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HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

ИСТОРИЯ АРХИТЕКТУРЫ

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ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE OF THE HISTORICAL PROVINCE OF TASHIR IN NORTHERN ARMENIA¹

Keywords: Historical Tashir, Gugark', Lori region, Armenian Medieval Architecture, Cultural Landscape, Cultural Heritage.

Abstract:

The paper focuses on a reading of the built landscape of the territory of northern Armenia, formerly known as the Tashir region, within the province of Lori. The region is characterised by a large plateau dotted with religious buildings, including churches and monasteries. According to scholars, these were built between the 6th and 12th centuries, making the region an active centre of architectural production for centuries. The highland has an agricultural tradition, while the infrastructure system is clearly hierarchical: it is bordered to the west by Lori Berd, and to the east by the Akht'ala Monastery. The route between these fortified vertices is marked by a monastic-type architectural infrastructure within an agricultural landscape, where the fields display various patterns reflecting different agrarian practices and land use. Monastic centres mark out the territory by isochrones and constitute a real network

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along the route serving the agricultural vocation of the place. The historical layering of the Tashir settlement is today an important repository of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The paper proposes a multiscale reading of the architectural elements in conjunction with the infrastructural-territorial hierarchy, thus offering a framework within which to interrogate the functions and roles of certain buildings within monastery complexes and the development of the territory over the course of centuries.

Historical cartography reveals that the region of Tashir, situated within the contemporary Armenian province of Lori, corresponds to a geographical nexus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Tashir is characterised by many religious buildings, churches and monasteries, which, according to scholars, were built between the 6th and 12th centuries². They are all located on a large plateau that marks the area along the Dzoraget River. The highland has an agricultural tradition, while the infrastructure system is clearly hierarchical. It is bordered to the west by Lori Berd, a medieval fortress with archaeological evidence of a Roman oppidum, and to the east by the Akht'ala Monastery, built on an ancient fortified settlement dating from the Byzantine era. The path connecting these fortified points is characterized by a monastic-type architectural infrastructure, set within an agrarian landscape. The rural fields exhibit a distinctive pattern that evokes the principles of Roman centuriation. The monastic centres mark out the territory by isochrones and constitute a network along the route serving the agricultural vocation of the place. In the early Christian period, this region was an active centre of architectural experimentation that remained alive for centuries. In fact, the architectural diachronicity testifies to the vitality of the whole area and to the monastic activity that settled in the Middle Ages on older foundations, while their diversity suggests a medieval reorganisation in response to new agricultural and social needs. The

² The timeframe mentioned in this work is considered to include buildings that were constructed and established, rather than modifications or extensions carried out in later centuries. This is intended to indicate that there were essentially two main periods of construction: one ending in the 7th/8th century, and the other beginning in the 10th century.

In this paper, we refer to the following sites (the page numbers and dates given can be found in **P. Cuneo**, *Architettura armena dal IV al XIX secolo*, Roma, 1988): Tziranavor-Tzaghkavank' in Odzun (6th, 8th), p. 286; Kurt'an (5th-6th), p. 274; Tormak (or Tormakavank') in Gyulagarak (7th), p.269; Gtevank' (6th), p.276; Jgrashen in Vardablur (7th), p.268; St. Gevorg in Sverdlov (6th, 12th-13th, 19th), p. 272; Hobardzi (6th) p. 277; Odzun (7th), p. 282-5; Akht'ala (10th, 13th), p. 311-3; Hnevank' (7th, 11th-13th), p. 275; K'obayr (12th-13th), p. 288-89; Horomayr (12th-14th), p. 278; Barjrakas (10th-13th), p. 280; Sanahin (10th-13th), p. 290-98; Haghpat (10th-13th), p. 302-9.

historical layering of the Tashir settlement is today a repository of Intangible Cultural Heritage and cultural constants. This paper presents a multiscale analysis of the region, tracing the development of the territory from the ancient to the medieval period. It highlights the connections between routes that intersect with the major trade pathways of the northern region.

The research investigates through an analysis of the architecture and the landscape the historical layering of the Armenian historical province of Tashir, which is now within the Lori region, in northern Armenia (fig. 0)*. Indeed, the northern border of Lori region represents also the border between Armenia and Georgia, and the region is today divided into five districts (Stepanavan, Tashir, Vanadzor, Alaverdi, and Spitak)³. In order to achieve a more profound understanding of the structural characteristics of Tashir, it is worth considering two key aspects: the morphological characteristics and the historical context.

