



GANDZASAR MONASTERY

Location. The monastery is situated a km north-west of Vank Village, Khachen District, Artsakh Province (Martakert District, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)).

Historical Notes. One of the pearls of medieval Armenian architecture, the Monastery of Gandzasar has always attracted the attention of specialists in different branches of Art History.

The construction of the church lasting for 22 years (1216 to 1238), it was eventually consecrated in a solemn ceremony in 1240. Kirakos Gandzaketsy reports important information relating to the erection of the sanctuary. As he writes, Prince of Khachen Hasan Jalal-Dola "...To the glory of God, Jalal constructed a beautifully adorned church with a heavenly dome... The church was built in the monastery called Gandzasar, opposite Xoxanaberd..."

"Once it was completed a solemn preliminary ceremony was held to [begin to] consecrate it. Present were the kat'oghikos of Aghbania, lord Nerses with many bishops... the holy vardapets of Xach'en, Grigoris and lord Eghia... They blessed the church with many priests and it is said that the number of priests present reached seven hundred."

"...This occurred in 689 A.E. [1240] on the day of the great Feast of the Transfiguration."

Later a narthex was built for the church under the patronage of Prince Hasan Jalal-Dola's wife Mamkan. In 1261 Great Prince of Khachen Hasan Jalal suffered martyrdom in the hands of Arghun Khan, his remains being buried "...next to his forefathers' graves" in the Monastery of Gandzasar.

In 1280 mention is made of a certain Pakutator's son, scribe Gevorg, who was "...from the celebrated purgatory of Gandzasar, from the powerful land of Khachin..."

The pupils studying at the monastic school of Kharabast (Turuberan Province, Metz Hayk) between 1402 and 1406 included "...Matevos from the Holy Convent of Gandzasar..."

In 1420 mention is made of "...the holy and wonderful See of Gandzasar..."

In 1445 poet Matevos of Gandzasar is mentioned. In 1607 Shah Abbas I issued a decree on exempting Gandzasar Monastery from a tax called *tafaut-e-jizya*.

The name of the monastery is also found in a decree (1650) issued by Shah Abbas II in which the monarch banned the Catholicos of Gandzasar from intervening in the affairs of Shamakhi Diocese (it was to be within the jurisdiction of Echmiatzin).

In 1655 mention is made of the following members of the brethren of Gandzasar: "...the Most Reverend Archbishop Astvatzatur, guardian of the See of Gandzasar, the Right Reverend Bishops Hovhannes, Yeghia, Minas..."

An archive document of 1691 mentions servant of Gandzasar Sarukhan.

In 1731 the monastery suffered destruction. In 1854 masters Melkon and Karapet repaired part of the church dome. In the same year, the monastic enclosure was renovated, too.

As reported by Senior Priest Yeghishe Geghamians in 1885, the Monastery of Gandzasar was in a state of utter dilapidation: "...humidity smothered you to death. The incessantly falling drops of water have damaged its fine ceiling and rendered its plain walls—now stripped of ornaments and decoration—and entirely bare floor absolutely gloomy. Water dripping throughout the year, pools have come into being on the floor: they have already devoured some of the delicate sculptures of the pillars..."

According to a traveller, as of 1888, the cross-carrier (baldachino) of the church was made of wood: "...its old wooden cross-carrier is still in use..."

A record of 1889 again raises the issue of the insalubrious state of the monastery, particularly stating that the eastern and western portions of its enclosure had collapsed, the roofs of the buildings were ruined and leaked to such an extent that in rainy days, it was impossible to perform divine service inside the church. The lamentable lack of financial means hindered the appropriate bodies from taking measures to save the monument from total collapse.

Bishop Makar, who visited the sanctuary between the late 1880s and the early 1890s, writes: "...this unmatched monastery is in a state of moral and material degradation—its stones are gradually falling down and crumbling to pieces; water is dropping endlessly, for the roof pavement is deteriorated; the ramps are ruined in certain parts and lack proper doors; a great many superb manuscripts have been stolen, the rest having fallen prey to dampness and neglect; ...church service is not held for several months, for there is no reader, no school, no monk... An archimandrite serving as Prior resides here with a servant..."

Folklorist Sargis Kamalian, who visited Gandzasar on 1 July 1892, writes the following about its pitiable conditions: "It represents an edifice with a dome enriched with paintings, the most magnificent among those of the other famous monasteries. It is in total dereliction. Rain has damaged most of its walls, and the grass remains unpicked... Everything around is in ruins; the eight stone-built cells are filthy; it is a long time since the floor was boarded, and everything is now covered with dung and doomed to negligence. The principal gate is even dislocated. The stones have become so detached due to the grass growing in their midst that birds have nested in the open space between them..."

Another source dating from the same year states: "...the roof of the church is cracked, and its finely-dressed stones have half fallen. When it rains, water drops into the building and forms puddles on the floor. Apart from this grave danger threatening the structures of the monastery, the vestments and manuscripts kept there are spoilt due to moisture, and it is impossible to hold divine service there. After so many years of dangerous conditions, both the Diocese Primate and the ...ecclesiastical authorities feel the necessity of renovation..."

In 1898 a Patriarchal bull set up a board of trustees consisting of Teodoros Khachian and Tigran Aghamalian—natives of Shooshi—for the organisation of overhaul in Gandzasar Monastery: "...for Masters Teodoros Khachian and Tigran Aghamalian from Shooshi, who are herewith appointed trustees for the renovation of Gandzasar Monastery to help and support the Father Superior..." Among the trustees also were Prior Anton the Archimandrite and Alexan Arakelian from Shooshi. In addition, 400 roubles were allocated "...from the income of the convents of Artsakh..." for the improvement of the road leading to the monastery.

In 1906 the Monastery of Gandzasar again faced the necessity of repairs, for the implementation of which, the Synod of Echmiatzin "...permitted the Consistory of Karabakh to appoint three trustees ...and provide them with the necessary amount of money for expenses..."

Between 1989 and the early 2000s, Gandzasar Monastery was under restoration.

Scriptorium. From among the numerous manuscripts written, or copied in the monastery—it used to have a rich repository—between the 15th and 18th centuries, 12 are kept in Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient

Manuscripts, Yerevan, Republic of Armenia, and 1 in the library of Sourb Hakobians Convent, Jerusalem. In 1417 scribe Matevos Monozon authored a manuscript whose colophon reads: "...this [manuscript] was created in the holy Monastery of Gandzasar in the land of Artsakh now called Khachen under the protection of the sacred remains of John the Baptist..."

