

A State Policy of Vandalism in Azerbaijan





**A STATE POLICY OF
VANDALISM
IN AZERBAIJAN**

**DURING
OF HIS HOLINESS
KAREKIN II
SUPREME PATRIARCH AND
CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS**

**BY THE ORDER
OF HIS GRACE
BISHOP VRTANES ABRAHAMYAN
PRIMATE OF THE DIOCESE OF ARTSAKH**

UDC 008:93/94

Kortoshian Raffi

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The return of the displaced sons and daughters of Artsakh is the only means of the securing protection and continual existence of the Christian heritage of Artsakh.

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DADIVANK MONASTERY

Culture binds people together with shared values, beliefs, religion and customs. It allows them to identify each other with a similar mindset. Cultural heritage created jointly can provide a common sense of unity and belonging within a group, allowing its members to better understand the previous generations and the common history with which they move towards a future to be built together.

Since time immemorial Artsakh (also known as Karabakh since the late Middle Ages) has always played an active part in the history of Armenia.¹ It was in this province that King Tigran the Great (95 to 55 BC) founded one of the four cities named after him.²

Starting from the second half of the first century, different preachers of Christianity spread this religion in Armenia. Among them were Sts. Dad³ and Elisha,⁴ two of the 72 disciples of Christ, both of whom preached Christianity in Artsakh and later suffered martyrdom there: they are buried in the monasteries of Dadivank⁵ and Yeghise Arakyal (Elisha the Apostle) respectively⁶ (both the monasteries are situated in Artsakh).

1 For all-embracing information on the history of Artsakh and the local Armenian princely families, see **V. Balayan**, *History of Artsakh* (Yerevan, 2002), and **A. Hakobian**, *The Royal and Princely Families in Boon Aghvank and in the Eastern Regions of Armenia from Ancient Times until the 13th Century* (Yerevan, 2020) /both in Armenian/.

2 **H. Petrosyan**, "Tigranakert of Artsakh," *Aramazd Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 10, issues 1-2 (2016) 2020, p. 327).

3 *Christian Armenia Encyclopedia* (Yerevan, 2020), p. 257 /in Armenian/.

4 **Simeon Yerevantsy**, *Jambr* (Vagharshapat, 1873), pp. 11, 64-65 /in Armenian/.

5 *Chronicle by Michael the Syrian* (Jerusalem, 1871), p. 33 /in Armenian/.

6 *Christian Armenia Encyclopedia* (Yerevan, 2020), p. 872 /in Armenian/.



After Christianity was proclaimed as the state religion of Armenia in the 4th century, on the order of King Trdat III preachers were sent to different provinces of the country to preach the new religion. One of them, St. Grigoris carried out Christian preaching in Artsakh (he rests in Amaras Monastery of Artsakh⁷).

One of the most important factors in spreading the new religion was the construction of places of worship. Many churches were built throughout Armenia, including the basilicas of Tsitsernavank, Tigranakert and Nor Haykajur in Artsakh. In fact, at the end of the 4th century, most of the population of Armenia professed Christianity.

7 Ibid., pp. 250-251.

In the following centuries, Artsakh was reigned by various powers (Armenian and non-Armenian), but the region remained predominantly inhabited by Christian Armenians, and architecture developed there according to the traditions of Armenian national architecture. Monasteries and churches continued to be built, the construction of religious monuments being particularly promoted when the region was part of an Armenian kingdom or principality. The church of Vankasar and Okhte Drne Monastery have been preserved as magnificent monuments of the 7th century. Katosavank Monastery as well as the churches of Varazgom and Stunis can be mentioned among structures dating from the period between the 9th and 11th centuries.

The art of construction particularly flourished in Artsakh between the 12th and 13th centuries, when the Artsakh school of Armenian architecture was formed. As elsewhere in the country, the reigning feudal families were actively involved in construction activities, especially building monasteries,⁸ the best known specimens of which include, but are not limited to, Dadivank, Gtchavank, Hakobavank, Khatravank, Horekavank, Gandzasar and Yeghishe Arakyal.

It should be noted that the architecture and art of Artsakh developed in complete interconnection with the architecture and art of central Armenia, this being marked by shared experience and achievements.⁹

The period between the 17th and 18th centuries marked another stage of flourishing in church building in Artsakh. Thanks to the existence of semi-independent Armenian melikdoms (principalities), the former rights of the representatives of several old Armenian princely families were restored and ratified under decrees issued by Safavid shahs.¹⁰ Many churches preserved from this period show that the three-nave basilica was the main type in Artsakh, just as elsewhere in Armenia.

After Artsakh fell under the rule of the Christian Russian Empire in 1805,¹¹ church construction again revived in the region (indeed, this does not refer to those local villages which were either depopulated in the 18th century).¹² Architecturally, Ghazanchetsots Sourb Amenaprkich Church (1868-1887) in Shushi is one of the most important monuments of the 19th century.

8 **D. Kouymjian, C. Mutafian**, *Artsakh-Karabagh, Garden of Armenian Arts and Traditions* (Paris, 2011), p. 66.

