronger during the period of Orbelians.

The exact name of the fortress is unknown. There are allegations that it was named "Smbataberd" since the Orbelian prince Smbat (who supposedly rebuilt the fortress) was buried in Yeghegis. However we assume that it was named after Syunyats Prince Smbat.



#### Bibliography:

"Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia", vol. 10, Y., 1984.

H. Yeghiazarian, "Cultural monuments of Azizbekov region", Y., 1955.

# SPITAKAVOR MONASTERY

(SPITAKAVOR ST ASTVATSATSIN MONASTERY)



The Monastery of Spitakavor is located 7 km north of the village of Vernashen, on the slope of the mountain. It consists of the church of St. Astvatsatsin, a gavit and a bell tower. They were built of white polished felsite stone. That's where the name of the monastery came from - "Spitak" means white in Armenian. According to the inscription, the church of St. Astvatsatsin was founded in 1318 by Prince Eachi Proshyan. After his death, the construction was continued and finished by his son Amir-Hasan in 1321. It has a domed-hall type of composition. The only entrance is on the western side. The Church is distinguished with bas-reliefs on the facade stone of the entrance depicting spiritual and secular scenes: sculptures of Mother Mary caring child (baby) Jesus in her hands, Prince Eachi and his son Amir Hassan (now kept in Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg), the high-relief of Amir Hasan with a scene of hunting (now in HMA), which are one of the best examples of sculptural art of Medieval Armenia. The gavit is a vaulted structure with a square plan and is adjacent to the church of St. Astvatsatsin from the western side. It was built in 1321-1330.

The bell tower is adjacent to the western wall of the gavit. It was built in 1330 by spouses Hovhannes and Tajn. It is a three-story building with unique composition. The first floor is closed from all sides and was built of rough-hewn stones, the second one is a rectangular niche, and the third is a passage-like arched embrasure covered with a gable roof. Around the monastery there are the remnants of fences, monastic cells and the graveyard relating to the late period.

The monument was reconstructed in 2007-2009, under the initiative of RA Ministry of Culture. In 2012, with the financial support of philanthropist Vardan Harutyunyan, in the bell tower there was installed a bell made and transferred from St. Petersburg.

#### Bibliography:

- Lalayan E., "Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review", book 26, Tbilisi, 1916.
- H. Yeghiazaryan, "Spitakavor S. Astvatsatsin Monastery and its lithographic inscriptions", "Echmiatsin", N 6, Echmiatsin, 1966.
- S. Barkhudaryan, "Vaults of Armenian inscriptions", ed.3, Y., 1967.

# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF TSAGHATS KAR



The monastic complex of Tsaghats Kar is located near the village of Artabuink (Yeghegis) in Vayots Dzor Province, on a sunward slope of a high mountain. It was one of the largest spiritual and cultural centers of medieval Armenia. The existence of the monastery was confirmed in the work of the historian Stepanos Taronetsi. Among the monasteries built and functioned during the reign of King Abbas Bagratuni (929-953 cc.), the historian also mentioned Tsaghats Kar and the abbot Stepanos. According to Stepanos Orbelian, in the 40s of the XI c., Abbot Vardik organized a wide range of construction activities.

The group of monuments consists of several churches, porticos, a gavit and a number of household buildings, part of which were revealed during excavations carried out in 1986-1991 by the archaeological expedition of NAS RA Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (led by Ph.D. H.Melkonyan). Among the latter, it is worth to mention the portico, which was opened on the southern side of the church of St. Hovhannes (X c.), and the gavit built in the XI c. and adjacent to the western part of the same church. Another portico was opened on the western part of the church of St. Astvatsatsin (X c.).

Another church (with a rectangular apse) was excavated in the eastern part of the same church. The excavations carried out at the western part of the group of monuments also revealed another small church. Tsaghats Kar is rich in lithographic inscriptions. Over 100 lithographs have remained preserved on the walls of the buildings of the group of monuments, cross-stones, gravestones and on individual building stones.

