

GENOCIDE AFTER THE GENOCIDE

Karapetyan S. G.

Head of Research on Armenian Architecture

During their millennia-old history the Armenian nation has created rich culture, built a wide variety of architectural monuments in its cradle - the territory of the Armenian Highland.

As a continuation of the Armenian Genocide, Turkey perpetrates the genocide of culture in the largest, western part of historical Armenia. In the course of World War I and during the following decades a policy of destroying or appropriating many thousands of historical Armenian monuments was realized in Western Armenia through the Turkish state program. As a result, thousands of centuries-old and diverse monuments having universal value were destroyed forever¹.

In 1912 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Turkish government assigned the Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople to make a list of operating Armenian monasteries and churches in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Archbishop Maghakia Ormanyan, who was assigned to this task, submitted a list of almost 2200 units of Armenian monasteries and churches operating in Western Armenia.

After the whole of Western Armenia was bereft of its native people by committing the Armenian Genocide the Turkish authorities realized the policy of annihilating the monuments of material culture of the Armenian people in a planned and purposeful manner: they were led by the naive viewpoint that in this way Turkey could continue the occupation of Western Armenia.

Thus, thousands of monuments that had been created during millennia and were in fact the universal civilization's integral value were wiped off the face of the earth by the fanaticism of the Turkish authorities. A phenomenon, the intentional manner and actions of which confirmed the planned genocide committed by the Turkish government towards Armenian culture as well.

It is apparent that the primary target of the destruction was chosen, especially those monuments that exposed the historical reality more vividly and testified to the existence of the native Armenian people in their historical Motherland before the genocide. This is the reason why the Armenian cemeteries and lapidary inscriptions, monasteries, churches and chapels rich in thousands of tombstones and *khachkars* (*խաչքար*, stone cross) that represented the Christian layer of the Armenian culture were destroyed first and foremost, whereas, for example, from Armenian bridges and

¹ The Condition of Armenian Monuments in Western Armenia since 1915, ՎԱՐՁՔ (DUTY OF SOUL), Research on Armenian architecture, 2, 2010, pp. 2-65.

founts and residential or public buildings only the Armenian construction inscriptions (that told the truthful history of their construction) disappeared, and they were appropriated by nomadic Turks in that savage way.

If the Christian cult structures were privatized and their fate totally depended on the owner's will (they were used as a cattle shed, a barn, a straw yard, sometimes as a dwelling or they were very often just destroyed to use the construction material), the territories occupied by cemeteries mainly remained under the state jurisdiction. That is why in many villages the public buildings such as schools, village municipalities, hospitals, etc., were built in the territory of Armenian cemeteries as a result of which all the cemetery monuments vanished.

Based on the formula that genocide is not only the physical, but also the cultural extermination of an ethnic or religious group, it can be inferred that the Turkish authorities committed the genocide of Armenians in 1915 and in fact, continue that crime till now. A posture, which is completely inappropriate and reprehensible for a country that is a member of international organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, and has pretensions to become a member of the European family. Moreover, Armenian culture is a part of world civilization so preserving Armenian Christian architecture is an important task of the international community.

Republican Turkey still continues denying the planned and executed state level genocide of 1894-1896 and 1915-1923 and moreover, spares no effort to get rid of the monuments that testify to the Armenian origin of Western Armenia.

Furthermore, in modern Turkey the denial of the Genocide has become a state policy. Special organizations established and supported by the government are publishing, spreading and propagandizing various books in different languages distorting and falsifying the Armenian history. The genocide which was and is still being committed against Armenian culture has two main goals: to prove that Western Armenia has never been the cradle of the Armenians and that no genocide was committed against the Armenians in Western Armenia by Turkey.

According to the UNESCO data of 1974, 464 of the 913 survived buildings were completely demolished, 252 were turned into ruins and 197 need extreme reconstruction. In spite of the existence of the law in Turkey about the preservation and reconstruction of historical monuments, no monument had been reconstructed in Turkey until 1999-2000. During recent years, implementing an even more distorting plan, they started the works of "reconstructing" the city walls, residential blocks and trade rows of Ani, etc.

