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RESEARCH ON ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE

VARDZK

№7

2012



Samvel Ayvazian & Gagik Sargissian
THE 2008 EXCAVATIONS IN DADIVANK



p. 1

Samvel Karapetian
**NEWLY-REVEALED DATA REGARDING THE
FOUNDATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF KHATRAVANK**



p. 13

Raffi Kortoshian
**A NEWLY-FOUND CROSS-STONE (910)
FRAGMENT IN KHOTAKERATS MONASTERY**



p. 21

Samvel Karapetian
THE SECOND GENOCIDE OF AGULIS



p. 22

Raffi Kortoshian
FORGOTTEN KHENE



p. 28

Samvel Karapetian
MREN AND ITS MONUMENTS



p. 31



N 7

2012

ԳԼԽԱԿՈՐ ԽՄԲԱԳԻՐ
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RESEARCH ON ARMENIAN
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ԿԿԱՅԱԿԱՆ N 03U089223

ՏՐԿԱԾ 13.10.2010

Certificate No. 03U089223
Given 13.10.2010

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THE 2008 EXCAVATIONS IN DADIVANK

by Samvel Ayvazian & Gagik Sargissian

Dadivank Monastery is situated on the left bank of the river Trtu, in Upper Khachen District of historical Artsakh Province (nowadays: Shahumian District, Republic of Nagorno Karabakh). The first historiographical record mentioning it dates back to the 9th century: "...in a deep valley called Dadoyi Vank."¹ It is also called monastery of Dadu, Dad, Dade, Date, Tade, Khuta, Khota, Dotal, Arakelots and Charekdar.

political and spiritual life, Research on Armenian Architecture (RAA) NGO (at present: Foundation; Founding Director: Dr. of Architecture Armen Hakhnazarian) embarked on its restoration in 1997.

The restoration project of the monastery also envisaged excavations which were conducted between 27 May and 5 June 2008 inside one of its buildings, the church of Dad (photo 2) as a continuation of the exca-



Photo 1: Dadivank Monastic Complex from the south (photo by S. Ayvazian, 2010)

The foundation of Dadivank is traditionally traced back to the martyrdom of Dad, one of the disciples of Thaddeus the Apostle who was tortured to death in the 1st century A.D. because of his being a preacher of Christianity. Later a monastery was erected over his grave:

Thaddeus, one of the seventy disciples who went to the north, to Armenia Maior. Hearing about Abgar's death, he went back and entered Small Siunik [namely Artsakh]. He was killed due to his secret preaching, a monastery being erected in the site [of his martyrdom] and called after him.²

Highly appreciating the cultural and historical significance of Dadivank, and particularly its role in Armenian

excavations that had started in the section of its bema in 2007 (head of the expedition: archaeologist Hamlet Petrossian; architect: Samvel Ayvazian) being later provisionally stopped.

The excavations of 2008 were headed by archaeologist Gagik Sargissian (architect: Samvel Ayvazian).