Of particular interest are: the samples of sculptural decorations of the monuments discovered during excavations; "crowns" of windows and entrances; cornices (fragments); stones (with knobby, arrow-shaped arches) from the lion's head; a basin with sculptured pitchers and stones covering the niche; sculptures carved on the south side of the church of St. Karapet (at the center of which there is a miniature model of the church with two human figures on both sides).

## Bibliography:

E. Lalayan, "Vayots Dzor. Ethnographic Review", book 26, Tbilisi 1916.

S. Barkhudaryan, "Set of Armenian inscriptions", vol.3, Y., 1967.

A. Manucharyan, "Examination of IV-XI cc. construction inscriptions of Armenia", Y., 1977.

# SYUNIQ

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF TATEV

THE MONASTERY OF VAHANAVANK

THE FUNERARY MONUMENT OF  
AGHITU

THE FORTRESS OF BAGHABERD

THE OLD KHNDZORESK

THE FORTRESS OF HALIDZOR

ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF THE  
GREAT QUARTER OF MEGHRI

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF  
VOROTNAVANK

THE PETROGLYPHS OF UGHTASAR

THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES  
OF SISAVAN



# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF TATEV

(MONASTERY OF STATHE, THE PILGRIMAGE OF APOSTLE EUSTATHIUS)



One of the masterpieces of medieval Armenian architecture - the monastic complex of Tatev, is located in the Syunik Province of RA, south-east of Tatev village, on the cape formed at the confluence of the Vorotan River and its tributary of Tatev. According to traditions, the origin of the name of the monastery is related to the name of one of the disciples of Apostle Thaddeus, Apostle Eustatheos.

The monastic complex of Tatev was established in the IV c., probably at the site of a pagan temple. In the V-VIII cc. it was the leading Armenian educational center. At the end of the VIII c., there was established the bishopric seat of Syunik. In 895-1117, there was built a higher type of school – Sunyats Vardapetaran. In 70's of the XIV c., there was founded a university (operated until 1435). Built on a high hill, the monastery of Tatev occupied advantageous strategic position, which contributed to the creation of a powerful defense complex there.

The buildings of the complex were mainly established at the end of the IX - beginning of the X c. and in the XVII- XVIII cc. The group of monuments includes: three churches, a bell tower, a manuscript-writing center, a dining hall, the mausoleum of Gr. Tatevatsi, a swinging cane-column, various residential, household and auxiliary build-

ings. They were surrounded by a pyramidal wall, outside of which there are the oil-mill, bath, water source and school.

The church of St. Grigor Lusavorich was built in 848 by Syunyats Prince Philippe. It is adjacent to the old church. The church is a single-nave, vaulted structure. Most probably, it was built by the famous medieval architect, sculptor and miniaturist Momik.

The main St. Poghos-Petros Church is a domed-hall building built in 895-906 at the site of an old church (with the support of the reigning prince of Syunik Ashot, his wife Shushanik, Grigor Supan and Dzagik princes). After completion of the construction (906), in the southern part of the monastery yard, Bishop Hovhannes erected an 8-meter high octagonal swinging pillar called "Gavazan" (dedicated to the Holy Trinity). The latter is one of the unique masterpieces: during seismic vibrations of the subsoil (even with a light touch of a human hand) it tilts and returns to the initial position.

In 930, upon the initiative of Bishop Hakob Dvnetsi, the St. Poghos-Petros Church was covered with frescoes (few of them have remained preserved). On the western wall you can see the remnants of the great composition "Last Judgment", on the northern wall – the scenes related to the theme of the birth of Jesus.

In 1043, a gavit-hall (narthex) was built adjacent to the church of St. Poghos-Petros. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 1931.

The St. Astvatsatsin (two-storey) church-mausoleum was built in 1087. It is situated on the gate of the monastery. In the XIV c., Hovhan Vorotnetsi (the first teacher of the University of Tatev) built a two-story arched bell tower on the gavit of the monastery.