Priors. *Archimandrite Hovhannes* is mentioned as spiritual leader of the monastery in 1237, when it was still in process of construction: "...from the holy Monastery of Gandzasar ...on the borderline of Khachen ...under Prior... invincible Archimandrite Hovhannis..."

Bishop Azaria participated in the ceremony of blessing Patriarch Kirakos as Catholicos of All Armenians in 1441: "...Father Azaria of Gandzasar..."

Bishop Yeghia is mentioned as one of the signatories to an archive document (1465) specifying the borders of Arajadzor Village.

Metropolitan Baghdasar: "This enthusiastic clergyman's memory will be perpetuated as long as this monastery is preserved standing. The local people retain his memory in their hearts, and the coming generation will appreciate [his activity]..."

Archimandrite Shtrakuny is mentioned as Father Superior of Gandzasar in 1884 and 1888.

By the Supreme Patriarch's consent, on 15 December 1894, the Synod of Echmiatzin appointed *Archimandrite Anton* (1894, 1897 to 1898, 1903 to ? (year not specified)) Prior of Gandzasar Monastery. He was born in Maragha Village in 1842. Ordained as Archimandrite in 1876, he became member of the monastic community of Amaras, later also serving as Prior of this sanctuary. After his designation as Father Superior of Gandzasar, he had a double-floor building erected there for pilgrims. In 1897 a Patriarchal bull restored him as Prior of Gandzasar. Through another bull issued in 1903, the Catholicos of All Armenians replaced Archimandrite Nikoghayos with Archimandrite Anton, appointing the latter as Father Superior of Gandzasar Monastery for life. He died on 20 March 1917 and was buried in St. Hripsime Church of Echmiatzin.

Archimandrite Nikoghayos was released from the post of Prior in 1903.

In 1989 Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I appointed *Archimandrite Michael Ajapahian* as Prior of Gandzasar Monastery.

Will. As reported by the *Kavkazski Vestnik* magazine, during his lifetime, in 1849 native of Artsakh Saghatel Bek-Youzbashian wrote rather a strange will under which he deposited 400 roubles in a bank in Moscow for a term of 260 years, at an interest rate of 4 %, and 166 pound sterling in a bank in London. In 260 years' time, part of this amount, namely 30,000 roubles, was to be allocated to Gandzasar Monastery for purposes of overhaul: "...I am allotting 90,000 roubles for the renovation of the Monasteries of Echmiatzin, Jerusalem and Gandzasar (30,000 roubles to each of them)."

Sanahin (in Lori Region, Republic of Armenia), was appointed Prior of Sourb Astvatzatin. Although he was well familiar with both the area where the sanctuary was situated and the affairs of its estates, he was released from his duties in 1909.

Monastic Community. Over many centuries, Sourb Astvatzatin of Jalet used to have a large community of monks, but the available information regarding them mostly relates to the 19th century. In 1835 and 1853, mention is made of Bishop Sukias of Echmiatzin. In 1839 Makar Antonians and Hovhannes Gasparian (born in 1794) became members of the monastic community of Jalet (as of 1857, the latter still served in the sanctuary). In 1861 Archimandrite Petros Sarukhianians resided in Jalet. As of 1893, the monastery was absolutely uninhabited.

Monastic Estates. In 1891 Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery was uninhabited; its garden lay reduced to wilderness, and its springs were dried up. By 1893 its glebe had been restricted to 18 *oravars* (a unit of measure for arable lands equal to 8/11 hectares), 8 of which were useless for cultivation.

In 1905 the monastery had a number of orchards and vineyards.

In 1909 the Synod faced the problem of allocating the income yielded by the monastic estates to the trustees of the Armenian schools of Jalet and Nukhi.

In 1910 the Synod decided to rent out the profitable glebes of the sanctuary—arable lands, mulberry woods and other orchards—for a yearly amount of 300 roubles.

In 1913 the ecclesiastical authorities of Echmiatzin decided to launch legal proceedings to reconstitute the income of the monastery that had been appropriated by the State Treasury from 1899 onwards: "Upon hearing the statement made by the Consistory of Karabakh on 19 December of last year... which said that the disputed 4 plots of land of Jalet Monastery had been recognised as part of the property of the same sanctuary, the Synod resolved to order the Consistory of Karabakh to open a legal case ...to demand recompense of the 1/5 of the income, yielded by these pieces of land during 14 years, from the State Treasury..."

The **cemetery** of Jalet's Sourb Astvatzatin extended in front of the two churches, in the west of the monastery: "That sanctuary retains the graves of a countless number of bishops, archimandrites and monks. Ruthless time has distorted their epitaphs, although they are not entirely lost yet..."

Below follows the translation of an epitaph engraved on a tombstone found in this graveyard:

Bishop Daniel of Echmiatzin, Primate of the Diocese of Jalet and Utik. He died in the year 1206 (1757) of the Armenian calendar.

Reference: **Ukhtavor**, in: *Nor-Dar*, 1891, No. 155, p. 3.

"...an archbishop is buried near the monastery entrance..."

(translation of the epitaph): *Archbishop Karapet of Echmiatzin, [who] died in the year 1247 (1798).*

Reference: *Arzagank*, 1893, No. 13, p. 3.

The exact year of the foundation of the school of Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery remains unknown, but undoubtedly, it had a history of many centuries. In 1807 Bishop Karapet of Jalet worked as a teacher for this establishment; between 1835 and 1838, Priest Mkrich Barseghian (born in 1805, ordained in 1835) taught Armenian there.

In the days of Prior Gevorg Aramiants (in the 1860s), the school reopened with over 50 pupils.

In 1865 Archbishop Sargis Jalalians wrote: "...I went to Nukhi and ...told them about my intention of building a school... in the Monastery of Jalet. ...they accepted it with willingness... Now it has 24 pupils..."

The school house attached to Jalet Monastery was built through the financial assistance of some Armenians from Shaki. In 1875 Prior Yeghishe Amatuny the Archimandrite, a graduate of Holy Echmiatzin, taught 17 pupils gathered there from the adjacent villages.

In 1876 the school had a teacher and 7 pupils, but shortly afterwards, it closed.