In the Armenian Tashir⁴, the term is used to refer to the plateau situated between the main Debed river and its two tributaries, the Dzoraget and the P'ambak. The Debed river has its source in Armenia, and then flows into Georgia, forming a natural boundary between Armenia and Georgia. The topography of the area extends from east to west along the Dzoraget River, which traverses and bisects the highland, and from south to north along the Debed River (fig. 1)⁵. The highland displays a notable potential for agricultural development, rich in springs and rivers and in natural and mineral resources⁶. The morphological conformation of the area not only facilitates agricultural activities but also plays a pivotal role in the emergence of urban settlements and villages. Indeed, the area is rich in fascinating and, above all, profoundly ancient buildings.

* For the images see the insert.

³ **M. Herles, R. Davtyan**, "Neue Untersuchungen in der Provinz Lori (Armenien)," In *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 149, 2017, p. 10.

⁴ The region has been divided between modern-day Armenia and Georgia since the 11th century, and this division has persisted to the present day, with the Armenian Lori Province and the Georgian region of Kvemo Kartli.

⁵ Geographical outline of the part of the territory corresponding to the historical province of Tashir in northern Armenia, specifically the area occupied by the Dzoraget and Debed river segments, including the castle of Lori on the left and the monastery of Akht'ala on the upper right. Image source: Google Earth.

⁶ See **A. Gevorkyan, A. Bobokhyan**, "Metallurgy of Ancient Armenia in Cultural and Historical Context", *Journal of Armenian Studies* 1, 2014, p. 49.

In terms of its historical background, the Tashir region is said to have belonged to one of the cantons of the Lords of Gugark', a former province of Greater Armenia⁷. From the fifth century onwards both Armenian and Iberian lords asserted their claim to the territory of Tashir, transferred between them in accordance with the shifting political circumstances. The region served as the Kingdom of Tashir-Dzoraget (tenth–twelfth century), also referred to as the Kingdom of Lori or the Kiurikian Kingdom, which was ruled by the Kiurikian dynasty, a branch of the Bagratids⁸. During this period of relative tranquillity, the region underwent a cultural renaissance, emerging as a prominent hub of Armenian culture. As asserted by Michael Herles and Ruben Davtyan in their 2017 paper “Neue Untersuchungen in der Provinz Lori (Armenien)”, the region functioned as a pivotal trade route between the Byzantine Empire and the Northern Caucasus region, as evidenced by the existence of the renowned monasteries of Sanahin and Haghbat⁹. During the expansion of David IV of Georgia in the years 1118–1123, the Kingdom of Lori fell into Georgian hands and “Lori and its province” were assigned to the Orbelian family¹⁰, who, in later years, became relatives of the Kiurikians¹¹. Over the following years, the region experienced a period of cultural and economic prosperity closely linked to construction¹². However, this period of tranquillity came to an end when the Tartars invaded the region in the first quarter of the thirteenth century (1214)¹³.

What we do have from this brief historical overview is an understanding of a number of specific aspects. Primarily, it underscores the vitality of the region, its historical layering and the fact that the territory has remained vital and unchanged for a considerable duration. Consequently, despite the region's susceptibility to political instability, it was a prominent cultural centre, at least until the twelfth

⁷ As mentioned in the book *Ashkharats'uyts' (Armenian Geography)*, probably written by Anania Shirakatsi (610–685) (see **Herles & Davtyan**, *op. cit.* p.12). The term Tashir is mentioned by Movsēs Khorenats'i in his 5th-century monumental work *History of Armenia*, as one of the cantons of the lords of Gugark', a former province of Greater Armenia. See **R. W. Thomson**, *History of the Armenians / Moses Khorenats' i*, Michigan, 2006, pp. 138, 329; *Ibid.*, Map II.

⁸ **L. Movsesian**, « Histoire des rois Kurikian de Lori », trans. **Frédéric Macler**, *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 7, Pt. 2 (1927), p. 222.

⁹ See **Herles & Davtyan**, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰ **Movsesian**, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–247.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

¹² *Ibidem*, p.259. The author refers to the 12th century as the Golden Age of the Kiurikian Kingdom. A scientific hub in northern Armenia, it was also the focus of ecclesiastical organisation, with new churches being built and old monasteries repaired.