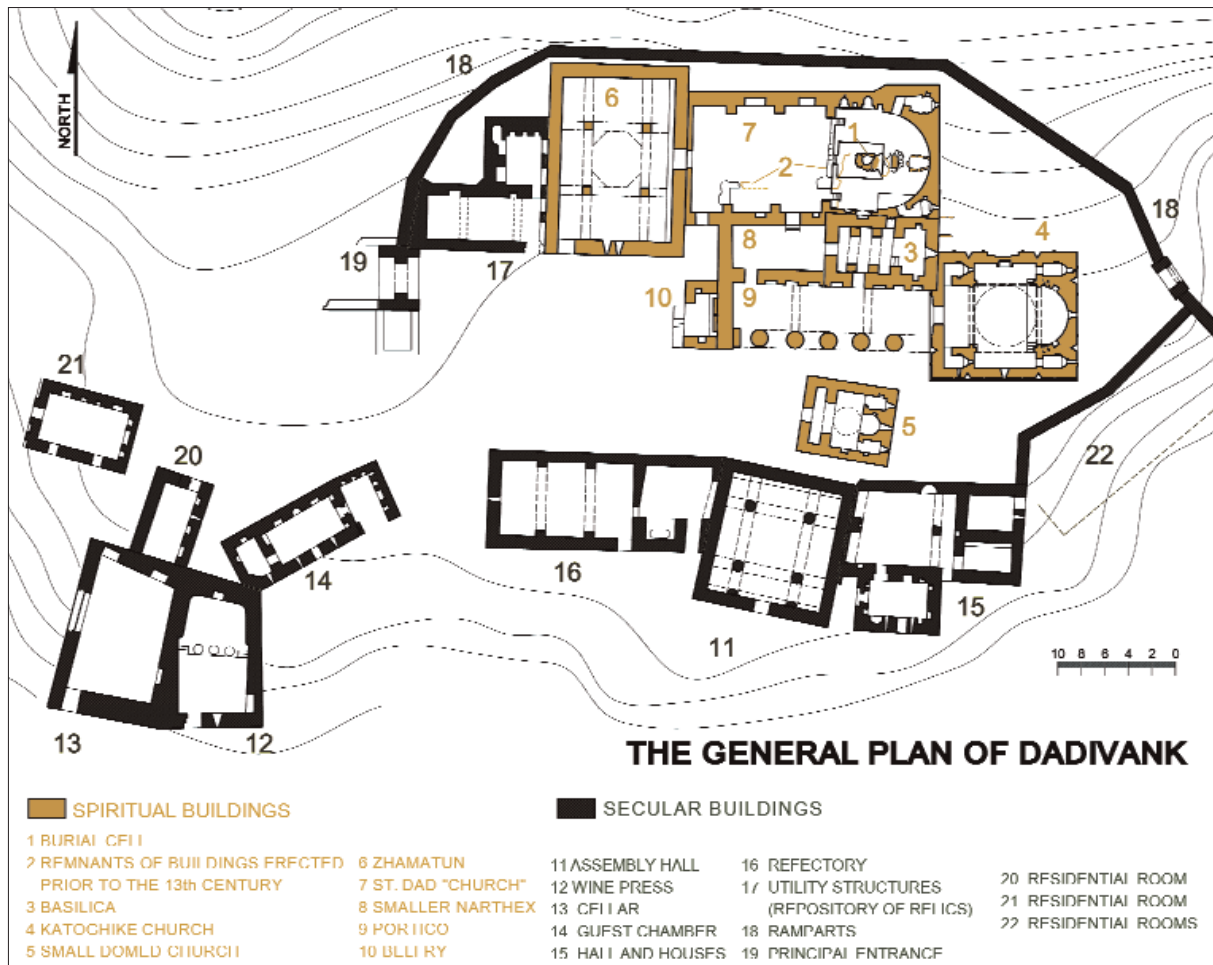
The continuation of the excavations was found necessary out of the following considerations:

a. The excavations of 2007 had revealed that the burial unclosed behind the stele situated in the centre of the sanctuary of St. Dad Church had nothing to do with St. Dad³ (photo 3); therefore, it was important to finally clarify whether his grave existed or not.

1 Movsēs Daxsurançi, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London, 1961), 226.

2 Ժամանակագրություն տեառն Միխայելի Ասորաց պատրիարքի [Chronology by Assyrian Patriarch Michael] (Jerusalem, 1871), 33.

3 Պետրոսյան Հ., 2007 թ. ՀճՈՒԻ հ/կ-ին հանձնված պեղումների հաշվետվություն [H. Petrossian, A Report on the 2007 Excavations Submitted to RAA NGO]. This report also contains a decipherment of the inscription on the stele: «Թ:ՊԺ:» (1361) or «ՊԺԹ» (1370).



b. The aforementioned stele was erected over a large mass of wall with mortar backfill (photo 4), the remnant of a building constructed earlier than St. Dad Church (mid-13th century).⁴ Probably, this mass represents the vestiges of the south-western corner of that building on which the upper interior angle of the entrance is preserved with part of its tympanum. It was necessary to find out the significance of this earlier structure as well as the construction date of the angular wall unearthed south of the bema.

c. The restoration project of St. Dad Church also envisaged the paving of its hall and bema, but once this was done, the main sections of certain walls (photo 5), revealed by the formerly-opened exploring pits, would have remained under the pavement: therefore, before that work, it was necessary to find out how these walls were related to the surviving buildings of the monastery.