In 1884 the establishment resumed its activity with 40 pupils, but in 1885 it closed on a Governmental order.

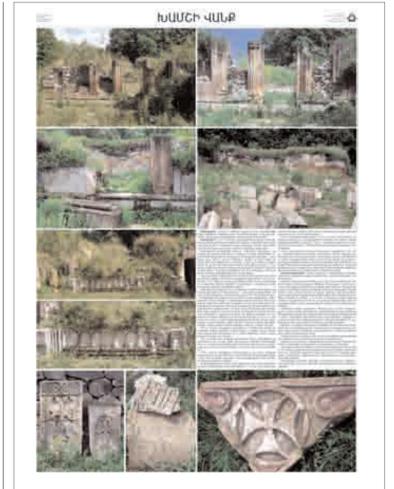
In 1891 the school house was in a semi-ruined state.

In 1893 the school reopened with 70 pupils through the support of the Humanitarian Society of Baku.

In 1895 the deteriorated school house was renovated at the expense of 235 roubles.

In 1908 the school had a teacher and 70 pupils.

The Armenian school of Jalet continued its existence until the deportation of 1988.



KHAMSHI MONASTERY

Location. The monastery stands on the wooded slope of a gorge lying on the left bank of the river Getik, a km north-west of Martuny Village, Miapor District, Gugark Province (former District of Karmir, present-day Gegharkunik Region, Republic of Armenia).

Historical Notes. Out of security considerations, Catholicos Hovhannes, ordained in Gandzak in 1195, chose a residence in the caverns towering on the deep and hardly accessible side of a gorge extending on the right bank of the river Shamkor: "He established his see around the border of Charek..."

However, pressure exerted on him by foreign invaders made him apply to Princes Zakare and Ivane for a new seat. The latter met his request and "...assigned him a residence in a monastery called Khamshi, in Miapor District. He embarked upon building a large and splendid church there, but failed to complete it, for the Sultan of Khorasani, named Jalal-ad-din, came there..." Thus, Khamshi Monastery "...was declared as the seat of the Catholicos of Caucasian Albania..."

The new residence having quite an isolated position, in 1216 Catholicos Hovhannes founded St. Hovhannes Mkrich (*John the Baptist*) Church of Gandzasar Monastery—it was to become another Patriarchal seat in the future—in the very heart of the country, in Khachen District. He, however, died and did not see the accomplishment of the church the construction of which he had desired so strongly.

In 1235 Catholicos Hovhannes was succeeded by Nerses, who resided in Khamshi Monastery like his predecessor: "...his brother, Father Nerses, a humble and kind-hearted man, was ordained in the year 684 of the Armenian calendar..."

During the period of Mongol reign, Catholicos Nerses succeeded in going to Tabriz and establishing good-neighbourly relations with the Mongol leaders. It is interesting to note that it was only after this that the Catholicos was allowed to visit his flock and the territories within his jurisdiction: "...And having visited his eparchy, he returned to his seat in Khamshi Monastery in peace..."

In 1240 Catholicos Nerses headed the ceremony of consecration of Gandzasar's St. Hovhannes Mkrich Church: "Once it was completed a solemn preliminary ceremony was held to [begin to] consecrate it. Present were the kat'oghikos of Aghbania, lord Nerses..."

Kirakos Gandzaketsy, who mentions Catholicos Nerses in connection with the events of 1241, writes: "...meek and humanitarian lord Nerses, who at this time resided in the monastery called Xamshi in the Miap'or district..."

In 1250 Catholicos Nerses built several churches (one of them attributed to 1249) and a Patriarchal residence—most presumably, a summer house—not very far from Gandzasar, in the vicinity of Mehmana Village, present-day District of Martakert, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)).

Catholicos Nerses was distinguished as a good-hearted man of noble character and demeanour. In his lifetime, he was characterised as a man "...even holier than a true saint, boasting a high repute and leading the Holy See of Caucasian Albania..."

Catholicos Nerses consigned his soul to God in 1261: "This year kind-hearted, humble Catholicos of Caucasian Albania, His Holiness Nerses has yielded up his spirit to Christ, after having held the throne of Catholicos for twenty-seven years. He has been succeeded by His Holiness Stepanos..." Most probably, Catholicos Nerses was buried in Khamshi Monastery.

Unfortunately, the existing sources relating to the activity of Nerses's successor Stepanos (1262 to 1323) do not contain any information regarding his residence. For this reason, it is hard to state whether or not Khamshi Monastery retained its status of a Patriarchal seat after Catholicos Hovhannes and Nerses. Presumably, under Catholicos Stepanos, the Catholicosate of Caucasian Albania was finally moved from Khamshi Monastery to Gandzasar.

Architectural Description. Khamshi Monastery consists of a church, a narthex adjoining it in the west, a chapel standing a little farther and a cemetery.

The church is a central-domed structure—a type of composition that was widely applied throughout Armenia in the late Middle Ages. It is built of entirely finely-finished variegated felsite and mortar. The exterior of the building was distinguished by its remarkably rich decoration. Particularly ornate was its western facade the meagre remnants of which—above the socles, the stonework of the walls is preserved to a height of 1.5 to 2, or 3 to 4 metres on average—show that the building masters attempted to reach as varied and interesting patterns of decoration as only possible.

Splendid ornamental patterns were also found on the fragments of the church and narthex unclosed during the excavations of the 1980s carried out by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, under the supervision of archaeologists Grigor Karakhanian and Husep Melkonian.

Each of the facades of the church has two recesses triangular in plan. The sanctuary, which is semi-circular in plan, is adjoined by a vestry on either of its sides. The space in front of it is enriched with decorative arches and pillars.

The floor of the narthex is covered with rectangular gravestones lying close to one another.

The cemetery extending around the monastery retains a great number of standing, or displaced cross-stones.

Not far from the main group of monuments is preserved a uni-nave vaulted chapel built of undressed stones and mortar. The site of the monastery also contains fragments of inscriptions mostly commemorating acts of donation and tracing back to the period between the 12th and 13th centuries.

Certain elements of decoration—such as a relief showing an equal-winged cross, etc.—attest that once the site was occupied by religious buildings of an older age.



SOURB ASTVATZATZIN (HOLY VIRGIN) MONASTERY OF JALET

Location. The monastery stands in a picturesque site abounding in water and surrounded by wooded mountains, about a km north of Jalet Village—it remained Armenian-populated until 1988—Vardashen (now renamed Oghuz) District.