9 **V. Harutunian**, *History of Armenian Architecture* (Yerevan, 1992), p. 333 /in Armenian/.

10 In order to better organize the defence of the region against the invasions of foreign tribes, in the late 17th century, these principalities entered into an alliance and established the melikdom of Khamsa. The newly-founded administrative entity consisted of the melikdoms of Gyulistan, Jraberd, Khachen, Varanda and Dizak, the borders of which extended from the vicinity of Gandzak to the Arax River (**V. Balayan**, *History of Artsakh* (Yerevan, 2002), pp. 143-150. **S. Karapetian**, *Artsakh: Atlas* (Yerevan, 2016), p. 1 /in Armenian/. For information on the history and princely families of Khamsa reported by a contemporary historian, see **Mirza Yousouf Nersesov**, *True History*. Translated into Armenian from the original by **K. Kostikian** (Yerevan, 2000).

11 **Leo**, *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (Yerevan, 1984), pp. 247-248 /in Armenian/.

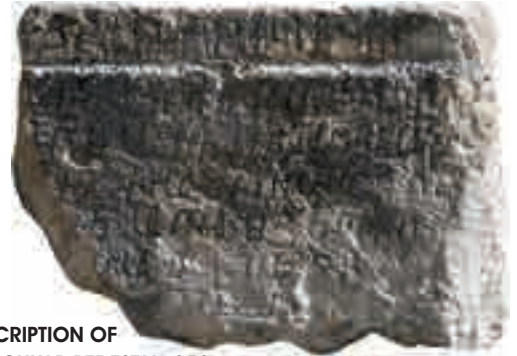
12 In the second half of the 1720s, Artsakh suffered devastating incursions by the Ottoman armies (**Balayan**, pp. 151-170; **Karapetian**, 2016, p. 2.), and due to the unprecedented persecutions that followed in subsequent years, many Armenian-inhabited districts of the region (Tsar, Kashatagh, Kashunik, Kovsakan and Shamkor) were almost completely depopulated (**Karapetian**, 2016, p. 2; **Balayan**, p. 162. Also see **S. Karapetian**, *Armenian Cultural Monuments in the Region of Karabakh* (Yerevan, 2001), p. 12.). After Artsakh fell under Russian rule in 1805, the tsarist authorities attempted to put an end to the nomadic lifestyle of the Caucasian Tatars (Information concerning the local nomadic tribes can be found in numerous Russian statistical tables of the 19th century. There are also a great number of works speaking about their temporary stay in Artsakh. Here are some of them: **Mirza Yousouf Nersesov**, p. 38; Acts Collected by the Caucasian Archaeological Commission (Tiflis, 1875), vol. 6, part 2, act 694, p. 383 /in Russian/; **Dubois de Montpéroux F.**, *Travel around the Caucasus, among the Circassians and Abkhassians, in Colchis, Georgia, Armenia and Crimea*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1840), p. 58 /in French/. by “re-educating” them and forcing them into a sedentary life (on the occasions when they refused to obey, they would be banished from the country). This process continued for several decades, lasting as late as in the 1910s. In the aftermath of these efforts, the ethnic composition of Artsakh completely changed.



CROSS-STONE, 866

6

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE
GUEST HOUSE, 1735



THE INSCRIPTION OF
THE KHACHKAR PEDESTAL, 853



13TH C. INSCRIPTION COMMEMORATES
THE DONATION OF EGATEGH

It should be noted that all the aforementioned monuments are rich in Armenian inscriptions most of which contain important information from the point of view of Armenian and world history. Thus, for instance, a 13th-century inscription commemorates the donation of an estate named Egategh to Hakobavank Monastery on the order of Jalal I, the king of Artsakh. It is noteworthy that Egategh, given to the monastery on a royal order, was considered its property¹³ in some land records even 6 centuries after the donation. This confirms the hereditary right of Artsakh Armenians handed down from the depths of centuries.

Also noteworthy is an inscription engraved in the guest house of Spitak Khach Monastery in Hadrut: according to it, the guest house was built in 1735, when Nader Shah Afshar of Iran expelled the Ottomans from Artsakh.

Special mention should be made of the cross-stones (khachkars) of Artsakh which show a complete confessional identity to the entire Armenian khachkar culture (in 2010 the Armenian khachkar was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity). Moreover, the Armenian art of khachkar making originated in Artsakh. It is no coincidence that throughout the Armenian environment, the first written proof about erecting a khachkar has reached us from Metsaranits Sourb Hakobavank Monastery of Artsakh (unfortunately, only the khachkar pedestal and an Armenian inscription dated 853 have been preserved).¹⁴ Also, it is in Vaghuhas Village of Artsakh that the oldest khachkar has been preserved with an inscription reporting the exact date (866) of its creation.¹⁵

Generally speaking, the local flora, various sculptural themes, and images of mortals have given a special charm to the khachkars of Artsakh, making them rich and unique.¹⁶

In our opinion, it is the aforementioned historical facts that annoy the authorities of Azerbaijan and determine their policy of destroying the Christian monuments of Artsakh. In this context, the war waged by Azerbaijan against the Artsakh people's right to self-determination is also a war against their culture, accompanied by cultural genocide.