Other buildings of the monastery are late medieval structures. The primacy, monk cells, barn, dining hall, kitchen, granary, other household buildings and fences were built in the XVII c. The bath was also built in the XVII c. In 1787, near the southern entrance of St. Poghos-Petros Church, on the grave of great philosopher Grigor



Tatevatsi, Archbishop Hovakim built a mausoleum (the pyramids of the northern fence were also built during that period). The “Dzit Han” (oil-mill) was built at the end of the XVIII c. by Archbishop Hovakim. The school, which was built in the XVIII c. by the abbot Abraham Astapatsi, operated until the beginning of the XX c. It is the only example of the preserved late medieval educational institution in Armenia that remained until nowadays. Its ruins were found during excavations in 1981-1982. At the end of the XIX c., the gavit and the old bell tower of the monastery were completely demolished. On their place, (at the beginning of the XX c.), there were built a new three-storey bell tower with magnificent sculptures, adjacent to the western facade of St. Poghos-Petros Church.

The monastery was seriously damaged by an earthquake in 1931. The main part of the structures turned into ruins. In the 1980s, the reconstruction projects of the main structures of the complex were developed and the construction works started. As a result of the collapse of the USSR, the reconstruction works were stopped. At the end of the 1990s, under the initiative of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the construction of the ceilings of St. Poghos-Petros Church was completed, and the first floor of the bell tower and the rotunda of the mausoleum of Gr. Tatevatsi were reconstructed. On October 16, 2010, the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia launched the project “Tatev Revival”, within the framework of which there was built a 5.7 km long cableway, stretching from the Vorotan River gorge to Tatev Monastery, and the oil mill of Tatev was restored. Within the framework of the same project, the research and project works of strengthening and reconstruction of the complex were continued.

Nowadays, Tatev Monastery serves as the center of the Syunik Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

#### Bibliography:

- S. Orbelian, “History of Syunik”, translated by A. Abrahamyan, Y., 1990.
- E. Lalayan, “Zangezur province”, Ethnographic Review, book D, Tbilisi, 1898.
- Gh. Alishan, “Sisakan”, Venice, 1893.
- “Set of Armenian lithographs” vol. II, Goris, Sisian and Ghapan provinces, compiled by S. Barkhudarian, Y., 1960.
- T. Hakobyan, “Kingdom of Syunik”, Y., 1966.
- St. Mnatsakanyan, “Syunik School of Armenian Architecture”, Y., 1960.

# THE MONASTERY OF VAHANAVANK



The monastic complex of Vahanavank is located about 5 km south-west of Kapan (the regional center of Syunik Province of RA) and 1.4 km south of the Shgharshik district (historic Shekq village). It is situated on the right bank of the Voghji River, on a wooded slope of Mount Tigranasar.

The main and the oldest structure of Vahanavank is the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator built in 911. It is a domed hall with a pair of pylons and sacristies built on the northern and southern sides of the altar. The facades are decorated with “Armenian niches”. It has two entrances: the western (connects with the gavit (narthex)) and the southern (connects with the portico). The church is built from white travertine. The gavit adjoins the domed church from the west side. It is a rectangular hall with three vaulted arches. The entrance is on the southern side and opens into the adjacent portico. It has the dimensions of 11m x 7.9 m. Inside there are burials. The portico (with the dimensions of 24 x 5.75 m) adjoins the church and gavit on the south side (along the whole length of the facades of the two buildings). In addition to the northern entrances, opening into the church and gavit, the portico has two more entrances on the south side: one of them communicates with the alleged portico, and the



#### Bibliography:

- Gr. Grigorian, "Vahanavank", (historical-scientific review) Y., 2007.
- "Set of Armenian lithographs", vol. II, compiled by S.G. Barkhudaryan, Y., 1960.
- "History of the province of Sisak", by Archbishop of Syunik Stepanos Orbelian", Tbilisi, 1911, chapter 44.
- Kh. Alishan "Sisakan", Venice, 1893.
- V. Avetian, "Bronze Age monuments in the territory of Vahanavank", "ASSR 1985-1986. scientific sessions reports dedicated to field archaeological works", Y., 1987.
- Gr. Grigorian, "Syunik in the period of Orbelians", Y., 1981.
- St. Mnatsakanian, "Syunik School of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1960.
- Yu. Tamanian, "Restoration of Stone Chronicles", Y., 1981, pp. 23-24.
- Yu. Tamanian, "New life to monuments", Y., 1988, pp. 126-130.
- "Armenian Brief Encyclopedia", vol. 4, Y., 2003, pp. 559-560.
- "Calendar. 2001", ed. Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, p. 232.