d. After finishing the excavations of 2007, the workers suddenly unclosed a pit resembling an empty well under the mass of mortar unearthed in front of the bema stele: the pit contained pieces of wood which they supposed might be the remains of a wooden cross (unfortunately, they took out the wood pieces without our knowledge). The archaeological finds, 27 big and 11 small pieces of wood together with 13 metallic nails, were taken to Yerevan, where we reconstructed the original object by measuring the pieces and putting them together (photo 8). It turned out to be a wooden armchair resembling a throne, the only preserved part of which is the section above the seat (photo 6): its entire back and arms, as well as the head of the right one, are missing. All the pieces were broken⁵ (as was apparent, metallic nails had been used in the junctures). The upper parts of the back and left arm have cylindrical finishing. The seat is thoroughly carved with an ornamental pattern of four furrow-shaped parallel bands which stretch longitudinally and have a row of

⁴ Հասրաթյան Մ., Հայկական ճարտարապետության Արցախի դպրոցը [M. Hasratian, Artsakh School of Armenian Architecture] (Yerevan, 1992), 50. Also see Այվազյան Ս., Գաղի վանքի հողերի շինությունների կառուցման ժամանակագրական հաջորդականությունը [S. Ayzavian, "A Chronology of the Construction of the Religious Buildings of the Monastery of Dad"], «ՊԻՃ» [Historico-Philological Journal], no. 3 (2006), 201.

⁵ The fragments of the wooden throne were cleaned, consolidated and prepared for exhibition by Lena Atoyants.



Photo 2: Dadivank Monastic Complex before its restoration (photo by S. Karapetian, 1993); **photos 3-4:** the burial behind the stele after the end of the excavations of 2007 (photos by S. Ayvazian, 2007); **photo 5:** the exploring pit close to the south-western wall pylon of the church (photo by S. Ayvazian, 2007)

circular patterns above and beneath them. The furrow-shaped decorative band is engraved on both the inner and outer sides of the throne, while the circular bands are seen only inwardly, being outwardly preserved only on the upper part of the surviving arm. These furrow-shaped and circular carvings remind of the symbols of water (as one of the elements of nature) and the sun respectively.

Similar circular patterns can also be seen in early Christian monuments, particularly on the endings and intersection points of the wings of winged crosses of the 5th to 6th centuries (such winged crosses can be seen on the entrance tympanum of the 6th-century basilica of Yereruyk; on the pilaster of the royal church of Ani (9th to 10th-centuries), on various cross-stones, etc.). An identical ornamental pattern is engraved on a cross-stone of 1158 preserved in Okhte Yeghtsy Monastery (photo 7). The part of the cross-stone (it was erected in memory of a child who died a premature death) beneath the cross is adorned with a relief of three human beings, the child between his parents. Left of the boy, his father is depicted as sitting on the

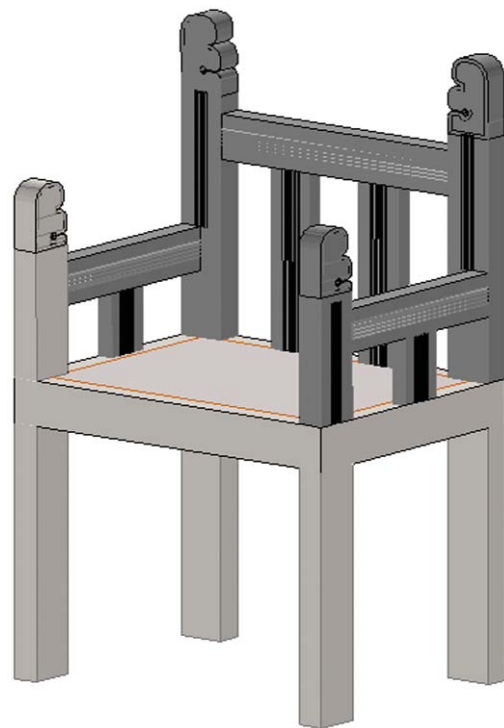
throne, and right of him, his mother is standing on a carpet. The aforementioned circular patterns are carved on this throne and carpet. The fact that the cross-stone is engraved with a chair with such ornamental patterns (they date as far back as the times of petroglyphs) allows us to trace the unclosed wooden throne back to the 12th century. However, the same decorative forms are more frequently found on older monuments, which comes to suggest that this throne might have been made even earlier than the time specified.