At the end of the 20th century, the Armenians of Artsakh who had struggled for centuries to live in liberty and preserve their ethnic identity finally succeeded in establishing, in part of their historical homeland, the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), which is de facto independent, although unrecognised by the UN member states.

The authorities of Azerbaijan who could not reconcile themselves to the loss of Artsakh started the widespread destruction of Armenian monuments, particularly Christian ones,¹⁷ continuing the policy of Soviet Azerbaijan.¹⁸

13 It was mentioned among the estates of the monastery in 1893 (National Archives of Armenia, fund 319, list 1, file 177, pp. 16-17) /in Armenian/.

14 **R. Kortoshian**, "The Revival of Hakobavank," *Jartarapetutun yev Shinararutun* [Architecture and Construction], nos. 11-12 (189-190), 2021, p. 69.

15 **S. Karapetian**, "The Oldest Khachkar with an Exact Date: 866," *Vardzk*, no. 14, 2020, p. 60.

16 **H. Petrosyan, N. Yeranyan**, *The Monumental Culture of Artsakh* (Yerevan, 2022), p. 69.

17 These were numerous monuments of material culture created, in the course of centuries, by the natives of the region, the Armenians as well as some Caucasian Albanian tribes inhabiting the areas on the left bank of the river Kur. These tribes which were carriers of Armenian civilization and followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church from the 4th century onwards mostly disappeared from the historical arena after the 10th century and were no longer mentioned in subsequent historical records. The only exception were the Uti who continued living in their native lands at the cost of renouncing their ethnic identity and history of 1,700 years (they have been forced to do so particularly since 1991). Moreover, their leaders often make anti-Armenian statements (**S. Karapetian**, *Azerbaijan Out of Civilization* (Yerevan, 2017), p. 11).

18 It is important to note that between the 1920s and 1940s, when the propaganda of atheism was prevalent throughout the Soviet Union, no mosques were destroyed in Azerbaijan; moreover, even new ones were constructed, while many

There is substantial amount of evidence revealing the fact that during the period between May 1994 and September 2020, the destruction of Armenian monuments, especially religious and funerary ones, was carried out within a state policy of Azerbaijan, in some cases, with the involvement of the military forces of the country.¹⁹

Since 1991, several hundred Armenian churches and monasteries have been destroyed by the authorities of Azerbaijan. Hundreds of medieval cemeteries with thousands of cross-stones and gravestones have been demolished. The historical Armenian inscriptions of many churches have been scraped off to present them as “Caucasian Albanian” monuments. It is important to note that even monuments situated far from active military zones have suffered serious damage or complete destruction. Based on these facts, the decision of the International Court of Justice was made on 7 December 2021.²⁰

medieval churches and monasteries were levelled to the ground in the meantime. In the 1950s to 1960s, when the campaign against religious monuments had stopped in the USSR, Azerbaijan still continued its state policy of destroying medieval Armenian monuments (monasteries, churches, chapels, cemeteries and cross-stones). In fact, Azerbaijan adhered to its state policy of annihilation of Armenian monuments even after the 1960s, when the Azerbaijani historians and architects, obeying an order of the authorities of the country, declared all the Armenian monuments built before the early 20th century as “Albanian” ones (this allegation was based on the former existence of the aforementioned Caucasian Albanian tribes on the left bank of the river Kur). The same label was also attached to the Armenian monuments located on the right bank of the Kur and in Nakhijevan, while their widespread destruction grew even larger in scale after Azerbaijan had proclaimed independence (1991) and still continues, judging from the available evidence (**Karapetian**, 2017, pp. 11-12).

19 For documentary evidence, read the online book, Azerbaijan Out of Civilization, at: <https://raa-am.org/en/azerbaijan-out-of-civilization/>

20 The following is an excerpt from the decision of the International Court of Justice regarding the destruction of Armenian monuments: “Take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts.” For the full text of the decision, visit <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/202558>

The facts of the destruction of Armenian monuments by Azerbaijan were also recorded in the United States Commission’s Annual Report on Religious Freedom, 2021, pp. 58-59, and 2022, p. 44. <https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports>

21 In fact, Azerbaijan repeats the actions of the Republic of Turkey that have been going on since the 1920s.

With the physical extermination of the natives of Western Armenia (now: Eastern Anatolia), the Young Turks also destroyed most of their non-material (customs, dialects, toponyms, rites, etc.) and movable (manuscripts, church vessels, etc.) legacy. As for the authorities of Kemalist Turkey, they continued carrying out the policy of the genocide of Armenians with the premeditated mass destruction of immovable Armenian cultural heritage.