Historical Notes. Between the 15th and 16th centuries, Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery was the residence of the Catholicos of the Eastern provinces of Historical Armenia, i.e. Shaki and Shirvan (forming part of the historical region of Caspian or Caucasian Albania). Afterwards it served as the seat of the Primate of Shaki Diocese. After the Primate had moved to the town of Shaki (Nukhi) for residence, the monastery was entrusted to the guardianship of Priors appointed by Holy Echmiatzin. They remained in charge of it until 1876, after which, it mostly continued its existence without spiritual leaders, being consigned to the care of the parish priests of Jalet Village until 1918.

As reported by the existing sources, the Catholicos who resided in the monastery between the 15th and 16th centuries were:

KARAPET (1402 to 1423)

MATEVOS (1423 to 1436)

TUMA (1466 to 1475)

ARAKEL (1475 to 1511)

ARISTAKES (mentioned in 1511 to 1516)

Scriptorium. The colophons of the manuscripts that have come down to our days confirm that from the 15th century onwards, Sourb Astvatzatin of Jalet housed one of the most celebrated scriptoria in Caucasian Albania.

The colophon of a manuscript dated 1432 states: "...in the Monastery of Jalet, in the District of Ghalal under Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Matevos, with the protection of the Holy Virgin and the sacred right hands of Gregory and Atanagin..."

Bishop Stepanos, who was known as a scribe and illuminator, writes the following in the colophon of another manuscript dated 1499: "...in the See of Jalet in the land of Caucasian Albania..."

In 1602 member of the monastic community of Sourb Astvatzatin, Bishop Ghukas created a Gospel known by the name of *Kosteghatz*.

Between 1783 and 1785, Father Paghtasar wrote a book of rites and prayers (called *Mashtots* in Armenian) in the sanctuary.

In 1791 Archimandrites Abraham and Harutun authored a work in Armenian entitled *Forms of Letters and Notes*.

Relics. The Monastery of Jalet also retained a number of sacred relics, including the Gospel named *Kosteghatz*, and the remains of the three holy infants. In this sanctuary was interred "...famous anchorite Husik the Bishop..."

Architectural Description. According to the construction inscription of the older church of Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery, it was built in 1411 on the ini-

tiative of Catholicos Karapet. It represents a uni-nave vaulted structure, with its only entrance opening from its western facade.

Each of the eastern and western facades of the church has an inwardly widening window providing illumination there. Its construction inscription was preserved on a finely-finished stone set in the lower part of the first of them, in the bema of the church. The entire monument (exterior dimensions: 10.40 x 6.35 metres) was constructed of undressed and semi-finished stone and mortar. The cornerstones of the entrance and niches, the tympanum, as well as the pilasters and the altar-stone were finely-finished. The roof of the church and the upper parts of its walls were built of brick. From the standpoint of decoration, special mention should be made of the outer frames of the windows, the one opening from the west having a bulging ornamental band running triply around its cruciform opening. The revetment of the monument was dressed and even finely-finished in some parts, but the stonework was absolutely irregular. The facing stones of the western facade bore a great number of simple cross reliefs commemorating acts of donation.

Apart from this older church, which repeatedly underwent repairs in the course of time, Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery also had another founded several metres south of it in the 1840s, when Archimandrite Sargis Ter-Avagiants was Father Superior there (he died in 1847). The construction of the newly-established church, which represented a tri-nave basilica, proceeded particularly successfully thanks to Prior Aramiants's efforts and the financial assistance of Arakel Muratians from Vardashen. However, the patron's death in 1848 stopped the work: "The new church, which rests on four fine columns and is splendidly built with dressed stones, Mr. Arakel Muratians being the contributor of the work... He, however, yielded up his spirit to the Lord when the building was still unfinished so that it remains half built."

Despite the intervals in the process of construction, the hard-working Prior eventually succeeded in accomplishing the long-delayed work in 1865. In the same year, he consecrated the newly-erected sanctuary.

In 1875 Father Superior Vrtanes Muradiants the Archimandrite carried out partial overhaul in the monastery. As of 1881, however, it was in an almost emergency condition due to the deteriorated state of its roof: "...the walls are on the verge of collapse because of rainwater dropping from the ceiling..."

In 1885 Primate of the Diocese, Archimandrite Garegin Satuniants intended to renovate the roofs of the monastic churches, but apparently, he did not implement this, for a record of 1887 states: "The monastery leaks like a sieve, and there is nobody to take care of it... Archimandrite Garegin Satuniants has put its income at the disposal of Simeon Ter-Avagian for a term of two years, during which he is to tile the roof. The time-limit is about to expire, but nothing has been done..."

The monastery remained in the same situation in 1893: "The adjoining buildings have partly burnt away, and partly gone to ruins. Only a two-floor structure, once housing a school, is still preserved standing, but it is in the same state of dereliction. It is a long time since the fountain and springs of the monastery dried up. Even the new monastic building [church], located close to the older one, began collapsing in the middle of this year..."

It was only in 1894 that some steps were taken to improve the condition of the monument through the efforts of Vicar of Shaki Diocese, Archimandrite Sahak Baghdasariants: "...recently the monastery has been gradually rising from ruins thanks to the endeavours of the Primates of Nukhi and pilgrims' donations. Thus, the spouses Makedonians from Nukhi financially contributed to the construction of beautiful springs in the monastery yard, whereas formerly water was brought here from a long distance. The Primate intends to build spacious rooms for pilgrims..."

In 1896 Archimandrite Sahak Baghdasariants prepared two photographs of the monastery in order to attract patrons to complete the improvement of the state of the adjoining structures: "The first photograph shows the balcony of the southern facade of the building—it is nine *gazes* [a unit of length equal to 112 cms] long and four *arshins* wide. The structure stretches northward and ends in a similar balcony... As is seen in the photograph, the building is of two storeys, the description offered above relating to the upper one. The lower floor contains three rooms which may serve both as dwellings for peasants and as cellars. The yard of the building is spacious and rich in trees. The money spent on it so far totals two thousand seven hundred roubles, 565 roubles of which is the amount You have sent. Now kitchens and toilets are being built close to its southern and northern

balconies... the expenses will come up to an extra amount of 500 roubles. This monastery may enjoy great prosperity in the future if only at least two families of our compatriots living in Baku condescend to come here every year for summer... The newly-built monastery needs a belfry and a plate-covered roof—at present it is tiled, but severe winds often remove and throw the tiles away..."