This archaeological find led us to the supposition that the workers might have come across some grave pit: surprising as it was, the dead person had been buried as sitting on the chair. Anyway, they had unearthed some closed cell the significance of which still remained obscure.

In order to clarify these four issues, we resumed the excavations on 27 May 2008. We found the opening leading to the aforementioned cell, outlined it and cleaned its roof, namely the aforementioned mass of mortar, on which the large mass of wall with mortar filling (beneath the stele) partly rested. What is now



Photo 6: fragments of the throne unclosed in the burial cell; **photo 7:** the lower part of a cross-stone of 1158 located in Okhte Yeghtsy Monastery (photo by R. Kortoshian, 2011); **photo 8:** the throne unclosed in the burial cell (reconstruction by S. Ayvazian, 2007)



clearly known as the cell roof had been unearthed during the excavations of 2007, but we were unable to find out its significance as the excavations temporarily stopped.

The cell turned out to have no entrance at all as it was sealed, and the opening unclosed by the workers was on the upper part of its southern wall, right beneath its roof (photo 9). In order to avoid causing much damage to the monument, we decided to enter there through its opening and widened it to such an extent as to be able to slip in.

The cell represented the following picture at the moment we entered there: it was empty with 5 to 6 rows of the undressed stonework of its walls clearly visible together with two level slabs forming its roof. The floor was covered with a smooth layer of fine sand (brought by water), with small stones and tiny pieces of wood visible in it. Near the eastern corner of the cell, the two

ends of a human lower jaw could be seen protruding. The backfill of the floor, which was as thick as 20 to 30 cm, mainly comprised water-brought fine sand, and for this reason, the preparation was carried out with a brush and partly a knife blade. The lower jaw was placed on a pile of human leg and hand bones, carefully arranged along the southern wall, in the eastern corner of the cell (photos 10, 11), together with two tiny pieces of a skull and some fragments of the wooden throne. After documenting and removing these remains, we found out that the floor level slightly descended in the eastern corner of the cell, beneath its northern edge. In this part, we unclosed whole foot bones arranged in anatomical precision (photo 12), this confirming the



Photo 9: the roof of the burial cell (photo by G. Sargissian, 2008)

supposition that the human body had been originally buried right in this tomb and not re-buried.

In the central part of the floor of the tomb, we unclosed vertebra, rib and shoulder-blade bones mixed with tiny pieces of the wooden throne. The western extremity of the cell did not retain any finds, but the back parts of the wooden chair used to lean right against its western wall: this supposition is based on the evidence provided by the workers: when one of them looked through the opening, something (namely, the wooden cross) hit his head.

Near the southern wall of the cell, we found the head of a staff (it had sloping ends) of white onyx (photos 13, 14) which had a hollow place with two holes made by metallic nails (the upper part of the staff used to be set there). Another staff with a similar head is carved in a bas relief on Archimandrite David's tombstone in Shativank (photo 15).

The archaeological finds of the burial cell also comprised two small fragments of tiling: one of them had been used for fastening a stone to the second upper row of the masonry of the southern wall.

The study of the skeleton showed that it missed some parts (photo 16), namely a pelvic bone, the upper jaw as well as certain parts of the vertebral column, some rib bones and parts of the hands. Its completely preserved parts were its lower jaw, shins and feet. As



Photo 10: the bones unclosed in the east of the burial cell; photo 11: the same part after the removal of the first layer of bones; photo 12: feet bones (photos by G. Sargissian, 2008)



Photo 13: the onyx head of a staff unearthed in the burial cell; **photo 14:** the onyx head after its cleaning (photos by G. Sargissian, 2008); **photo 15:** a staff relief in Shativank (photo by R. Kortoshian, 2010)

Photo 16: the bones unearthed in the burial cell (photo by G. Sargissian, 2008); **photos 17-18:** the excavation site and burial cell after the excavations (photos by S. Ayvazian, 2008)

for the skull, only some 3 to 4 small pieces could be found. After taking samples of the bones, we re-buried the rest of them in the same cell and covered them with sand and polyethylene. Ruzan Mkrтчian, who holds a Ph.D. in History, carried out a preliminary anthropological examination which showed that the person buried in the cell is a man aged between 50 and 55,

with a height of 175 to 180 cm (he suffered from toothache).