Armenian architectural monuments have consistently been exploded and used as targets during military exercises; their ashlar were used as construction material and the ones that were still erect served as a barn, storehouse, even a prison and in some cases they were turned into a mosque or were falsely announced samples of "Seljuk architecture".

The Turkish authorities explained the destruction of Armenian churches by earthquakes in the region. But how is it that those earthquakes selectively do not destroy, for example, any Seljuk monument?

For years the Turkish media proclaimed that before “leaving” the country, the rich Armenians had hidden their gold under stones on which there were inscriptions of “the faithless” or a cross engraving. Obsessed with the idea of finding gold Turks and Kurds who had occupied the Western Armenian settlements bereft of Armenians constantly destroyed and are still destroying everything that reminds them of Armenianness.

Today Turkey is a member of UNESCO but numerous facts prove that after the Armenian Genocide modern Turkey continues to commit the genocide against Armenian culture.



Tekor. St. Yerrordutyun (Holy Trinity) Church (5th century)
(photo of the beginning of XX century).



In 1956 the church of Tekor became the target of the Turkish army
during artillery exercises.



The church of St. Hovhannes of Bagavan
(in ancient Bagrevand district, Ayrarat province) (631/639),
on the left bank of the river Aratsani



The church of Bagavan was completely destroyed at the end of the 1940s and some of its stones were sold and others were used to build a mosque in a nearby town.



The Horomos monastery (the X-XIII centuries) to the north of the city Ani on the right bank of the Akhuryan river.



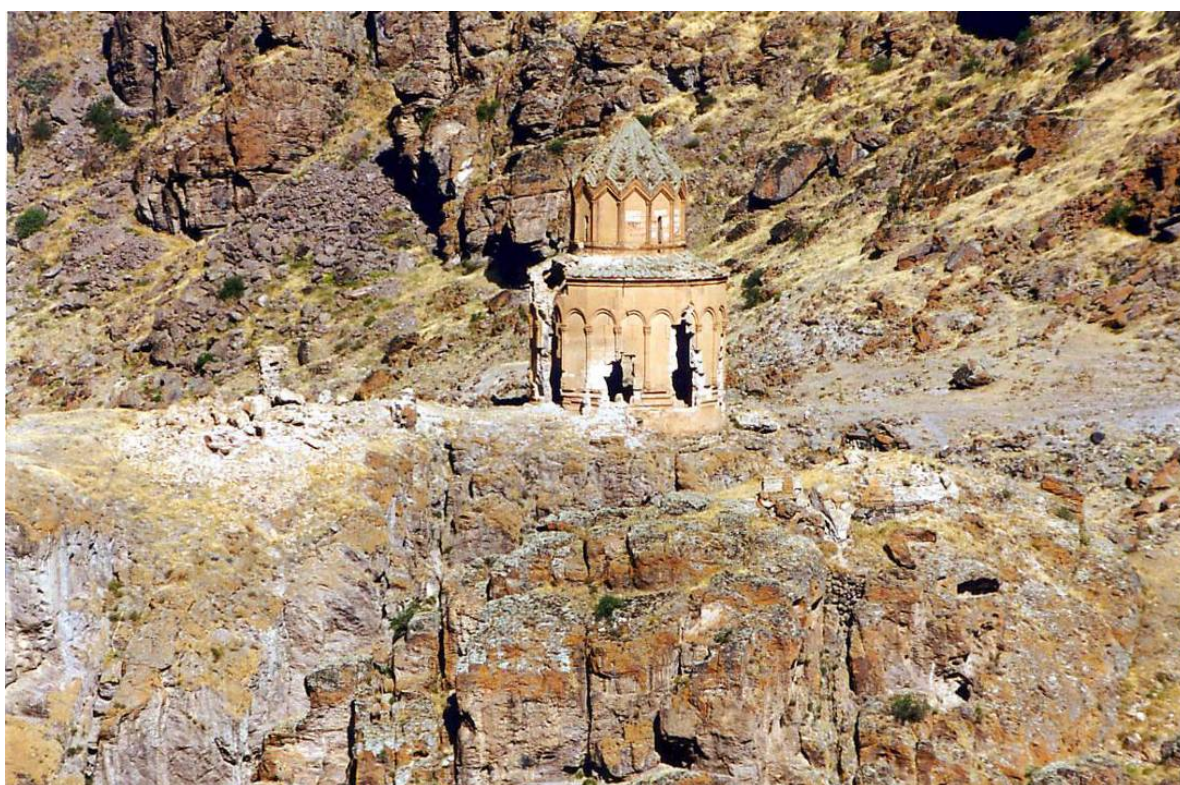
The Horomos monastery was destroyed in the 20th century