In 1914 the spiritual powers of Nukhi informed the Armenian Diocese Consistory of Karabakh that the annexes of the sanctuary were in a bad state of ruin, and only urgent repairs could save them from total collapse: "On Prior Sahak Baghdasariants the Archimandrite's initiative, a number of rooms for pilgrims were built in the yard of Jalet's Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery, but at present they need major overhaul, for they have been damaged in the course of time. In summer and autumn, abundant rainwater leaks in its kitchen built of raw bricks..." It was suggested that the renovation—its expenses totaled 358 roubles—should be implemented with the income received from the monastic estate. As a rule, the income of the sanctuary was transferred to the Synod of Echmiatzin; for this reason, on 14 April 1915, Acting Primate of Artsakh Diocese Zaven the Archimandrite applied to the supreme spiritual authorities for permission to start repairs in the sanctuary.

The establishment of the Soviet regime marked the beginning of another long-lasting stage of utter neglect and dereliction for Jalet's Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery. In the 1960s, the vaulted ceiling of its older church collapsed. In January 1984, the last remnants of the roof covering the semi-circular bema of the church were levelled with the ground. Even after the total fall of the roof, the altar-stone remains intact in the centre of the sanctuary of the church.

It should be noted that the monastic complex was exposed to continual deterioration and destruction while being under the so-called "care" of Azerbaijan's Main Department for Monuments Preservation. With abominable deception, its representatives had a bilingual signboard attached to the entrance of the monument alleging that it was under the protection of the state.

Priors. From 1837 until 1842, the Prior of the monastery and the Primate of Shaki Diocese was *Archimandrite Sargis Ter-Avagiants* (born in 1788). In 1842 he was released from work on the basis of his own petition, but in 1844 he was restored in his position and held it until his death in 1847. He was buried in the graveyard of the monastery.

Between 1842 and 1844, *Bishop Harutun (Artem) Ter-Barseghian Poghossians of Sanahin* (born in 1796) performed the duties of Primate of Shaki Diocese and Father Superior of the Monastery of Jalet.

In the 1860s, mention is made of Prior Gevorg Aramiants the Archimandrite, who committed suicide on 25 July 1871 (he hanged himself from a beam in the Prior's room). In his days, the new church of Sourb Astvatzatin Monastery was founded; its construction proceeded at intervals, being eventually completed in 1865. The meritorious Father Superior himself consecrated it in a solemn ceremony.

In 1872 the ecclesiastical authorities gave a negative response to the petition of Harutun Azarian from Vagharshapat, who had applied for the post of Prior.

As of 1881—10 years after Father Superior Aramiants's suicide—the monastery remained without a spiritual leader. The candidacy of *Abraham Sedrakians*—a sexton from Vardashen—was suggested for the post, but he failed to assume it due to his death in 1884.

In the early 1890s, mention is made of *Archimandrite Yeg*



METZ ARANTS ST. HAKOB MONASTERY

Location. The monument stands in the area between the rivers Khachen and Kolatak, 1.5 km north of Kolatak Village, Khachen District, Artsakh Province (Martakert District, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)).

Historical Notes. One of the earliest records mentioning the sanctuary—also known by the names of *Metzarants* and *Metzirants*—dates from the 7th century, when "...a bishop from Metzirants in Artsakh, a valorous man named Hovel..." participated in a meeting convened under Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Ukhtanes (671 to 683). As is reported, this clergyman "...had command of a powerful knowledge and was well-aware of scriptural writings." Bishops David and Hovel were assigned by the Catholicos to go "...to the Cheghakh valley, District of Rostak, which is within the diocese of Metzirants..."

Bishop Hovel is again mentioned in 689: in the presence of the numerous participants of a meeting, he demanded that Bishop Nerses (Catholicos of Caucasian Albania between 689 and 706), who had adhered to the Chalcedonian faith, should make a statement cursing the Council of Chalcedon and seal it with the Patriarchal ring. Nerses did so, but after Bishop Hovel's death (702), he took the paper of curse back from Prior of Metzirank Zakaria.

An inscription (12 lines in the Armenian original), carved on two blocks of stone set in the western facade of the eastern church of the monastery, reports that in

1212 it underwent reconstruction thanks to Khorishah, Princes Zakare and Ivane's sister, and Prince of Khachen Vakhhtang's wife.

In 1470 Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Hovhannes was interred in the portico of the sanctuary. It also retains the remains of Catholicos Aristakes, whose tombstone, now removed from its original place and lost, was engraved with an undated epitaph.

In 1577 scribe Saghatel the Coenobite and illuminator Zakaria of Avan wrote a manuscript in the monastery for Archbishop Simeon.

In 1614 Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Simeon, who resided in the monastery, erected a cross-stone there for his soul's salvation. After his death in 1616, he was buried in Metz Arants Monastery.

In 1855 some Turkish robbers plundered the monastery, causing grave losses to it and beating two clergymen there. In the same year, mention is made of Archimandrites Simeon Ter-Hovhannissian and Gabriel Aydinians (members of the monastic community), as well as *Mahtesy* Baghdasar.

Architectural Description. Senior Priest Yeghishe Geghamians (Haykuny), who visited Metz Arants Monastery in 1884, writes: "...it consists of two dark churches enclosed within ramparts—although still standing, they are in a state of utter dilapidation. Instead of a *zhamatun*, one of the churches has a hall of average dimensions. The ramparts have two gates opening opposite each other—one from the east, and the other from the west. The latter is superb, being arched... The churches of this monastery are simple structures mostly built of undressed stone. The cross reliefs are not so very finely-made. It has a cellar, a stable, basements and two clean rooms... The churches are absolutely bare of any ornaments and vessels. There is a gloomy underground chapel beneath the altar."