After the measurement of the burial cell, the aforementioned opening was re-laid with the stones that had been covering it, being temporarily blanketed with oil cloth and a thin layer of soil. It was decided to include the issue of the preservation of, and tourist visits to, the mon-

corresponds to the level of the bema of St. Dad Church); moreover, it is even lower than that of the small basilica (by 36 cm). The interior plan dimensions of the cell are: 107 cm on the longitudinal axis (from the east westward); 72 cm on the transversal axis; height: 132 cm. Indeed, it goes without saying that a traditional burial, with the deceased person lying on his back with his head to the west, could not have been held in a cell of these dimensions. The dead man was buried as sitting on the aforementioned wooden throne, with a staff on his right side or in his right hand (it should be remembered that the head of the staff was found close to the southern wall of the cell, namely on the right of the sitting corpse).

The tomb is built of the local undressed solid stone and sandstone without mortar. It is thoroughly dug down in soft sandstone which forms the soil proper in that part of the monastery. In its eastern part, which is narrower than the rest of the structure, the stones are placed on one another with their ends coming a little forward (photo 19). Above half of the cell height, its longitudinal dimensions diminish to 81 cm, as a result of which, it looks like an armchair in its longitudinal section, repeating the outline of the person sitting on the throne (see the drawing). This is an additional substantiation of the supposition that the cell was specially built for that burial. The tomb is covered with two slabs (thickness: 20 to 22 cm) which stretch transversally, the western of them being placed 7 cm higher than the other. Outwardly, these covering slabs have a layer of mortar over them: it has a thickness of 3 to 5 cm, comprises small stones and retains a fragment of the extreme part of a tile. Probably, the present-day roof of the cell is not its original one and was made later. As a rule, similar structures have a false vault or a dome-like ending of a stonework going with their walls. Outwardly, the upper contour of the northern wall of the burial cell is equal to the soil, while that of the southern wall is 40 cm higher than the soil: this difference may be explained by the former north-southward slant of the terrain.

The burial cell is entirely located in the centre of the vaulted space in front of the sanctuary of St. Dad Church, west of the stele. Its eastern extremity is beneath the remnants (the aforementioned wall mass with mortar filling) of a destroyed structure that was unclosed in 2007. The well-known stele of the central part of the bema of St. Dad Church was erected over these remnants (photo 9), which suggests that the burial cell was built earlier than the ruined structure and stele. As for St. Dad Church, the excavations of 2007 showed that it stood over the ruins of this destroyed build-

ing, that is to say, the church was erected later than the burial cell. The latter could not have been built later than the church as in that case, it would have been necessary to dig a pit of a depth of 260 cm in the part of its bema for the burial, something not very probable as a depth of 80 to 120 cm would have been quite sufficient to inter a dead body (as is the case with the burial behind the stele). Even if we accept that the cell was built after the church, it will be difficult to explain how the large fragment of a structure destroyed before the construction of Dad's church could have appeared over a burial cell erected after the church.

The aforementioned leads us to the conclusion that the burial cell existed before the stele, church and structure that went to ruins even earlier than the construction of these monuments, at least in the second half of the 12th century (during the ruin and devastation spread by war-lord Choli). Its volumetric composition, building technique, construction chronology and burial ritual suggest that the legend of St. Dad might have a close connection with this cell. Even if we accept that this burial cell is not St. Dad's grave or that the legend is merely a concoction, we might consider that those writing the inscription of 1224⁶ on the western facade of the cathedral meant this very tomb when mentioning Dad's grave.

According to historian A. Hakobian, the inscription «Տր Աթանաս» (*Father Atanas*), carved in the vestry of St. Dad Church, can be considered as a memorial plaque over⁷ the probable grave of Prior Atanas, who was the spiritual leader of the monastery from 1260 until 1290.⁸

The remnants of the destroyed structure as well as the part of the angular wall unclosed south of the bema

6 For the inscription, see Գիվան հայ վիճազրույթյան [A Corpus of Armenian Inscriptions], vol. 5 (Yerevan, 1982), 201; S. Karapetian, *Armenian Cultural Monuments in the Region of Karabakh* (Yerevan, 2001), 106.