other one - with the southern part of the monastery yard. In the portico there also were burials. The remnants of the alleged portico are spread from the gavit to south-west. Presumably, it had two floors (the second floor was not preserved). On the southern side of the complex, about 70 m south of the main group of monuments, there is the two-storey small church of St. Astvatsatsin (with dimensions are 7.8m x 4.45m), built of red, marble polished fragments of limestone.

The monastic complex also includes: a graveyard, situated in the territory of the yard with cross-stones and gravestones revealed during excavations (the majority of which were inscribed); a metal smelting furnaces (which were opened near the western wall of the gavit); a hall adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the church of St. Gregory; several drinking fountains and residential buildings dating back to the X-XI cc. According to the lapidary inscriptions on the territory of the monastery, there also were two other churches - St. Harutyun and St. Zion, location of which are unknown.

The excavation and cleaning works of the monument were started in 1966 by the initiative of the Organization of protection of Armenian monuments. The reconstruction works of the two-storey St. Astvatsatsin Church were started in 1978. In 2006-2009, the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator and the adjacent gavit were reconstructed. The portico was also partially reconstructed.

Thus, Vahanavank is one of the rare examples of the complex construction of that period, due to which it acquires special significance.

# THE FUNERARY MONUMENT OF AGHITU

(AGHUDI)



The unique monument of the early medieval memorial architecture - Aghitu funerary monument (which, according to traditions, was commemorated in the memory of the three Syunyats princes who defeated the Persian army) is located in the historic graveyard of Odzun village, beside khachkars (crosses-stones) and gravestones of the XIII-XIV cc. This monument dates back to the VI-VII cc. and is unique with its architectural composition. The 15 meter-high monument is a composition of a two-storeyed column-arch framed by horizontal cornice slabs and two pylons. In the central part of a rectangular pedestal (with two different sized arched hollows built of polished stones) there is a rising 8-sided column enclosed in two rectangular pylons with gorgeous ornate capital. The monument ends with a three-part arch decorated with gorgeous herbal ornaments. The monument is crowned with a sculptured volumetric cross, of which only fragments were preserved. It also has five undated inscriptions. The monument was renovated in 1970 by the architect A. Stepanyan.

#### **Bibliography:**

V. Harutyunian, "Overview of the history of Armenian architecture", Y., 1964.

H. Hakobian, "The memorable places of Armenian history", Y., 1978.

Yu. Tamaian, "Restoration of Stone Chronicles", Y., 1981.

Short Armenian Encyclopedia, Y., vol. 1, 1990.

# THE FORTRESS OF BAGHABERD

Baghaberd (or the fortress of Kapan) is located in Syunik Province, (to the west of the town of Kapan), on the highway leading to Qajaran, not far from the place of the confluence of the Voghji and Geghi rivers. It is one of the largest defense structures in Armenia. According to the historian Stepanos Orbelyan (XIII-XIV cc.), one of the descendants of Sisak - Baghak Nahapet, received the Dzork (Kapan) canton as inheritance. He built the stone castle of Baghak, fortified the fortress and named it "Baghaberd". As an inaccessible fortress it was known from the IV-V cc.

The significance of Baghaberd increased in the X-XII cc., in the period of the Kingdom of Syunik (or Baghats). In 1103, after the destruction of the town of Kapan, aghaberd became the capital of the kingdom of Syunik. In 1170, the Seljuks of Gandzak, headed by Atabek Eldkuz (Ildegiz), occupied Baghaberd, killed the residents, burned more than 10,000 manuscripts belonging to the Monastery of Tatev, robbed the treasures, after which the fortress dimmed and never rebuild.