Historian Leo wrote the following in 1888: "St. Hakob Monastery represents a simple building without decoration. The smaller church is surrounded with numerous narrow and obscure cells and openings. This monastery is even older than Gandzasar, but apparently, it has seen a lot of acts of renovation. The rebuilding workers placed the stones of the former building into the walls of the present one without any order and consideration of taste so that a tombstone may be seen on a pillar, a cross-stone on the ceiling and in a dark corner. The whole building looks like a clumsy patchwork. ...As compared to Gandzasar, this monastery is in even worse conditions—its wooden parts have fallen into decay... In times bygone, however, it used to be a celebrated monastery, and as far as I know, it served as a Patriarchal residence, its diocese being known by the name of Metzrarants. The old stones of the walls are inscribed. The *zhamatun* retains the graves of Archbishop Hakobos and the 'Patriarch of Metzrarants,' the latter's epitaph being dated 1223. In

the narthex is buried Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Hovhannes. It also retains a cross-stone perpetuating the memory of Great Prince Jalal's son, Catholicos Hovhannes... The monastery is famous for its relic—the right hand of Patriarch Hakob of Mitzbin, which is highly esteemed in Karabakh. It is placed below a tiny dome in a small cell. In times of diseases, drought and harmful rain, it is taken to the villages and Shooshi in a procession."

In 1725 Archimandrite Sargis from Shnher built a hall with adjoining rooms in the east of the eastern church of the monastery and left an inscription commemorating this act.

Priors. Between the 670s and 680s, mention is made of *Bishop David*.

In 1199 Bishop Hovhannes of Metz Arants Monastery died and was buried in Koshik Cloister.

In 1223 *Archbishop Hakobos* is mentioned as Patriarch of Metzrarants.

In 1225 the Prior of the monastery was *Father Sargis*, who is known to have shared his office with Father Vardan in 1241.

In 1241, 1250 and 1265 *Father Vardan* was the spiritual leader of the sanctuary (his undated gravestone reposes in the monastery).

In 1272 *Father Superior Sargis* is mentioned. In 1765 reference is made to *Archimandrite Martiros*.

In 1769 the Prior was *Archimandrite Yeghia*.

As of 1888, it was already several years since *Archimandrite Nerses Suleymanians* was appointed Prior of Metz Arants Monastery.

In 1884 *Priest Gaspar Ter-Gasparians* performed the duties of Father Superior.

Monastic Estates. Metz Arants Monastery had a land of over 3,000 *dessiatinas* which yielded almost no income: "...the peasantry of the neighbourhood are so poor that they cannot even cultivate the soil and gain profit from the woods. Then what can be the profit of the monastery?"

A record of 1886 states that the monastery received tithes from its estates.

It also gained profit from a mill located near the river Kolatak.

As of 1909, Metz Arants Monastery possessed two rooms, a plot of 452 *dessiatinas* and 2,300 *sazhen* squares and a flour mill close to the summer dwellings of Kolatak Village.

In 1884 the **spring** of the monastery was out of order and needed repairs. In the same year, Haykuny applied to Saginians with a request to renovate it. In response to it, this high-ranking clergyman "...promised to order the Board of Trustees of Shooshi Seminary—it held management of all the monasteries in Artsakh—to immediately provide money for the meagre expenses of the spring of St. Hakob Monastery..."

one of whom was blind in one eye... These old maids have rented it from the trustees of Shooshi Seminary and pay an annual amount of 30 roubles to them."

Monastic Bells. In the late 19th century, two bells, once belonging to Yerits Mankants Monastery, were found near the river Trghi. As reported by an inscription carved on one of them, it was donated to the sanctuary by Khoja Khudijan on 3 May 1698.

The Patriarchate of Yerits Mankants. By hosting a Catholicos seat, this sanctuary rivaled the See of Gandzasar, thus making a breach in the Armenian church. As stated in an inscription carved on the entrance tympanum of the church, Simeon, the son of Priest Sargis serving in Metzshen Village, Jraberd District, had it built in 1691, thus giving rise to severe disputes and strong antagonism—he held the Patriarchal throne until 1705—that continued even in the days of his successor, Catholicos Nerses (1676 to 1700). In order to put an end to the rivalry between the See of Gandzasar and the Catholicosate of Yerits Mankants, Catholicos of Echmiatzin Nahapet I of Edessa (1691 to 1705) interceded and made self-proclaimed Catholicos Simeon give a pledge that none of the representatives of his family should ever become Catholicos. In 1705, however, he was succeeded by his relative Nerses, who held office until 1736. His struggle against Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Yesayi Hasan Jalalians (the latter's seat was in Gandzasar) aggravated bitterly so that two years later, in 1707 both of them were summoned to Echmiatzin. Catholicos of All Armenians Alexandre of Jugha I (1706 to 1714) put the issue of their antagonism under circumstantial consideration, then cursed Nerses and declared Yesayi legitimate Catholicos. The latter, however, found it expedient to reconcile himself with Nerses, for as a true enthusiastic warrior of the Armenian national liberation movement, he realised that the ongoing rivalry was only of perilous consequences to the Armenians' common cause.

The Catholicos who succeeded each other in Yerits Mankants Monastery afterwards were Nerses's nephew Israel (1728 to 1763) and Simeon's nephew Simeon Junior (Simeon II), who was from Khotorashen Village and held throne until 1819.

Estates. As of 1854, the monastery possessed no glebes and was almost uninhabited, its guardians being only some lay servants of the church (called *Mughdusi*). In 1893 the sanctuary had 25 *dessiatinas* of arable and forestland. In 1909 its estates comprised 26 *dessiatinas* of land, an orchard and a room.

Architectural Description. The monastic complex of Yerits Mankants consists of a church, a refectory, monks' rooms, defensive installations and a cemetery. The church, which represents a tri-nave domed basilica with its only entrance opening from the southern facade, occupies a central position on the monastery grounds. It is built of rough and finely-finished limestone of light yellow. In all its four facades, only the cornerstones and the upper parts close to the pediments are thoroughly finely-dressed. The same is also true of the octagonal tambour which ends in a pointed spire, an inwardly widening window opening from each of its sides. The dome rests on four finely-dressed pillars. The square beneath the dome is connected with the concha via pendentives. In the east is the sanctuary with seven niches and double-floor vestries rectangular in plan in the north and south. On the second floor, one of the vestries has a

narrow door which opens into the sanctuary, but does not reach its floor, and a hanging stairway is employed to overcome the rest of the height.

Late medieval churches with the application of a similar building method on the second storey of their sacristies can also be found in other parts of Artsakh—Tzaghkavank of Tzakuri, Ptiki Sourb Gevorg of Ulupap, etc.

The altar-stone is preserved in the centre of the sanctuary. The font is in its traditional place—in the northern wall.