¹³ See *Ibidem*, p. 258; **Herles & Davtyan**, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15; **L. Pubblici**, *Storia dei Mongoli. Dalle steppe all'impero (secoli XIII–XV)*. Roma, 2023, p. 96.

century. And thirdly, from the fifth century onwards, the region has consistently served as a border between two factions, serving as unchanged northern border of Armenia for as long as one can speak of it. This preserved integrity and authenticity enable the study of buildings and landscapes that maintain their original structures and reflect the historical legacy of the region.

Focusing the study on the building and landscape system in the region of Tashir, we recognize a complex and multifaceted hierarchical organisation, where a number of archaeological sites can be identified, beginning at the eastern side with the Fortress d Lorī¹⁴, a few kilometres away from the city of Stepanavan (fig. 2). The castle, known in Armenian as Lorī Berd, was the capital of the Kingdom of Tashir-Dzoraget and it was constructed in the eleventh century. It is currently undergoing archaeological excavation, during which evidence of the classical period has been discovered¹⁵. It functions as an entrance control for the plateau, regulating the access to the Dzoraget river, as the sole viable ford. On the far western side, however, where the plateau reaches its conclusion, the Monastery of Akht'ala is located at the upper

¹⁴ Regarding the history and some photographs of Lorī Berd, refer to the official web page of the Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-reservations SNCO (<https://hushardzan.am/en/archives/721>) [last access 13/03/2025].

¹⁵ The most recent archaeological excavations of the Lorī Fortress, resumed in 2022 with a special grant from the RA MoESCS, were carried out by the SNCO's Historical and Cultural Heritage Research Centre. The archaeological expedition of the Scientific Research Centre of Historical and Cultural Heritage (expedition leader: A. Nalbandyan, archaeologist: M. Khechoyan, assistant: S. Bislamyán) revealed significant results both in terms of architecture and the study of cultural layers. See the official website (<https://hushardzan.am/en/archives/27096>) [last access 20/03/2025] and Nalbandyan 2024. For an overview of archaeological excavations in Lorī Berd, see: **A. Nalbandyan**, *New Discoveries Intowards the Water Use Systems of the Medieval Baths of the Lore Berd Fortress*, 2024; **S. Devedjyan**, *Lorī Berd II, Bronze Moyen*, Yerevan, 2006; **S. Devedjyan**, *Լորի բերդ III. Ուշբրոնզեդարյան դամբարաններ [Lorī Berd III. Late Bronze Age Burials]*, Yerevan, 2022; **S. Devedjyan, S., Hobosyan**, «Դամբարանների պեղումներ Լորու մարզի Կուրբան գյուղում» [“Excavations of Burials in the village Kurt'an of the Lorī Region”], in: **P. Avetisyan, A., Kalantaryan, R. Badalyan** (eds.), *Հին Հայաստանի մշակույթը [The Culture of Ancient Armenia]*, XIV, Yerevan 2008, pp. 113–127; **R. Davtyan**, *Between Near East and Eurasian Nomads: Representation of Local Elites in the Lorī Berd Necropolis during the First Half of the First Millennium BC*, Halle-Wittenberg, 2022; **R. Davtyan, S. Arnhold, R. Kunze**, “Sondageuntersuchungen an der Siedlung Lorī Berd 2022”, In *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin mDOG 155*, pp. 5-33, 2023; **I. Gharibyan**, *Լորե բերդաբաղաբը և նրա պեղումները [The Lore Castle and its Excavations]*, Yerevan, 2009.

For a comprehensive overview of Archaeological excavations in the province of Lorī, refer to the bibliography of relevant excavations explained in **Herles & Davtyan**, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

point of the ridge (fig. 3)¹⁶. The religious edifice was founded circa twelfth century¹⁷ and it is located within the tenth century fortress of Akht'ala, which was constructed with the aim of strengthening defensive positions by the Bagratids and the Kiurikians¹⁸. The history of the site is indeed very ancient. The ruins of the ancient fortified settlement include a circular tower dating back to the Byzantine era, and archaeological findings¹⁹ discovered between 1887 and 1889 by Jacques de Morgan provide evidence that the fortress was almost certainly constructed on top of Bronze and Iron Age foundations²⁰.

The route between the fortified peaks of Lori Castle and the Monastery of Akht'ala is situated within an agrarian environment, the field design of which is clearly visible and it is interspersed with a monastic architectural infrastructure. Indeed, along the Dzoraget river, there is a significant concentration of churches and monasteries in close proximity to one another (fig. 4)²¹. However, on a closer architectural analysis, these churches and monasteries reveal both similarities and differences.