7 Յակոբյան Ա., Խաչեն-Խոխանաբերդ ամրոցը եւ նրա իշխանատոհմի Թ-ԺԳ դարերում [A. Hakobian, "The Castle of Khachen-Khokhanaberd and Its Princely Family between the 9th and 13th Centuries"], «Հանդես ամսօրեայ» [*Handes Amsorea*], nos. 1-12 (Vienna-Yerevan, 2010), note 147, 136.

8 During our discussion with A. Hakobian, he expressed a viewpoint that the unclosed tomb retains the remains of Atanas or one of the priors of the monastery who served in the second half of the 13th century. This supposition is also shared by Gagik Sargissian, who is guided by the results of the radiocarbonic examination (SPb-63) of the deceased man's bone carried out in St. Petersburg Pedagogical University after Herzen: 1260 A.D.±55 years. Nevertheless, we do not share this thesis as the funerary cell was built prior to the construction of Dad's "church" and the ruined structure, namely before the lifetime of these people (Atanas served from 1261 until 1291).

are closely connected with the small basilica, being either part of it or having been erected with little time difference. The corner wall, which is preserved in situ, continues along the southern wall of the sanctuary of St. Dad Church (supposedly, it could reach the small basilica), proving that the church was built over this wall. Unfortunately, the exploring pit dug in this part in 2007 could not be made deeper for technical reasons to clarify the inter-relation between this wall and the small basilica, the northern entrance of which is in this very part. Had we been able to clarify this issue, it would have been easier to find out the chronological sequence of the construction of the burial cell and small basilica.

Close to the southern wall of the vaulted space in front of the sanctuary of St. Dad Church, 1.5 to 2 metres south of the burial cell, we unearthed part of a flagging of medium-size flat stones and boulders which continues to the small basilica.

The excavations conducted inside St. Dad Church unclosed the remnants of two walls of rough masonry. One of them extends transversally (photos 17, 18) beginning from the eastern wall pylon of the northern wall of the church and continuing to the eastern wall pylon of the southern wall, remaining within a metre of the latter. This wall, which is preserved to the height of

only a single row, has a layer of split stone. The other wall, which stretches longitudinally (photos 5, 20), begins from the ending of the first one with a large block of unbroken stone, and continues to the western wall pylon of the southern wall, then bends for 90 degrees and gets under it. It is impossible to find out how it continues further and it is only clear that it existed before the foundation of St. Dad Church.

East of the south-western wall pylon of the church, within 10 to 20 cm of the longitudinal wall and at a depth of 112 cm of the base of the wall pylon, we found a cross-stone (25 x 33 x 191 cm) of a smooth face (see photo 21 and the drawing) which lay right on the ground, a fact showing that it was not in its original place. In the upper part of the khachkar, its thickness gradually diminishes to 2 cm, giving it the shape of a knife. The upper part of its smooth surface is engraved with a plain cross having the form of a line, the wings of which end in three branches and have ball-shaped hollows at their ends. The lateral parts of the cross-stone are broken all along its length and there is a small broken section in its lower part. The stylistic and artistic peculiarities of the cross-stone trace it back to the period between the 11th and 12th centuries.

In order to find out the continuation of the angular wall, unearthed south of the bema of St. Dad Church in



Photos 20-21: the unclosed longitudinal wall and cross-stone (photos by S. Ayvazian, 2008)



A graphical drawing of the unearthed cross-stone (by S. Ayvazian)

2007, we opened an exploring pit of 3 sq. metres close to the eastern facade of the same monument. At a depth of about a metre, we unclosed two Christian burials in cists without tombstones (photo 22) which adjoin the main wall unclosed beneath the eastern facade of St. Dad Church (we shall enlarge on this below): it is evident that these burials were held later. These graves substantiate the viewpoint we expressed earlier,⁹ according to which, this part of the monastic complex used to retain a number of graves and probably a cemetery. The exploring pit did not show any continuation of the wall in question to the east; instead, we unclosed a retaining wall (photo 23) in the foundations of the eastern facade of St. Dad Church: it jutted out of the surface of that facade by 15 cm and was a little deviated from it, its level approximately coinciding with that of the eastern facade of the small basilica. Taking into account the differences in building technique and masonry, we can state with conviction that St. Dad Church was built after this main wall, being erected over it. This retaining wall is closely connected with the aforementioned angular wall and the small basilica: perhaps, it formed part of them. In order to further clarify this connection, we need to conduct excavations in

⁹ Ayvazian, "A Chronology," 205.