The fortress was built on a triangular cape with three-stage defense levels, the first of which passes through the foot of the cliff, the second one is about 150m above it and the third one is at the top of the cape. It is surrounded by round, towered thick and high double-walls. On both sides, there are vertical cliffs of deep gorges which serve as natural barriers. On the eastern side, the relatively vulnerable parts of cliffs were fortified by retaining walls with pyramidal buttresses, and the cliffs in some places were designed as vertical walls. The only entrance to the fortress is on the south-western part of the fence, protected by a "control tower". The fortress had underground passages, storages carved into the rock and water line, of which only barely noticeable traces were preserved. There are also remained fragments of the walls (about 6-8m high)(people demolished the walls tones to use them as building stones). The fortress was heavily damaged in the Soviet period, when a new road to Kapan-Qajaran was built. During the construction of the road a part of the fence was demolished (along with the pyramids). Currently, there are two pyramids standing adjacent to that road: ruined and dilapidated.

#### **Bibliography:**

St. Orbelyan, "History of Syunik",  
Y., 1986.

S. Mnatsakanyan, "The Syunik  
School of Armenian Architecture",  
Y., 1960.

# THE OLD KHNDZORESK



The village of Old Khndzoresk is situated on the right and left slopes of the mountain valley (separated by deep basins of the northeastern edge of the current Khndzoresk village), about 13 km south-east of Goris. According to traditions, the village was built in deep canyons and initially was named “Khor Dzor” (“Deep Canyon”). Later, it was renamed into “Khndzoresk”. At first, most of the houses in the village were built into caves. The cave houses also served as shelters. Besides the cliffs with one cavern, there are also cliffs with caverns carved at different heights. The residents living in the cave houses situated at the altitude of 20-30 m used to climb up by ropes. Later, on the front parts of the caves there were built houses, which were arranged in the form of terraces: the roof of one house served as a yard for the other one.

One of the most famous monuments is the fortress of Khndzoresk. In 1728- 1730, it served as a military base for Mkhitar Sparapet.

In the territory of the village, in different historical periods there were built four churches: the churches of St. Tadevos (Thaddeus) and St. Hripsime (which remained standing); the church of Anapat (Desert) (was dilapidated) and the cave church built (in IX-X cc.) on the southeastern edge of the village. The church of St. Hripsime (1666) is a three-nave basilica, and the church of St. Tadevos (XVII- XVIII cc.) is a single-nave hall. The church of Anapat served as manuscript center, where many manuscripts were written and preserved. The grave of Mkhitar Sparapet is in the cemetery located in the churchyard.

**Bibliography:**

- St. Orbelian, "History of Syunik", Y., 1986.
- E. Lalayan, "The province of Zang-ezur, Ethnographic Review", book D, Tbilisi, 1898, N 2.
- The Dictionary of Toponymy of Armenia and Adjacent Territories. vol 2, Y., 1988.
- E. Zohrabyan, "People of Khoradzor", Y., 1984.
- H. Mirzoyan, "Motherland", Y., 2000.
- "Architecture and Construction" Magazine, September, 2012.

In different parts of the village there are water sources (some of them are arched). All the water sources have big or small stone basins. The palace of Melik Kasu (1836) is located on the upland slope of the ancient village. One of the noteworthy constructions is the cave reservoir located near the church of St. Tadevos. The curren village of Khndzoresk was built due to the old one: when the residents left the village, they demolished and used the building stones of the old houses to construct new houses, as a result, the historical-cultural image of the village (which remained undamaged until 1954), suffered. Khndzoresk was the largest village in Eastern Armenia. At the beginning of the XX c. its population reached 8300. It had 7 schools and 27 stores. The population of the village took an active part in the liberation movement of David Bek.