The monastery is paved, the eastern portion of its paving being entirely preserved. The four dome-bearing arches are expressly ogival.

The church walls bear dated cross-stones of an older age, which suggests that formerly a graveyard, or perhaps, a church (chapel) used to be situated in its territory.

The domed church of Yerits Mankants Monastery, which is preserved standing, was completed in 1691, an inscription engraved on the tympanum of its southern entrance commemorating this.

Another inscription relating to the construction of the church (6 lines in the Armenian original) is preserved on the westward facade of the bema.

According to an inscription—three lines in the Armenian original—carved on the south-directed face of the eastern pillar of the northern wall, the architect of the church was master Sargis.

In 1884 one of the church walls had cracks, due to which, its roof leaked.

On 13 August 1925, Primate of Artsakh Diocese, Senior Archimandrite Vrtanes wrote in a report addressed to Catholicos Gevorg V that "...a large number of boards prepared for the renovation of Yerits Mankants Monastery have been carried away for the construction of a school in Martakert."

In 1930 Yerits Mankants Monastery suffered damage due to an earthquake.

Before the occupation of the monastery by the Azeri bandits in 1992, it still retained its old door of wood and the cross attached to the end of its dome spire.

The **annexes** still preserved close to the monastic church include its refectory and other utility rooms. The first of them, situated 10 to 15 metres north-east of the church, represents a tripartite vaulted structure rectangular in plan. Two of the rooms are separated through a vaulted corridor and have a great number of recesses and fire-places. Several metres south-east of the church are located two neighbouring vaulted rooms adjoined in the east by a semi-circular tower with an inner diameter of 380 centimetres. These rooms belong to the same type of composition—in both of them the vault is supported by a finely-finished decorative arch resting on a finely-dressed capital protruding from the upper section of the wall. From the side of the gorge, the southern room has large and wide windows creating the impression of an arched balcony. All these annexes have fire-places and are built with undressed and roughly-hewn stones, with the exception of their cornerstones and decorative arches which are finely-finished.

Yerits Mankants Monastery used to be fortified by ramparts only meagre vestiges of which are now left in certain parts. They are mostly buried under ruins and a centuries-old layer of earth.

SUMMER HOUSE OF CATHOLICOSES OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

Location. The site of the Patriarchal summer residence, now called *Mandur*, is found a km south-east of Mehmana Village, Jraberd District, Artsakh Province (Martakert District, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)).

Historical Notes. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood do not remember the historical name of this site, but the available lapidary inscriptions report that in 1250 Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Nerses built a residence and several churches here.

Presumably, the place served as a summer residence for the Catholicos of Caucasian Albania whose seat was in the Monastery of Gandzasar—then a newly-built sanctuary.

As for the churches once standing in the site, only one of them is now preserved in a semi-ruined state, whereas the Patriarchal residence has been levelled with the ground without any vestige. Its large construction inscription (161 x 43.5 x 41 centimetres, 18 lines in the Armenian original) is carved on the southern side of a stele-shaped cross-stone lying in the west of the surviving church, within several metres of it.

This church, which used to be named *Panaina* (translated as *Holy Virgin*) by the Greeks of Mehmana, represents a uni-nave vaulted structure with a horse-shoe-shaped bema and an entrance opening from its



western facade. According to an inscription engraved on two blocks of stone outwardly set in the northern part of the same facade, it was built in 1249.

Around the church extends a medieval cemetery whence an ornate cross-stone of the 13th century was moved to the site of Mehmana.

AMARAS MONASTERY

Location. The monastery is situated 5 kms south-east of Majkalashen Village, Varanda District, Artsakh Province (Martuny District, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)).

Historical Notes. The celebrated monastery of Amaras was founded by Gregory the Enlightener in the early 4th century. It grew particularly well-known in the mid-4th century, when Gregory the Enlightener's grandson, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Grigoris was buried there (he had suffered martyrdom for his efforts in disseminating Christianity).

In the late 5th century, King of Caucasian Albania Vachagan the Pious had a dream which helped him find Grigoris's remains: "...and the king ordered that the bishops should distribute the relics among their dioceses, leaving most of them in Amaras... And he ordered that a chapel should be founded over the grave and be completed in all haste to be dedicated to St. Grigoris." His wish was fulfilled, and "...the building of the holy church was erected in all speed for fear [of the king]."

In the 5th century, Amaras started serving as a bishop residence.

In 821 the monastery was invaded by Arabs from Partaw: "And in the year 270 of the Armenian calendar, ...the Arabs left Partaw secretly and intruded into the district of Amaras, taking one thousand captives..."

In 1766 mention is made of "Prior of Amaras Baghdasar the Archimandrite..."

The Monastery of Amaras frequently suffered attacks by the Turkish robbers of the neighbourhood. Particularly disastrous were the raids of the bandits living in the adjacent village of Yaghelevend.

On 13 August 1925, Primate of Artsakh Diocese, Senior Archimandrite Vrtanes wrote in a report submitted to Catholicos Gevorg V that "St. Grigoris's right hand, some crosses, chrismatories [and] chasubles—a total number of thirty-three pieces—have been removed from Amaras and are in the Politburo..."

In 1926 the sanctuary was consigned to the charge of a Prior and his vicar. As of 1932, it was within the possession of the commune of Majkal.

Architectural Description. The available information relating to the original composition of St. Grigoris Church of Amaras is restricted to only some statements about its large dimensions: "Numerous graves lie around the church, for since times bygone and ever since its foundation, nobody has been able to construct a church like the one founded by Gregory the Great." A record of 1884 states: "The Monastery of St. Grigoris consists of large stone-built ramparts erected by Melik Shahnazir in the late 19th century. They have four turrets in each of their corners and resemble those of a castle with a length of 130 and a width of 120 *sazhens*. The ramparts are inwardly adjoined by 33 magnificent arched rooms, 9 of which are halls, and two spacious stables. Three of the rooms are of double floors—this is the Patriarchal residence of Amaras."