The annihilation of Armenian monuments—particularly Christian ones—which was carried out from the very first years of the foundation of the Turkish republic became unprecedented in scope between the 1940s and 1960s, with the Turkish army directly involved in the acts



Regarding the destruction of Armenian heritage,²¹ special mention should be made of the monuments located in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhijevan: the centuries-old



THE CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS OF NAKHIJEVAN

of destruction. Most of the medieval Armenian architectural heritage of Western Armenia which is indisputable proof of the historical truth has been razed to the ground by the Turkish authorities who aim at finally appropriating the historical Armenian Homeland.

For literature confirming this, see D. Kouyumjian, *The Destruction of Armenian Historical Monuments as a Continuation of the Turkish Policy of Genocide* (Cambridge, 1985); J.-M. Thierry, “The Damage Suffered by Armenian Monuments in Eastern Turkey,” *Ani*, no. 1, 1992; L. Chorbajian, G. Shirinian, *Studies in Comparative Genocide* (Great Britain, 1999); A. Givargizyan, *Armenian National-Cultural Genocide. The Century-Long Struggle for Justice*, VUKOVAR '91.- ISTINA I/ILI OSPORAVANJE (Zagreb, 2013); S. Karapetian, *Another Genocide after the Genocide*, vol. 1 (Yerevan, 2015).

In conclusion, we would like to note that these acts of vandalism have been perpetrated by a country which considers itself part of European civilization, and which, under the Treaty of Lausanne, has undertaken to preserve the cultural values (churches and cemeteries) of the religious minorities in its territory (Part I, Section III, Article 42).

http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-_political-clauses.en.mfa

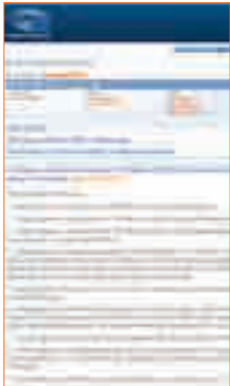


Christian Armenian heritage of this region has been completely destroyed during the last twenty-five years.²² This has been firmly stated in the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 10 March 2022.²³

22 For documentary evidence, see **Karapetian**, 2017, pp. 108-164; **S. Karapetian**, Nakhijevan: Atlas (Yerevan, 2012), pp. 32-34 (<https://raa-am.org/en/nakhijevan-atlas/>). **L. Khatchadourian, A. Smith, H. Ghulyan, I. Lindsay (CHW)**, Special Report #1. Silent Erasure: A Satellite Investigation of the Destruction of Armenian Cultural Heritage in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan (USA, 2022). Also see CHW interactive web platform.



23 For the full text of the European Parliament Resolution of 10 March 2022 on the Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Nagorno Karabakh, see https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0080_EN.html



You can also watch a film entitled *Julfa* at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4OHVFNePaI>



Photos Proving the Destruction of Armenian Monuments in Azerbaijan between May 1994 and September 2020



Sourb Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) Church of Baku, its caravanserai (both dating from the 18th century) and three-tier belfry of the 19th century (photos by H. Badalian, 1980s)

In the late 1990s, the municipal authorities of Baku completely destroyed the church as well as the second and third tiers of its belfry. The truncated belfry has been transformed to resemble a fire temple on the Absheron Peninsula, 3,3 km north of the settlement of Surakhan.



Situated 250 km away from active military zones

40.365794N, 49.836917E



Sourb Asdvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) Church (1902 to 1907), Ghalaka/Galagah
(now: Xanegah) Village, Ismayilli District (photo by S. Karapetian, 1984)



The church after its destruction—probably explosion—in the late 1990s (unknown photographer, 2003)

Situated 110 km away from active military zones

40.712736N, 47.941933E



A Christian cemetery in Baku covering an area of around 60 hectares and containing thousands of gravestones of the 19th to 20th centuries

The cemetery was destroyed between 2004 and 2016, as revealed by a comparison of a 1976 map of the USSR General Military Headquarters with Google Earth photos dated 2006, 2008, and 2021.

Situated 250 km away from active military zones

40.410831N, 49.858128E

Additional Source:

https://www.molokane.org/places/FSU/Azerbiadjian/Baku_Cemetery/index.html

<http://www.rusichi-center.ru/e/3175131-muchitelnaya-smert-kladbisha>

If the source above is not available:



St. Hovhannes (John) Church (17th century), **Suluk** (formerly: Azat, now: Yeni Zod) **Village** (photo by S. Karapetian, 1989)

The church after its destruction between 1989 and 2007 (photos by F. Berlemont, 2007)



Situated 20 km away from active military zones

40.490344N, 46.337367E



Sourb Harutiun (Holy Resurrection) **Church** (17th century), **Bakhshik** (now: Kamo) **Village** (photo by S. Karapetian, 1989)



The church after its demolition in the late 1990s (photo by F. Berlemont, 2007)

Situated 25 km away from active military zones

40.484994N, 46.341733E



St. Hovhannes (John) **Church** (1633) of **Gandzak** (now: Gence) **City** 'renovated' to be used as a chamber music hall





An Armenian inscription (1643) with a cross commemorating a donation made by a church servant, a certain Tasal from Astapat (photo by S. Karapetian, 1985)
The inscription and the cross after obliteration during the 'renovation' of the church (photo by F. Berlemont, 2007)