Among these, a particularly significant series of buildings originates from the sixth or seventh century²². As suggested by Murad Hasratyan in *Les églises à nef unique avec portique de Tachir et les monuments similaires du Haut Moyen Age de l'Arménie*, these early Christian buildings seem to belong to the same architectural

¹⁶ Akht'ala Monastery. The photo shows the older fortress and the religious building inside. Credits to Soghomon Matevosyan, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons. [[a title="Soghomon Matevosyan, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/> via Wikimedia Commons" href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Akhtala_monastery_110.JPG">\].](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

¹⁷ In 1188, Princess Mariam commissioned the construction of the Monastery of the Holy Virgin, which functioned as a site for spiritual contemplation. See **H. Tarverdyan**, *Ախթալայի Մուրթ Աստվածածին Վանքը* [*The Monastery of the Holy Mother of God in Akt'ala*], 2018.

¹⁸ About the history of the monastery, see *ibid*.

¹⁹ Findings such as 576 rectangular stone sepulchres, and cultural, bronze and iron items dated back to the 8th century BC.

²⁰ **M. Castelluccia**, "The Evolution of the Archaeological Landscape of the Armenian Highland during the Iron Age," In *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 21 (2), 2015, pp. 354-355; **J. De Morgan**, *Mission scientifique au Caucase: études archéologiques & historiques, Recherches sur les origines des peuples du caucase*, vol. 2. Paris, 1889.

²¹ Diagram of Tashir religious buildings along the Dzoraget and Debed rivers, starting at Lori Berd on the left and arriving at Akht'ala Monastery on the top right. Drawing by the author.

²² Paolo Cuneo identifies the 6th and 7th centuries as the second phase in the formative period of Armenian architecture (See **Cuneo**, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

school²³. These buildings notably share similarities in decoration and masonry, while also featuring a consistent architectural design, such as the single-nave church with an external porch. This specific building type is first attested in historical Armenia during the initial phase of church construction²⁴. To date, only a limited number of examples have been identified, with seven situated in the Tashir region, all within close proximity to one another. These buildings are Tziravor, Tzaghkavank' in Odzun, Kurt'an, Tormak (or Tormakvank) in Gyulagarak, Gtevak', Jgrashen in Vardablur, and St. Gevorg in Sverdlov²⁵. To this day, these buildings remain in a state of severe damage (fig. 5)²⁶.

In 2022, the author conducted a research mission focused on studying these sites and undertook architectural surveys to document their current condition and update the graphical records available in the literature, particularly for the sites of Tormak (in Gyulagarak) and Gtevak'.

In recognition of the importance of this type of building in the history of Christian architecture, the concentration of such buildings in Tashir²⁷, dating back to the sixth and seventh centuries, provides evidence of the region's social and cultural activity. They also offer an opportunity to reconsider the process of architectural experimentation in religious buildings, providing a chance to reframe the role of this territory. It seems reasonable to state that a centre of architectural production could

²³ See **M. Hasratian**, « Les églises à nef unique avec portique de Tachir et les monuments similaires du haut Moyen Age de l'Arménie », *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes*, XII, Paris, 1977, p. 227.

²⁴ For further reading on this topic, see: Ibid., p. 215-242; **M. Hasratian**, « Les églises à nef unique avec portique de l'Arménie paléochrétienne », in *Atti del Primo simposio internazionale di arte armena*, Venise, 1975/78, p. 227-245; **F. Gandolfo**, *Chiese e cappelle armene a navate semplice dal IV al VII secolo*, Rome, 1973; **P. Donabédian**, « Les premiers édifices chrétiens d'Arménie (IV^e-VI^e siècle) », *Armenia sacra. Mémoire chrétienne des Arméniens (IV^e-XVIII^e siècle)*, Paris, 2007, pp. 48-59 and bibliography cited by the author in the article. **A. Kazaryan**, *Церковная архитектура стран Закавказья VII века. Формирование и развитие традиции* [Church architecture of the 7th century in Transcaucasian countries. Formation and development of the tradition], vols. 1-4. Moscow, 2012.

²⁵ See **Hasratian**, *op. cit.*, pl. XIX- XX.