Photos 22-23: the eastern burials and the unclosed main section of the eastern wall of St. Dad Church (photos by S. Ayvazian, 2008)

this part of the monastic complex, which we decided to carry out in the next stage of the excavations. As for the exploring pit, we filled it back with soil.

During the field work, we took samples of the mortar pieces preserved in different parts of these buildings. Their comparative examination, conducted by Knarik Navasardian, a Ph.D. in History, yielded the following results: the mortar of the large wall mass under the stele of Dad and that of the wall remnants of the ruined church (they are now in the bema backfill) are identical to the mortar of the wall unclosed in 2007 in the southern corner of the sanctuary. The mortar consolidating the stele, the masonry of the wall of St. Dad

Church and that covering the roof of the burial cell differ in their structure and composition, possibly also in their chronology.

The archaeological finds yielded by the excavations, namely the wooden throne and the staff head, were handed to the History and Geology Museum of Artsakh.

To summarise, we would like to submit the results of the 2008 archaeological excavations of Dadivank Monastery with the following conclusions:

1. A cross-stone has been unclosed.
2. A cemetery has been unearthed in the area north of the cathedral and east of St. Dad Church.
3. The wall remnants unearthed inside St. Dad Church attest that before its construction in the second half of the 13th century, its site was occupied by another building the forms, volumes and functional significance of which are still to be found out.
4. The unclosed cell is a sepulchre, the oldest of the structures preserved in Dadivank Monastery (perhaps, only the small basilica can be an exception). It was specially built for the interment of the given person, and probably, the legend about St. Dad and the supposition that he had a grave within the monastery (as stated in the donation inscription of 1224 engraved on the western facade of the cathedral) are based on its existence.
5. The dead person was buried as sitting on the wooden throne, with his face eastward. Judging from the ornate throne and the head of his staff (it has sloping ends typical of the staffs of Biblical fathers), he was an eminent Christian figure, but his identity still remains moot.
6. Possibly, the cell twice opened formerly for plunder or for the purpose of taking the saint's relics.

For the first time, the tomb was broken into quite a time after the burial, when the soft tissues of the deceased person had putrefied, the skeleton had shrunk and the rodents had eaten away the legs and seat of the wooden armchair. The robbers or those taking away the holy relics mixed the bones scattered on the floor and partly broke them. The feet remaining in the depression of the eastern corner of the floor and the onyx head of the staff, which lay on the floor, exactly close to the southern wall, probably did not attract their attention, being covered with water-brought sand.

Presumably, those who entered the cell for the last time wanted to do away with the disorder reigning there after the robbers and those who had taken away the relics without bothering themselves to keep every-

thing in order. Besides, they also wanted to consolidate the cell: they carefully arranged the big bones near the eastern wall and put the lower jaw over that pile of human remains. The tile pieces found in the masonry of the cell and in the mortar backfill of its roof, which date back to the 13th century and are identical to the tiles of the small domed church, attest that for the last time, the cell opened during the construction of St. Dad Church, when the tomb was placed beneath its sanctuary (later it was sealed).

7. North of the uni-nave basilica (it is evidently an earlier structure with numerous traces of reconstruction¹⁰) adjoining St. Dad Church in the south, there used to exist a building of considerable volumes (let us remember the angular wall south of the bema of the church; the fragment beneath the stele of Dad, numerous other similar, although small, pieces as well as the main wall unclosed in the east) which either shared the building period of the basilica or formed part of it (this may be ascertained through excavations and by means of exploring pits). It was removed during the construction of St. Dad Church, its debris being used for increasing the height of its bema. It should be noted that the builders of the church were well-aware of the existence of the burial cell as the future church had been designed in such a way as to have the cell in the centre of its bema, on the axis. The remnants of the wall with mortar backfill, which belonged to the removed structure, were carefully arranged around the cell so as not to damage it.

8. At this point, we find it expedient to repeat the viewpoint expressed in different reports, namely that the church of Dad does not meet the criteria of a building known to have functioned as a church: first of all, the vaulted space in front of its sanctuary is rather long (406 cm) and so high (110 cm) that it reaches the sanctuary, something that cannot be seen in any medieval church. Even the basilicas of earlier periods and domed ones (Yeghvard, Dvin, Mren, Tekor, Bagavan, etc.) have low sanctuaries (in some cases, they consist of two parts, their first rectilinear sections being comparatively extended).