# THE FORTRESS OF HALIDZOR

(ST. ASTVATSATSIN CONVENT OF HALIDZOR)

As a remarkable example of the combination of compositions of defense and religious complexes, the fortress of Halidzor occupies a special place in the late medieval Armenian architecture. It is located on the right bank of the Voghji River. The fortress of Halidzor was built in the first half of the XVII c. and served as a convent. In 1668, there were built 70 nuns. In the XVIII c., due to the inaccessible position, it was turned into a castle and became the main fortress of David Bek's struggle for liberation and the center of the Armenian power of Syunik. The fortress has irregular square plan and is surrounded by walls (the length of each of the walls is 50 m, thickness - about 1 m). The south-western corner of the castle is reinforced with a pyramid with a circular base. It has two entrances (southern and northern).

The main structure in the complex is the church of St. Astvatsatsin. It was established in the XVII c. (and rebuilt in 1723). It was built of large raw basalt stones. It is a vaulted hall with rectangular plan and a couple of sacristies on the right and left sides of the eastern altar. Above the prayer hall, there is a bell tower. The church does not have a gavit (narthex). There are two-storey buildings adjoining the church from the north and south (the first floors of which serve as gavits). The old two-storey roof of the church, for safety reasons, was transformed into a flat roof, aligned with the roofs of the two-storey buildings on both sides and turned into a high square for carrying out military actions.

On the north of the church of St. Astvatsatsin there is a dome-covered rectangular building with four pylons, (it probably served as a mausoleum). It was established in the XVII c. According to traditions, the gravestone of Commander David Bek is situated there. The dining hall was built in the XVII c. It is located on the northern side of the fortress. Near the western walls there are traces of monk cells. Near the southern wall there is a small rectangular building, which was probably built earlier and served as a monastery guard-house. Like the other fortresses in Armenia, the fortress of Halidzor had a secret road. Outside the fortress (on the eastern side) there is the other church of the fortress of Halidzor, which, by its composition and size, is basically similar to the church of St. Astvatsatsin.

In 2006-2009, partial reconstruction works were carried out on the territory of the fortress: the church of St. Astvatsatsin, the eastern, northeast and southeastern walls and southern entrance were reconstructed.



#### Bibliography:

M. Hasratyan, "Syunik architectural complexes of the XVII-XVIII centuries", Y., 1973.

Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 6, Y., 1980.

# ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF THE GREAT QUARTER OF MEGHRI

The domed XVII c. churches of Meghri region are of great value for Armenian architecture. The most noteworthy of them is the church of St. Astvatsatsin located in the Great quarter of Meghri. It is situated in the highland northern quarter of the settlement and was built of basalt (the drum and dome were built of with brick). It is a four-pylon, domed basilica with two entrances (western and southern).

In the southern part of the monument there was built a bell tower. It was erected on the gable roof of the fronton. The structure is a rectangular brick rotunda "crowned" with a tetrahedron spire. The church is of a restrained design (the only decoration is the head of a ram carved near the western window of the southern facade). From inside, the church is decorated with XIX c. frescoes.

#### Bibliography:

M. Hasratyan, "Monuments of Meghri region", Y., 1987.



# THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF VOROTNAVANK



The medieval monastic complex of Vorotnavank (Monastery of Vaghadni) is one of the most remarkable monuments of the Syunik school of Armenian architecture. The complex is located about 2 km south-east of the village, on the edge of the gorge of Vоротan River. It dates back to the X-XI centuries. It consists of the churches of St. Grigor, St. Stepanos and St. Karapet, a gavit, porticos, guest house and auxiliary buildings, a wall and graveyard. All the monuments were placed along the perimeter of the rectangular yard, mainly on the northern and eastern sides, and were built with local basalt stones. The church of St. Grigor is the oldest church of the complex. The church operated even before the foundation of the monastery complex. According to the historian Stepanos Orbelyan (the XIII-XIV centuries), it was founded by Gregory the Illuminator in the IV century. Later was rebuilt by hermit Fr. Stepanos. It's a single-nave structure (currently is ruined). In the early Middle Ages, it was a famous pilgrimage site.

The church of St. Stepanos Nakhaveka is situated on the north-eastern side of the church of St. Grigor. According to the building inscription, the church was built in 1000 by the wife of Syunyats King Smbat, Queen Shahandukht. It is a single-nave, vaulted structure.