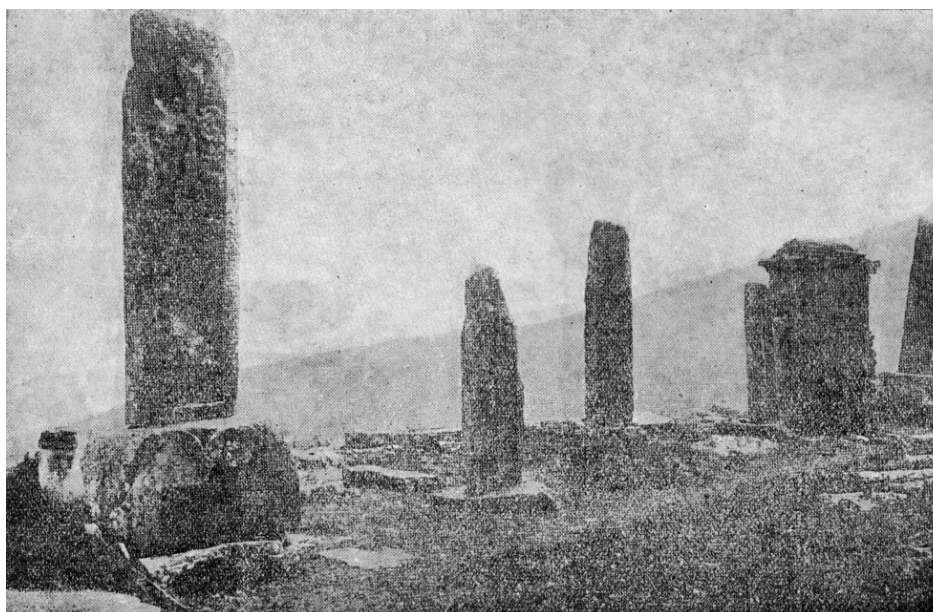
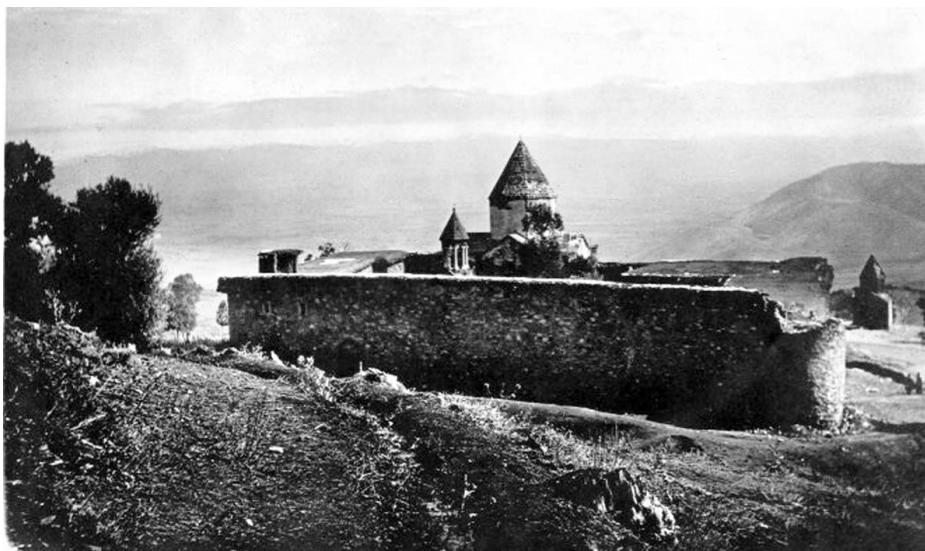
Argina. The church named Katoghike (the 10th century), where the Armenian Catholicos resided (photo of the beginning of XX century).