An Armenian inscription commemorating the foundation of the church in 1633 (photo by S. Karapetian, 1985)
The inscription after obliteration (photo by F. Berlemont, 2007)



An Armenian inscription of 1860 commemorating the construction of the southern entrance to the church thanks to Hovsep Grigoriant's financial support (photo by S. Karapetian, 1985)
The inscription after obliteration during the 'renovation' of the church (photo by F. Berlemont, 2007)

Situated 40 km away from active military zones

40.669692N, 46.363919E



St. Yeghishe (Elijah) Church, Middle Quarter of Nizh Village, before (photos by H. Sanasarian, 1985) **and after 'renovation'**

The tympanum of the southern entrance to the church with two Armenian inscriptions commemorating its complete reconstruction in the 1840s by Priest Astvatsatur Jodaniants (photos by H. Sanasarian, 1985)

During the 'renovation' of St. Yeghishe (Elijah) in the early 2000s, the inscriptions were obliterated to present the church as a 'Caucasian Albanian' one.²⁴

The church was 'renovated' with the support of the Norwegian Embassy in Azerbaijan, but the Norwegian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Steinar Gill, expressed regret for what had been done and described it as vandalism.

Ambassador Steinar Gil's post: 'Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Culture Anar Karimov has produced a video of the St. Elisaeus church in Nij. This church was built in 1823 and belonged to the Albanian Eparchy of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The church was restored in the beginning of this century with the financial assistance of the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise. In December 2004, before the restoration was finished, Armenian inscriptions on the tympanum and on tombstones outside the church were erased... The authorities were informed about the erasure of the inscriptions, but nobody has been brought to account for this vandalism.'



Screenshot of the Ambassador's post:
<https://www.facebook.com/steinar.gil/posts/10218111450966413>

Situated 90 km away from active military zones

40.928939N, 47.658000E

²⁴ R. Galichian, *The Invention of History*, 2010, London/Yerevan, pp. 74-76.

Photos Proving the Destruction of Armenian Monuments in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhijevan between May 1994 and September 2020



St. Gevorg (George) Church (1869 to 1872), **Nakhijevan City** (photo by H. Zakarian, 1980s)
The church marked on the map (1976, scale: 1:10000) of the USSR General Military Headquarters
Its site after its complete destruction in the second half of the 1990s (Google Earth, 2008)

Situated 150 km away from active military zones

39.208989N, 45.406172E



St. Stepanos (Stephen) Church (rebuilt in the 17th century), **Upper Agulis** (photo by Z. Sargissian, 1987)
The church marked on the map (1976, scale: 1:50000) of the USSR General Military Headquarters
Its site after its annihilation in the late 1990s (Google Earth, 2011)

Situated 140 km away from active military zones

38.966778N, 45.984647E





Sourb Karapet (Holy Forerunner) **Monastery** (built in 1381, restored in 1648 to 1649), **Aprakunis Village** (photos by A. Vardanian, 1986, and S. Bulanov, 1980s)

The site of the monastery after its destruction in the late 1990s (photo by S. Sim, 2005)

The monastery marked on the map (1976, scale: 1:50000) of the USSR General Military Headquarters

Its site after its complete destruction, and a mosque built in the same location (Google Earth, 2011, 2017)

Situated 150 km away from active military zones.

39.137222N, 45.632972E



St. Hakob (Jacob) Monastery (reconstructed in 1642), **Shorot Village** (photo from Al. Tamanian's private collection, 1910s)

The site of the monastery after its destruction in the late 1990s (photo by S. Sim, 2005)

The monastery marked on the map (1976, scale: 1:500000) of the USSR General Military Headquarters

Its site after its complete destruction (Google Earth, 2019)



Situated 135 km away from active military zones

39.144958N, 45.799959E



St. Tovma Arakyal (Thomas the Apostle) **Monastery** (reconstructed in the 17th century), **Upper Agulis Village** (photos by unknown photographer, first decade of the 20th century, and Z. Sargissian, 1987)

The monastery marked on the map (1976, scale: 1:50000) of the USSR General Military Headquarters

Its site after its complete destruction in the late 1990s, and a mosque built in the same location (Google Earth, 2011, 2016)



Situated 130 km away from active military zones

38.962881N, 45.982403E

Unfortunately, the same policy of destroying Armenian monuments is being carried out in those territories of the unrecognised Artsakh Republic which came under the control of Azerbaijan in the aftermath of the 44-day war of 2020 and the ethnic cleansing of the region in september 2023. There is a significant amount of evidence confirming that the monuments built by Armenians

Photos Proving the Destruction of Armenian Monuments in those Territories of the Unrecognised Artsakh Republic which Came under the Control of Azerbaijan after the 44-Day War of 2020 and the ethnic cleansing of the region in september 2023.



St. Hovhannes (John) Church, Shushi City, still standing intact on 10 November 2020, the day following the announcement of a ceasefire, with an Azerbaijani soldier standing nearby. As seen in the photo, the church was not damaged during the war.