Secondly, the longitudinal (northern and southern) walls of the hall and vaulted space in front of the sanctuary retain large and small recesses (4 in the former and 6 in the latter) which are not typical of churches. The left niche in the northern wall of the vaulted space

¹⁰ Ayvazian, "A Chronology," 201-203.



Photo 24: St. Dad Church (photo by S. Ayvazian, 2009)

in front of the sanctuary is remarkable for its splendid ornamentation and a circular opening in its centre which might have borne a clay water pipe: this again puts into question the fact that the building used to serve as a church.

Thirdly, the sanctuary of the building retains a grave (unclosed in 2007), something impossible for a church.

Fourthly, the building was not completed¹¹: it either remained without a roof or was just designed to have none, whereas a church should have one by all means.

Besides, in all times churches were built in such a way as to have at least a window in the sanctuary opening from the east, which is associated with the sun and light, that is to say, the saving light coming from Christ: for this reason, churches extend from the east westward with the sanctuary in the east. In this case, the church has no windows although technically their existence was quite possible.

Finally, the building lacks an altar which is necessary for the conduct of spiritual rites. What we have in the centre of the bema is a large-size stele with cross



Architect Samvel Ayvazian and archaeologist Gagik Sargissian at the burial cell (2009)

reliefs and an inscription. Its upper part retains a hollow, the place of a cross relief once placed there. This stele could not have served as a holy altar as it has a height of 190 cm, which surpasses average human height (in fact, it should reach the chest or be slightly lower).

9. Our previous conclusion, the unearthed burial cell, the grave unclosed east of the stele in 2007 and the entrances¹² to the zhamatun, small narthex and basilica, which open to St. Dad Church, as if marking a way leading to a sacred place, give us grounds to say that this church retains the holified place around which the monastic complex was established throughout centuries, the present-day church of St. Dad serving as a sacred sepulchre.

According to the changes made to the restoration project of St. Dad Church, the unclosed burial cell is included in the section of its bema as a separate part. It communicates with the hall through steps, via the entrance opening from the bema facade. As of the present moment, most of the construction activity has been carried out in accordance with the project (photo 24).

¹¹ This is M. Hasratian's viewpoint (see **Hasratian**, 50). Also see **Ayvazian**, "A Chronology," 201.

¹² See **Ayvazian**, *ibid.*, for information about these entrances.

NEW RAA PROJECTS

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Great Armenian Genocide of 1915 and in token of deepest respect of the memory of its innocent victims, RAA intends to complete its decades-long research in Western Armenia in 2015 and present the history of its over 70 districts in 36 volumes.



The members of RAA are also preparing a series of publications on the history and material culture of the towns and villages of Artsakh.



NOTIFICATION

The year 2013 marks the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the renowned monastery of Teger (1213 to 2013), Aragatzotn Region, Republic of Armenia. In commemoration of this, RAA Foundation is planning to dedicate one of the forthcoming "Vardzk" issues of 2013 to this monastic complex, which, regretful as it is, has not been properly studied so far.



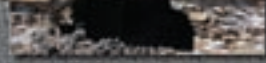
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

RAA Foundation extends its deepest gratitude to **Mr. Arthur Seredian** (Harutiun Sarhadian, the younger son of Sirak Sarhadian, an outstanding political, public, cultural and educational figure from Van, Western Armenia) for his donation of an IPAD2 4G.

OBITUARY

We regret to inform our readers about the death of our senior friend, master **SEPUH SAGHATELIAN**, a man of great patriotic feelings, who died at the age of 92 on 27 February 2012 in his birthplace Akhalktskha.





This brief research into the monuments, and particularly, cathedral of Mren is first and foremost an **SOS** to the proper international bodies, primarily UNESCO, to urgently draw their attention to the issue of the preservation or, better to say, salvation of this pearl of architecture consigned to total annihilation. For already many decades, the watch base of Turkish border-guarding forces, stationed in the neighbourhood of the ghost city, has been giving entry permit to only the inhabitants of the adjacent villages who visit it simply for searching for gold there. Unlike them, architects, culturologists and tourists are absolutely denied access to the ghost city



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