The church of Argina, was totally destroyed by explosion between the 1940s and 1950s.

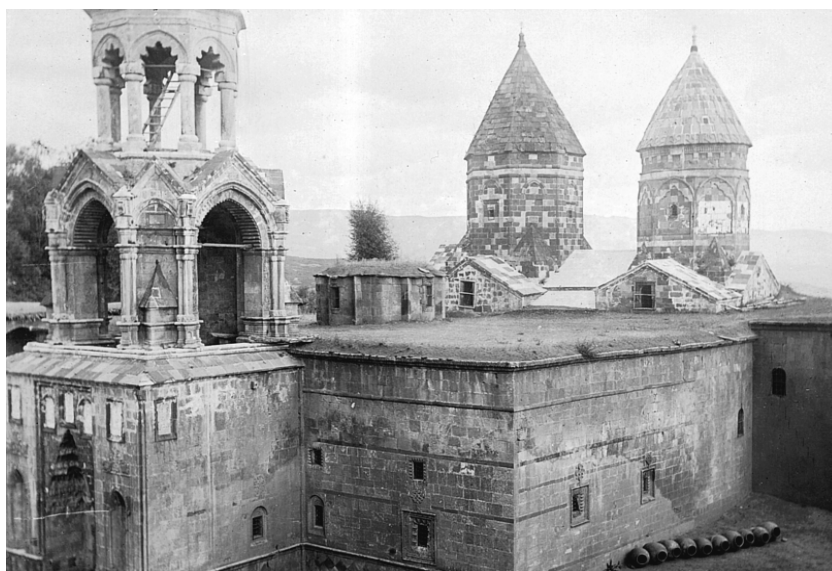


Five churches of Khtskonk monastery built in the X-XIII centuries were exploded in 1964; only St. Sargis church remained erect “by a miracle”.





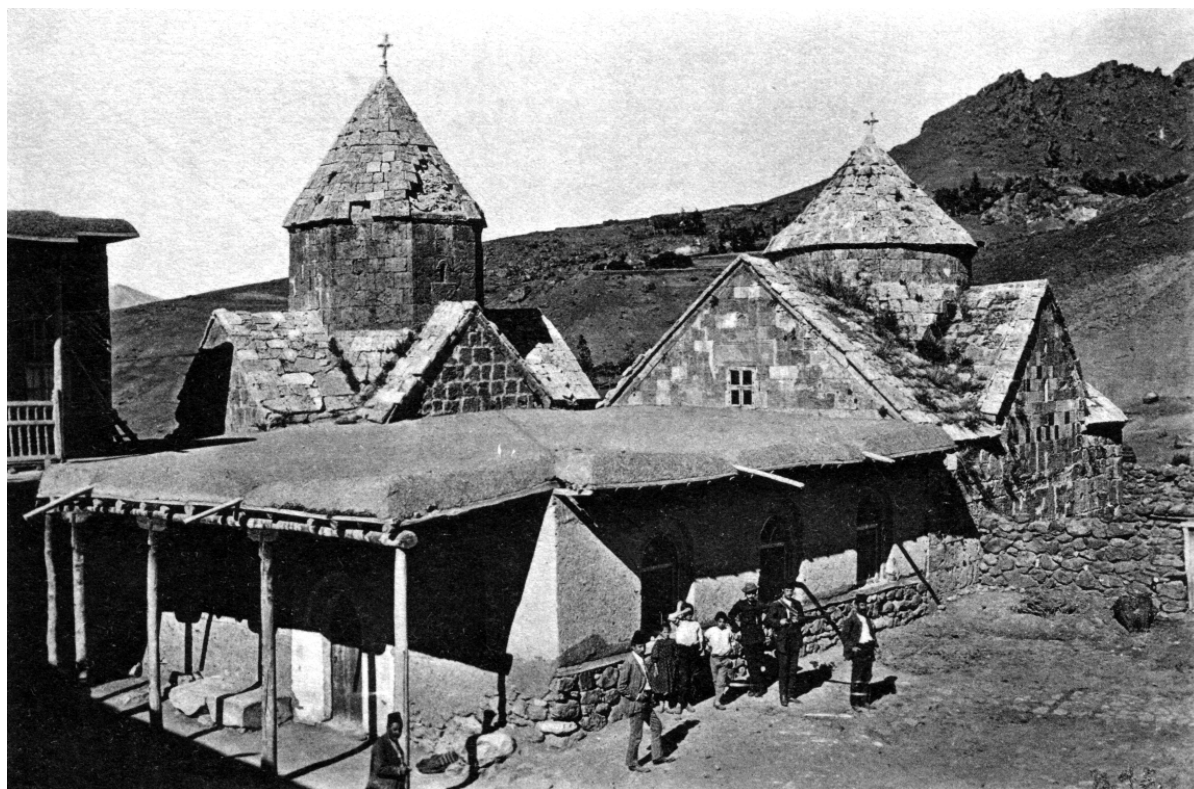
Taron. All the monastic buildings in St. Arakelots monastery of Mush were destroyed; the pantheon-cemetery of the renowned Armenians of V-XV centuries vanished. There were the cemeteries of Movses Khorenatsi, Ghazar Parpetsi, Anania Shirakatsi, Stepanos Taronatsi (Asoghik) and others and *khachkars* and tombstones to honor their memory.