The church a year after the ceasefire agreement, in a state of ruin, with an Azerbaijani soldier posing in front of it.



39.762558N, 46.743540E

in the last 30 years are now being destroyed. Armenian inscriptions are being removed from the walls of churches in order to present them as “Caucasian Albanian” monuments. Several other churches have simply been blown up or desecrated,²⁵ as well as a number of churches, cemeteries as well as entire villages were completely destroyed.

As seen from satellite photos between December 28, 2023 and April 4, 2024, the church was destroyed, which is Azerbaijan's most flagrant violation of the December 2021 order of the International Court of Justice.



25 Numerous videos taken after September 2020 prove the annihilation of Armenian monuments.



For the videos, see:





Sourb Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) **Church of Jrakan** (Jabrayil) **City** before its destruction, in 2017 (source: azeriwarcrimes.org), and afterwards, in 2021



source: www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-56517835

39.386351N, 47.038248E



The cemetery of Sighnakh Village, Askeran District, containing more than 30 tombstones and a few khachkars (photo by S. Karapetian, 2001)

The site of the cemetery in 2021: it was levelled to the ground, within a state policy of Azerbaijan, under the pretext of building a road to Shushi. See: two Google Earth photos published on 15 February 2021, and on 23 August 2021.



39.721615N, 46.804555E



A memorial dedicated to the victims of World War II and to the Armenian freedom fighters killed in the First Artsakh War in 1991 to 1994 (photo by L. Hovhannisyanyan, 2010), **Talish Village, Martakert District.**



In the aftermath of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war that started on September 27, 2020, the village of Talish came under the control of the Azerbaijani armed forces, and the memorial was destroyed (photos 2021, unknown photographer).

40.377413N, 46.746964E



Karin Tak Village, Shushi District. A unique example of a late medieval rural settlement in Artsakh, Karin Tak Village was completely destroyed by the Azerbaijani army in 2024. The destruction is evident in satellite photos.

Partial views of the village (photos 2009, by S. Karapetian)

39.744511N, 46.749678E





Kavak Monastery, Hogher Village, Hadrut District, the church of Kavak' Monastery from the north-west, and its western portal (photos 1982); the church after its destruction during the Azerbaijani occupation, in 1991 to 1992 (photos 2009, by S. Karapetian)

39.606081N, 47.091258E



The church in 2020, after it again came under Azerbaijani control: the Azerbaijanis have carried out an act of vandalism in the same portal under the pretence of "renovation." Photo 2023



Sourb Amenaprkich (Holy Saviour) or Ghazanchetsots Church and its belfry after restoration (photo by S. Karapetian, 2008), **Shushi City, Shushi District.**



The church after 2020, with its exterior distorted by the Azerbaijani authorities under the pretext of renovation.

39.758789N, 46.747528E



Sourb Sargis Church, Mkhrenis Village, Hadrut District.

The church from the south-east (photo by S. Karapetian, 2002)