²⁶ Seven churches date back to the 6th century in the historical region of Tashir. The churches are: Tziravor Tzaghkavank' in Odzun, Kurt'an, Gtevak', Tormak (or Tormakvank') in Gyulagarak, Jgrashen in Vardablur, St. Gevorg in Sverdlov, and Hobardzi in Stepanavan. The sheet is made by the author. The photographs were all taken by the author in 2022, except for the photograph of the Church of St. Gevorg in Sverdlov, which was taken from the work by Hasratian (ibid.) cited in the text.

²⁷ See **Hasratian**, *op. cit.*, p. 242: «Les monuments à nef unique de Tachir [...] présentent les monuments dans lesquels on voit, d'une manière évidente le passage des formes architecturales du IV^e au V^e siècle de l' Arménie aux formes «classiques» du VII^e siècle».

not have existed in isolation, but was part of a mutual circle of exchange and development. Indeed, these observations lend further support to the hypothesis of an architectural and landscape network to which they belong.

The other religious buildings in this area date from the Middle Ages (fig. 6)²⁸.

In contrast to the single-nave churches with porch, these are larger and demonstrate more complex architectural compositions. Among these, we count the two monasteries of Sanahin and Haghpat, from the period of prosperity during the Kiurikian dynasty: important centres of learning, both of which are inscribed within the list of UNESCO World Heritage properties²⁹. In addition to them, reading the territory from Lori Berd to Akht'ala monastery and following the Dzoraget river, we encounter the monastic complex of Hnevank' (seventh-twelfth century), the monastery of Horomayri (twelfth century), the monastic complex of K'obayr³⁰ (twelfth century) and the monastery of Odzun (first construction attested in the 6th century, but rebuilt in the 8th century).

The positioning of the structures in question within the Tashir highlands mirrors the logic of the placement of the aforementioned more ancient structures, thereby supporting the hypothesis of an environmental network that encompasses all of the structures. Indeed, acknowledging the existence of a well-established landscape-architectural system, an analysis was conducted of the isochronous relationships between more recent and older buildings. This analysis revealed that they adhere to a common system (fig. 7)³¹.

Evidence suggests that a well-defined network had been established, thereby establishing a direct connection between Berd Castle (Lori Berd) and the site of Tormak monastery. This site, situated approximately 10 kilometres from the fortress, has been found to have an isochronous system of 8-10 kilometres around it. This is equivalent to half a day's walk or two hours on horseback carrying loads. The monastery of Tormak constitutes a twin structure with Hnevank', from which it is

²⁸ Diagram of Tashir religious buildings along the Dzoraget and Debed rivers, with distinctions between the older (6th - 7th century) and the more recent ones (8th-13th century). Drawn by the author.

²⁹ The monasteries were inscribed in 1996. For further information and documentation see the official webpage <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/777/> [last access 21/03/2025].

³⁰ K'obayr was an important spiritual, cultural and literary centre of northern Armenia in the Middle Ages. Of particular interest are the frescoes of Christ and the Twelve Apostles, the Church Fathers and other Christian figures on the ruins of the main church.

³¹ Diagram of the isochronous relationships between the religious buildings of the Tashir region along the Dzoraget and Debed rivers. The diagram, drawn by the author, links the sites in different colours according to the kilometres to be travelled to reach them. Same colours represent same distances.

15-16 km away, which in turn becomes the centre of an isochrone of up to 15 km with the monasteries of Hořomayri, K'obayr and Odzun to the north, the latter oriented towards the north-south Debed River. Departing from the monastery of Odzun, the topography of the region undergoes a transition, descending towards Sanahin after a further 14 kilometres. The distance between Sanahin and Haghpāt is 14 kilometres, equivalent to the distance from the latter to Akht'ala. This configuration engenders the impression that the system is self-contained and self-sufficient with respect to both maintenance and control. The observed diachronic diversity of the buildings indicates the continued vitality of the entire area, as well as the establishment of monastic activity during the Middle Ages, which was built upon the foundations of older buildings. It is of particular interest to note that the architectural evidence supports the hypothesis that the region was particularly active and productive for a long period of time.