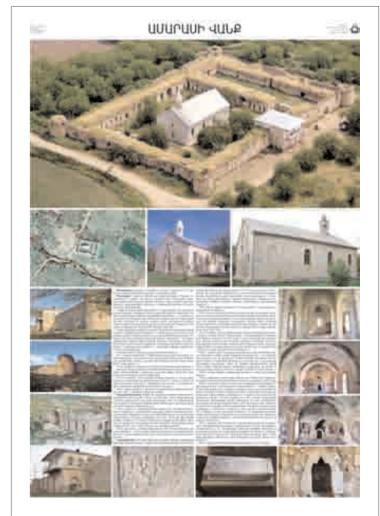
One of the available sources reads: "...the numerous large and small vaulted rooms surrounding the monastery... are now [as of 1869] filthy and left derelict. Instead of the great number of monks, only a single archimandrite resides in the monastery at present..."

Renovation. In the late 17th century, Catholicos of Caucasian Albania Petros reconstructed the Monastery of Amaras from its very foundations. Between 1667 and 1676, he built a new church dedicated to St. Grigoris in Herher Village serving as a place of summer residence for clerics. This is attested by an inscription engraved on the tympanum of the southern entrance of this monument. Its English translation is as follows: "...I carried out repairs and improved the Holy See of Amaras, had it enclosed within ramparts and numerous rooms, and enriched the church with ornaments..."

Between 1780 and 1790, Melik Shahnazir III increased the height of the monastic ramparts and fortified them with 4 pyramids.

From 1805 until 1848, the Russian authorities used Amaras as a custom-house, but Metropolitan Baghdasar restored the rights of the monastery. Moreover, he unfolded work to replace the existing chapel with a new church: its construction started on the initiative of Primate of Artsakh Diocese, Bishop Gevorg Vehapetian, and was completed in the days of Bishop Sargis (1858 to 1870).

In 1858 mention is made of Gevorg Ambrumians from Shooshi, who supervised the construction ongoing in the monastery: "The renovation of the church of the same monastery that has been in process since



1858 is proceeding under the close watch of a faithful person assigned [to this work] by the Armenian inhabitants of the town of Shooshi. He is highly respected pious gentleman, Mr. Gevorg Ambrumians, a citizen of Shooshi, who now lives and works in Amaras for the construction of the house of God."

After assuming the office of Father Superior, Deacon Vahan Dadian embarked on the overhaul of the sanctuary in 1888: "...within a short time, he had a mill built with the means of Mr. Tadevos Tamir, together with a marble tombstone placed over St. Grigoris's grave, and another... in the place of the Holy Patriarch's relics inside the church. In addition, he had a water pipeline conveyed to the yard of the monastery via its ramparts. A mill and water were of the utmost necessity in a place like Amaras..."

In 1890 Sophia Hovsepians from Shooshi implemented repairs in two of the monastic rooms.

In 1892 Agha Grigor Tovmassian Ayvaziants—coming from Sarushen in origin, but living in Baku—allocated 600 roubles for the overhaul of the ruined cells of the monastery.

In 1895 Father Superior Vahan Grigorian the Archimandrite carried out repairs to improve the conditions of the sanctuary: "...the former Priors of the monastery consigned it to destruction and wasted its belongings and property, leaving it reduced to a ruined state of dereliction. Every Archimandrite serving as Prior left it whenever they wished and did not make the slightest effort towards the prosperity and preservation of the celebrated pilgrimage site of St. Grigoris. It is already a year and two months since Archimandrite Vahan Gevorgian came to reside in the Monastery of St. Grigoris (Amaras) on the order of our supreme ecclesiastical authorities to perform the duties of Father Superior there... partly with his own means and partly with the believers' contributions, he has renovated the dilapidated parts of the old rooms and the great gateway of the monastery so that at present it is neat and well-built."

In 1896 thanks to Agha Grigor Tovmassian Ayvaziants's financial support, the Monastery of Amaras acquired two newly-built rooms: "After having the church of Sarushen repaired and decorated, resident of Baku Mr. G. Ayvaziants focused his attention on St. Grigoris Monastery of Amaras. He has already built two large rooms ...in European taste at the expense of about 1,200 roubles."

In 1897 Hovhannes Kamalians from Gish renovated another 5 rooms.

The walls and pillars of the church are [repaired] through the expenses of Hovsep Michaelians from Shooshi ...in memory of his deceased daughter Horpsim and all his dead [relatives].

...This bell tower ...Sargis Jilavians... ...Isa Dahoon... ...spouse...

Lady Sophia Hovsepians from Shooshi had two rooms renovated on 25 February 1890 in memory of her soul.

The overhaul of this holy church and its 5 outer rooms was implemented in the year 1897 through the means of Mr. Hovhannes Kamalians from Gish in memory of his parents and for the longevity of his dear ones.

...Hripsime Tum... repaired this room on 18 September 19...



YERITS MANKANTS (THREE INFANTS) MONASTERY

Location. The monastery is located on the side of a gorge lying on the left bank of the river Trghi—it has its rise in the southern slope of the range of Mrav—15 kms north-west of Metzshen Village, Jraberd District, Artsakh Province (Martakert District, Republic of Artsakh (NKR)), at an altitude of 962 metres above sea level.

Historical Notes. A number of manuscripts written in this sanctuary attest that it had a scriptorium dating as far back as the late Middle Ages. The manuscripts written in, or donated to, the monastery include a book of rites and prayers called *Mashtots* (by scribe Ghazar the Archimandrite for Ghazar Astvatzatur) and dated 1214; a Gospel authored by scribe Atanas the Coenobite in 1565 for brothers Erestand and Karimshah; an *Aymavurk* (a large volume containing the martyrologies and lives of saints) illuminated by Bishop Poghos Meltentsy in 1592 for Archimandrite Hakob; a manuscript in Armenian (*Bibliography by Simeon of Jugha*) donated to the monastery in 1660 (judging from its colophon, it was written in Yerits Mankants Monastery); a *Collection* compiled in 1661 by scribe Ignatios of Metzshen and others.

Among manuscripts attributed to later periods can be mentioned another *Mashtots* authored by scribe Abraham of Shaki in 1760.

In the 18th century, the monastery received a *Gandzaran* with the following words written at its beginning: "In memory of Catholicos Nerses to [the holy Monastery of] Yerits Mankants."

Priors. After 1819 the monastery was governed by Priors. Father Superior Nerses the Archimandrite was succeeded by Coenobite Hakob Ter-Stepanosian.

During the same period, mention is made of Priest Mkrtych of Metzshen. As of the late 19th century, the monastery did not have any clergymen residing there. In 1884 it was "...guarded and governed by two spinsters