On the eastern side there are two sacristies. The third sacristy is located along the northern wall and is the continuation of the north-eastern sacristy.

The Gavit is adjacent to the church of St. Stepanos on the western side. It is a vaulted structure built at the beginning of XI c. The portico stretches along the southern fronts of the church of St. Stepanos and gavit. It is a vaulted structure, with a wide horseshoe-shaped arched embrasure.

The church of St. Karapet is located in the eastern part of the complex, on the southeastern side of the church of St. Stepanos. It was built in 1007 by the son of Queen Shahandukht, Prince Sevada. It has a central-domed, three-altar, internally cross-shaped composition with sacristies in the four corners. The only entrance is from the western side. It was built of polished basalt stones. The dome of the church was reconstructed in 1438 by the abbot Sargis Angeghakotsi. The dome and ceilings of the church were destroyed by the earthquake of 1931. Inside the church there are few preserved traces of a fresco, which was restored in 2011 by Kristin Lemieux from Belgium and Italian specialists.

The portico stretches along the southern wall of the church of St. Stepanos (it was built later than the church). It is an open, arched structure with three large semi-circular arches erected on the central part. The guesthouse and other auxiliary buildings are located on the western side of the complex. The latter were built by Queen Shahandukht at the beginning of the XI c. The guesthouse was built later (in 1326).

The memorial-column was built in the XI c. It is adjacent to the northern wall of the church of St. Karapet. It is erected on a three-stage pedestal, with a cross-stone placed on the capital on the top.

The wall surrounds the complex from the eastern, western and southern sides. The northern walls of the monuments were a part of the monastery defense system. The graveyard is spread over the fenced yard of the monastery. It has various khachkars and tombstones dating back to the X-XVI cc. The porticos (adjoining the churches of St. Stepanos and St. Karapet) served as the graveyard for the ruling dynasty. The founders of the monastery, Shahandukht and her son Sevada, were buried there.

The renovation works of the complex started in the 1980s and finished in 2013.

#### Bibliography:

S. Mnatsakanyan, "Syunik School of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1960.

S. Barkhudaryan, "Set of Armenian inscriptions", vol.2, Y., 1960.



# THE PETROGLYPHS OF UGHTASAR

Ughtasar is located about 30 km far from Sisian, at the top of Syunyats (Zangezur) mountain range (at about 3300 meters above sea level). The ancient settlement of Ughtasar, rich in monuments with petroglyphs (rock carvings), is located on its slopes. There were found more than 2000 petroglyphs (scattered throughout the foot hills of the mountain, around small lakes formed of volcanic craters, in small gorges and upland areas). Most of the petroglyphs were engraved on horizontal or vertical surfaces of copper and black rock fragments with a depth of 2-6 cm and width of 2-20 mm.

The content of the petroglyphs is varied. They include scenes of hunting, surrounding nature, ritual acts, cosmic symbols, especially scenes related to the worship of the Sun. The oldest petroglyphs of Ughtasar date back to V- IV millenniums B.C. The large petroglyphs were covered with carved volume images of cattle, predators. Most numerous is the group of petroglyphs from the Bronze Age (III-II millenniums BC.), which is mostly multi-figure and depicts the everyday life, hunting, beliefs of the ancient tribes of the Armenian Highlands, as well as the animal world of Armenia: there are images of wild and domesticated animals (bezoar goats, mufflons, gazelles, deer, au rochs (wild oxen/bulls), horses, dogs, boars, leopards).

In abstract images of the animals their characteristic movements and specific features are clearly expressed. In most of the thematic scenes, the direct participant is a man, depicted at the moment of hunting, in motion, with longbow in hand, throwing a bow at a hunting animal, armed with a spear, and often with a rope in hand. There are depictions of hunting scenes of both large groups and individuals. (round-up, chasing hunting animals, various ways of pursuit). There are masterfully carved scenes of fight between beast and man, a dog protecting a goat herd from the attacks of a pack of predators and other scenes.