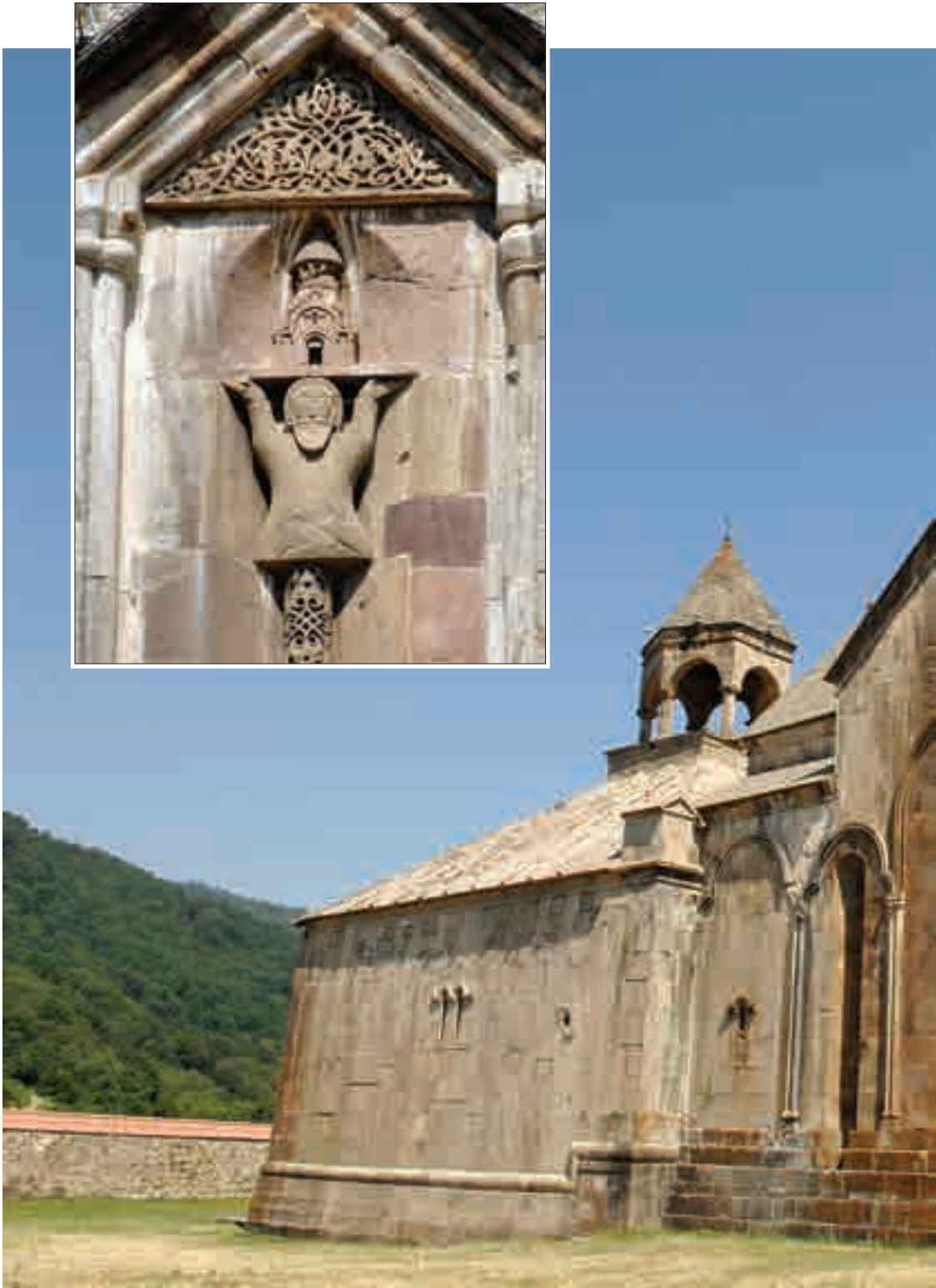


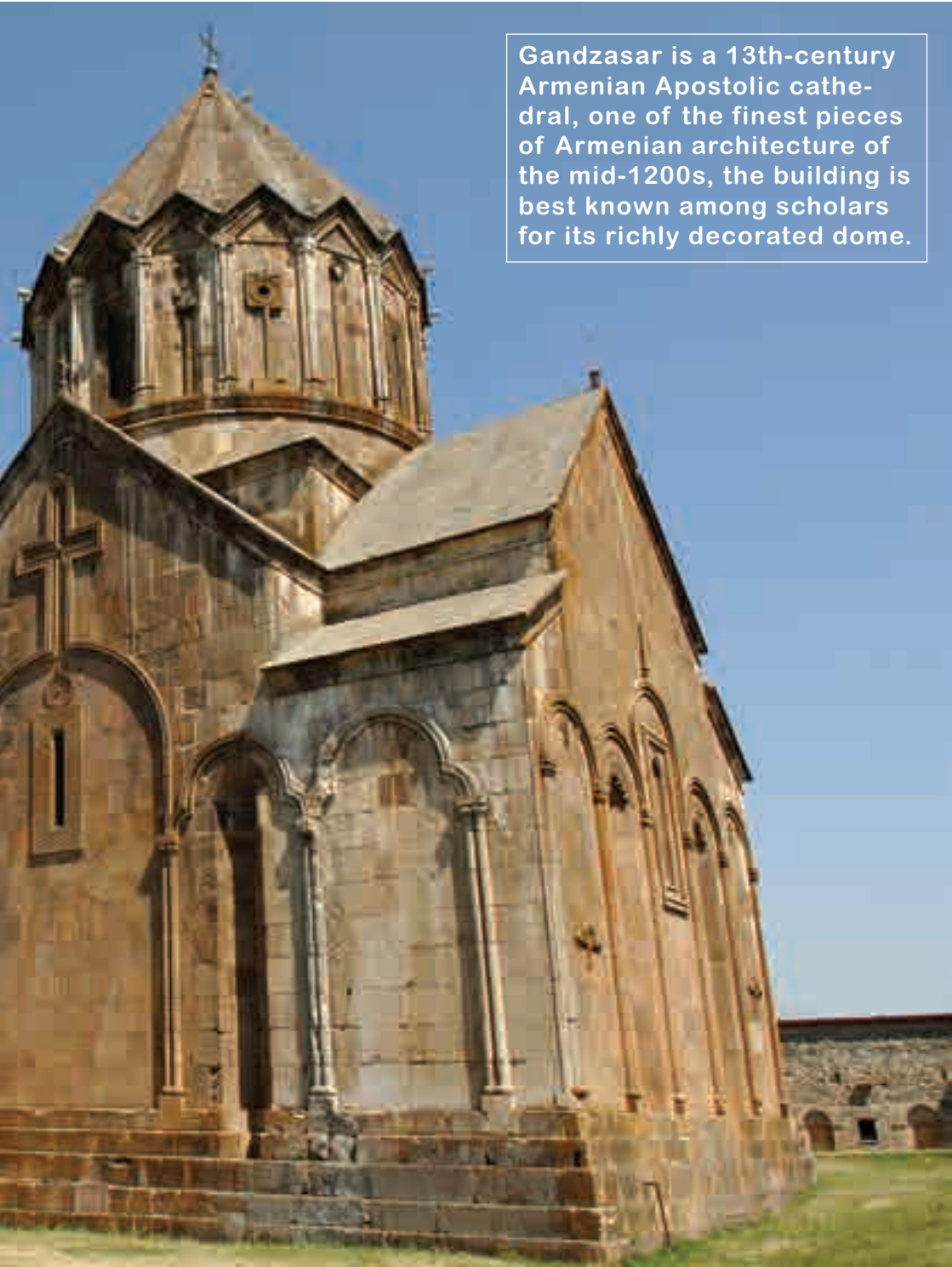
Satellite images show that the church was destroyed between March and July 2022.