It is imperative to consider the architectural network within the territory's strong agricultural vocation. The system created by these buildings can be defined as belonging to a monastic sphere that is inextricably linked with its territory. The area is used as a well-organised rural centre that serves as a hub for extensive open-field cultivation. Indeed, the architectural diversity indicates that during the Middle Ages, the area and its buildings underwent reorganization in accordance with the evolving agricultural needs, forming a system of reciprocal relations. A more detailed examination of the field layout reveals the presence of a discernible pattern. It becomes evident that the layout reflects a familiar spatial configuration from the ancient era, which we trace as a matrix. It may be observed that field management practices in Tashir during the medieval period appear to have been influenced by those coming from the ancient period. It is indeed challenging to alter the configuration of a territory, as the existing use, topography, orientation, irrigation systems and fields layout are often deeply entrenched. However, further analysis is required to confirm this hypothesis.

The landscape and architectural structures of Tashir exhibit a strong interconnection, highlighting a correlation between fortified structures, religious centres, and agricultural buildings.

It is noteworthy that there may be vestiges of "civil architecture" within the monastic structure, built and managed in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, which effectively exploit and organise the territory. Indeed, we have some clues about these buildings seen in light of the rural use of the territory. We could refer to the monastic complex of Haghpāt, where it is still possible to visit a room on the ground floor, identified as a library, where the floor level is characterised

by buried jars,³² and that could have been used as a storeroom, as was the case in Roman *villae fructuariae*, such as the *Villa Augusta* at Boscotrecase. An additional topic for discussion is the monastery of Hnevank', which shows diachronicity (7th-12th century) in its structural elements and a distinctive characterisation of the surrounding environment. The analysis of the openings and the volumetric shape of some of the buildings unveil the presence of agricultural service facilities, such as rural warehouses. Indeed, the presence of a sizable rectangular edifice, which would have had a double-pitched roof, is detached from the monastic complex (fig. 8)³³. Its shape and position suggest that its function is dedicated to the agricultural utilisation of the territory rather than to a religious purpose.

The idea of finding such an organised network on a territorial scale, and the evidence of such an active and productive centre, raises the question of the role of this region in a wider context of trade routes and exchanges. Religious activity is no less important. It is also important to note that, during the early Christian period, the architectural design of religious buildings was driven by liturgical rite, which was discussed at ecumenical councils. This implies an impressive intercultural exchange of communication and knowledge beyond the Armenian borders. Indeed, as the architectural evidence and the historical stratigraphy attest, strong links were established with the western and southern side of the world, within the former Roman Empire. In the light of the above, the transnational connections with a wider context and the historical evidence push the research to look for a much larger frame. Such a result would encourage further research into the territorial structure, which undoubtedly remained within the deeply rooted ancient territorial and planning logic.

The current state of research and existing literature does not list the towns within Tashir as declared stops on the claimed trade routes³⁴. Nevertheless, a study of

³² See **P. Cuneo**, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

³³ Within the site of the Hnevank' monastery, but separate from the monastery complex, is this large rectangular building on the right built by *spolia*. The building no longer has a roof. The photographs were taken by the author in 2022 and show the exterior and interior of the building. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that in the photograph of Paolo Cuneo the building is also clearly visible in relation to the monastic architectural complex. See *Ibid*, p. 275.

³⁴ See **H. A. Manadian**, *The trade and cities of Armenia in relation to ancient world trade*. (translated by **N. Garsoïan**). Livraria Bertrand. 1965. The author mentions the ancient Armenian province of Gugark', giving the geographical reference of the Debed River when he tries to identify the circuit route from Artaxata Sanora to the Anonymous Station (pp. 114-15). He also mentions the natural elements of Debed and P'ambak rivers, within the section "An Armenian Itinerary of the Bagratid Period", when – referring to Markwart's work *Das Itinerar von Artaxata* – he mentions the three roads linking Leninakan to Tbilisi, and specifically the

literary sources confirms that the region was settled in ancient times³⁵. The study of the correlation between architecture and landscape provides an opportunity to question and redefine the region's position, and it offers clues for its redefinition and the attribution of its historical importance. The paper proposes a multiscale reading of the region, offering a change to retrace the development of the territory according to principles of the Cultural Landscape.