The Art of petroglyphs is impressive both in terms of art and content. They reached us almost undamaged: only a small part, damaged under the influence of wind, was torn off the surfaces of rock fragments, and some part of them, that are close to the water sources, are covered with a layer of earth.



## Bibliography:

G. Karakhanyan, P. Safyan, "Petroglyphs of Syunik. The Archaeological Monuments of Armenia", 4, Petroglyphs, vol. 1, Y., 1970.

# THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES OF SISAVAN

(SYUNI VANK)



The church of St. Hovhannes is located on the north-western hill of the town of Sisian. According to the historian Stepanos Orbelian (the XIII c.), the monastery was founded by Varazdukht, Princess of Syunik. The church was completely rebuilt by Syunik prince Kohazat and Syunyats Bishop Hovsep I, with the support of Theodoros Vardapet. There is no valid evidence on the date of its construction. Based on the architectural forms and the research of the lithographs records` it is ascribed to the second half of the VII century. It was dedicated to St. Gregory the Illuminator, later was renamed to St. Hovhannes. The church belongs to the type of "Hripsime Type" monuments. It was built of polished, blue basalt, three-stage bases. It has a cross-shape, central-domed structure, with quadrangular sacristies in the four corners. It has two entrances (southern and western).

The church of St. Hovhannes is distinguished by its sculptures. The cornice of the dome was decorated with high-relief sculptures of the four evangelists (with corresponding inscriptions). The drum of the church was decorated (from inside) with the highly artistic sculptures depicting prince Kohazat, Bishop Hovsep I and Theodoros Vardapet. On the walls there are preserved 39 engraved signs of the builders, in the form of initials.

#### Bibliography:

- S. Orbelian, "History of Syunik", Y., 1986.
- V. Harutyunyan, "History of Armenian Architecture", Y., 1992.
- S. Barkhudaryan, "Set of Armenian inscriptions", vol.2, Y., 1960.



## SHIRAK

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF MARMASHEN	4
YERERUYK	6
ST. GEVORG CHURCH OF ARTIK	8
LMBATAVANK	9
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF HARITCH	10
THE CHURCH OF PEMZASHEN	12

## ARAGATSOTN

HOVHANNAVANK	16
THE MONASTERY OF SAGHMOSAVANK	19
ST. KATOGHIKE AND ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCHES OF TALIN	22
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF ASTVATZNKAL	25
ST. GRIGOR CHURCH OF ARUCH	26
THE TSIRANAVOR CHURCH	28
KARMRAVOR ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH	29
AMBERD	30
THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES	32
ST. GEVORG MONASTERY OF MUGHNI	33
THE ST. SARKIS MONASTERY OF USHI	34
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF THEGHER	36
THE BASILICA CHURCH COMPLEX OF QASAKH	38

## ARARAT

THE ANCIENT CITY OF ARTASHAT	42
THE ANCIENT CITY OF DVIN	45
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF KHOR VIRAP	55
OVHANNES KARAPET MONASTERY	58

## VAYOTS DZOR

ARENI - 1 CAVE	62
NORAVANK	65
THE MONASTERY OF ARATES	68
ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF ARENI	69
THE MONASTERY OF GNDEVANK	71
THE CARAVANSERAI OF SULEMA	73
ZORATS CHURCH OF YEGHEGIS	74
SMBATABERD	75
SPITAKAVOR MONASTERY	76
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF TSAGHATS KAR	77

## SYUNIQ

THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF TATEV	80
THE MONASTERY OF VAHANAVANK	83
THE FUNERARY MONUMENT OF AGHITU	85
THE FORTRESS OF BAGHABERD	86
THE OLD KHNDZORESK	87
THE FORTRESS OF HALIDZOR	89
ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH OF THE GREAT QUARTER OF MEGHRI	90
THE MONASTIC COMPLEX OF VOROTNAVANK	91
THE PETROGLYPHS OF UGHTASAR	93
THE CHURCH OF ST. HOVHANNES OF SISAVAN	94



MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA  
“SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT  
AND CULTURAL MUSEUM RESERVATIONS”  
Non Commercial State Organization