In 2023 the construction of a new structure started in the site of the church.

39.569916N, 46.930891E





Gandzasar is a 13th-century Armenian Apostolic cathedral, one of the finest pieces of Armenian architecture of the mid-1200s, the building is best known among scholars for its richly decorated dome.

A State Policy of Vandalism in Azerbaijan

Author

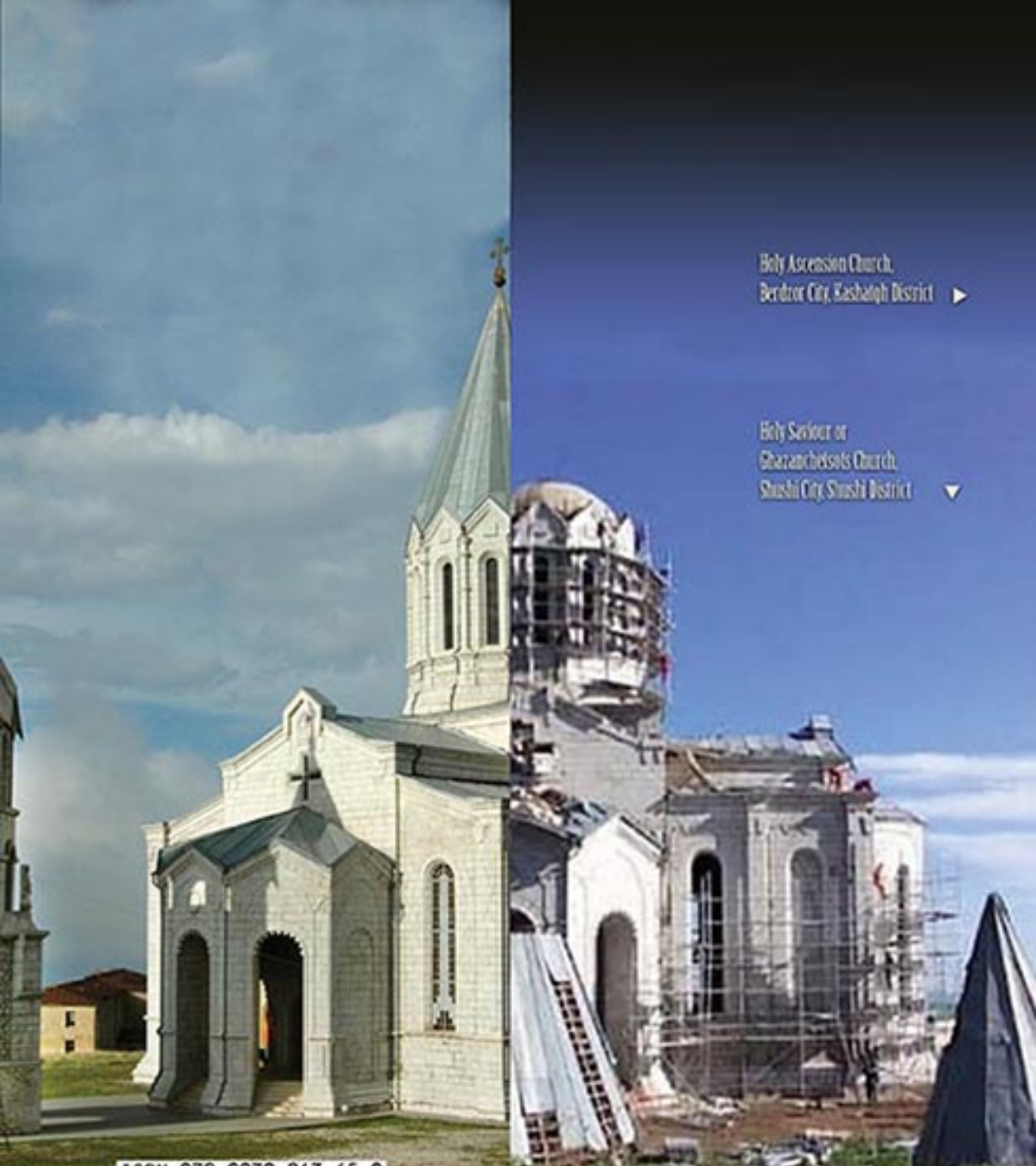
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