ՄԱՐԹԱ ԶԵՐԲԻՆԻ

ՀՅՈՒՄԻՍԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՏԱԾԻՐ ՊԱՏՄԱԿԱՆ ԳԱՎԱՌԻ ՃԱՐՏԱՐԱԿԵՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ և ԲՆԱՊԱՏԿԵՐԸ

Բանալի բառեր՝ Պատմական Տաշիր, Լոռու մարզ, միջնադարյան հայկական ճարտարապետություն, հռոմեական ուղին, մշակութային լանդշաֆտ, մշակութային ժառանգություն:

Հոգվածը նվիրված է Լոռու մարզի պատմական Տաշիր գավառի ճարտարապետական բնապատկերին: Տարածքը գտնվում է ընդարձակ սարահարթի վրա՝ բազմաթիվ կրոնական շինություններով, որոնք հետազոտողների կարծիքով, կառուցվել են VI և XII դարերի միջև: Եվ իրոք, վաղ քրիստոնեական շրջանում այդ տարածքը ճարտարապետական ակտիվ փորձարկումների կենտրոն է եղել, և դրանց արդյունքները պահպանվել են դարերի ընթացքում: Բարձրավանդակը հարուստ է գյուղատնտեսական ավանդույթներով, իսկ ենթակառուցվածքը բացահայտ հիերարխիկ կառուցվածք ունի: Նրա արևմուտքում Լոռի բերդն է, իսկ արևելքում՝ Ախթալայի վանքը: Այդ բարձունքների միջև ընկած տարածքին բնորոշ է ճարտարապետական ենթակառուցվածքը գյուղատնտեսական միջավայրում (դաշտերի

eastern one, along the P'ambak and Debed rivers (pp. 169-170). These indications help us to define the area as the one we are studying.

³⁵ Regarding this topic, see the maps published in **Robert H. Hewsen**, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*, University of Chicago Press, 2001. In map n. 40, "Armenia as known to the Romans. 63-299 A.D." we see the traces of the road linking the capitals of Caenepolis and Mescheta. The road crosses the Tashir region, crossing the Dzoraget river, and following the Debed river. In map n. 55, "Roman Itineraries through Armenia" we see that the cities of Tashir region are named in the *Peutinger Table* and are both placed along the Debed River, along the route from Artaxata (Artashat) to Tephiladus (Philado) (Tbilisi) and cross the Dzoraget river along the route from Artaxata (Artashat) to Caspiae (Xospi). This confirms the hypothesis of an ancient settlement in the region. See also Movsesian, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-14.

ուրվագծերը տեսանելի են մինչև օրս): Վանական կենտրոնները գյուղատնտեսական տարածքով անցնող ճանապարհի երկայնքով մի իսկական ցանց են կազմում: Տաշիր բնակավայրի պատմական շերտերն այսօր այդ վայրի ոչ նյութական արժեքների և մշակութային մշտական հատկանիշների շտեմարան են: Հողվածն առաջարկում է ճարտարապետական տարրերի բազմաստիճան քննություն՝ ենթակառուցվածքային-տարածական հիերարխիայի զուգադրմամբ, ինչը հնարավորություն է ընձեռում ուսումնասիրելու վանական համալիրների որոշ շինությունների գործառույթը և դարերի ընթացքում տեղանքի կրած փոփոխությունները:

МАРТА ЗЕРБИНИ

АРХИТЕКТУРА И ЛАНДШАФТ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ПРОВИНЦИИ ТАШИР В СЕВЕРНОЙ АРМЕНИИ

Ключевые слова: Исторический Ташир, провинция Лори, армянская средневековая архитектура, римский путь, культурный ландшафт, культурное наследие.

Статья посвящена изучению архитектурного ландшафта территории северной Армении, ранее известной как Таширская область в составе провинции Лори. Регион характеризуется обширным плато с множеством культовых сооружений, церквей и монастырей, которые, по мнению исследователей, были построены между VI и XII веками. Действительно, в раннехристианский период этот регион был активным центром архитектурных экспериментов, результаты которых сохранялись на протяжении веков. Нагорье имеет сельскохозяйственные традиции, а его инфраструктура очевидным образом иерархична. С запада оно граничит с Лори-Бердом, а с востока – с монастырем Ахтала. Маршрут между этими укрепленными вершинами отмечен архитектурной инфраструктурой монастырского типа в аграрной среде, очертания полей которой видны до сих пор. Монастырские центры размечают территорию изохронами и образуют настоящую сеть вдоль маршрута, служащую сельскохозяйственному назначению местности. Исторические слои Таширского поселения сегодня являются хранилищем нематериальных ценностей и культурных констант этого места. В статье предлагается многоступенчатое прочтение архитектурных элементов в сочетании с инфраструктурно-территориальной иерархией, что дает возможность исследовать функции и роли некоторых зданий в монастырских комплексах и развитие территории на протяжении веков.