St. Karapet monastery of Mush was robbed and partly destroyed in 1915. In 1960s as a result of artillery exercises it was turned into a pile of stones which was later used as construction material while founding a village in the same place.



Vaspurakan. To the south of Van, near the village Tsvstan the monastery Krnku built in X-XII centuries. It was totally destroyed in XX century.



Vaspurakan. To the east of Van, near the village Koghbants (present Sarmach) the churches St. Astvatsatsin and St. Karapet and all the other auxiliary buildings of the St. Grigor monastery of Salnapat (X-XIII centuries) were exploded in the 1960s.



Rshtunik. In the village Narek (present Yemishlek) the memorial monastery Narekavank consisting of several churches and numerous auxiliary buildings was completely

destroyed. In the 1970s at the site of the monastery, using its stones, a mosque and residential buildings were built.



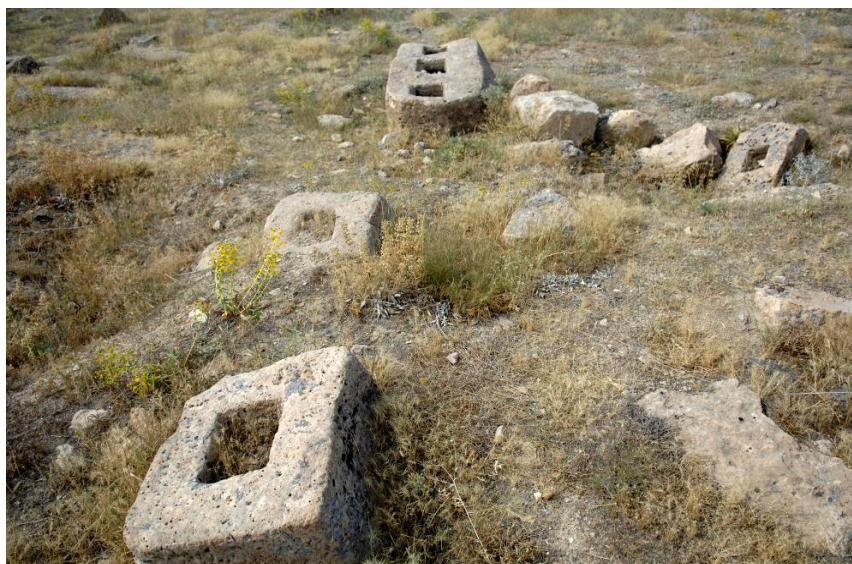
3— VIEW OF ST. CROSS MONASTERY OF VARAK, IN VAN.
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Vaspurakan. The Varagavank monastery was subjected to great destruction in 1915 and part of the complex was used as a storehouse and barn. During 1998-2000 a mosque was built with the stones of the monastery right next to it.



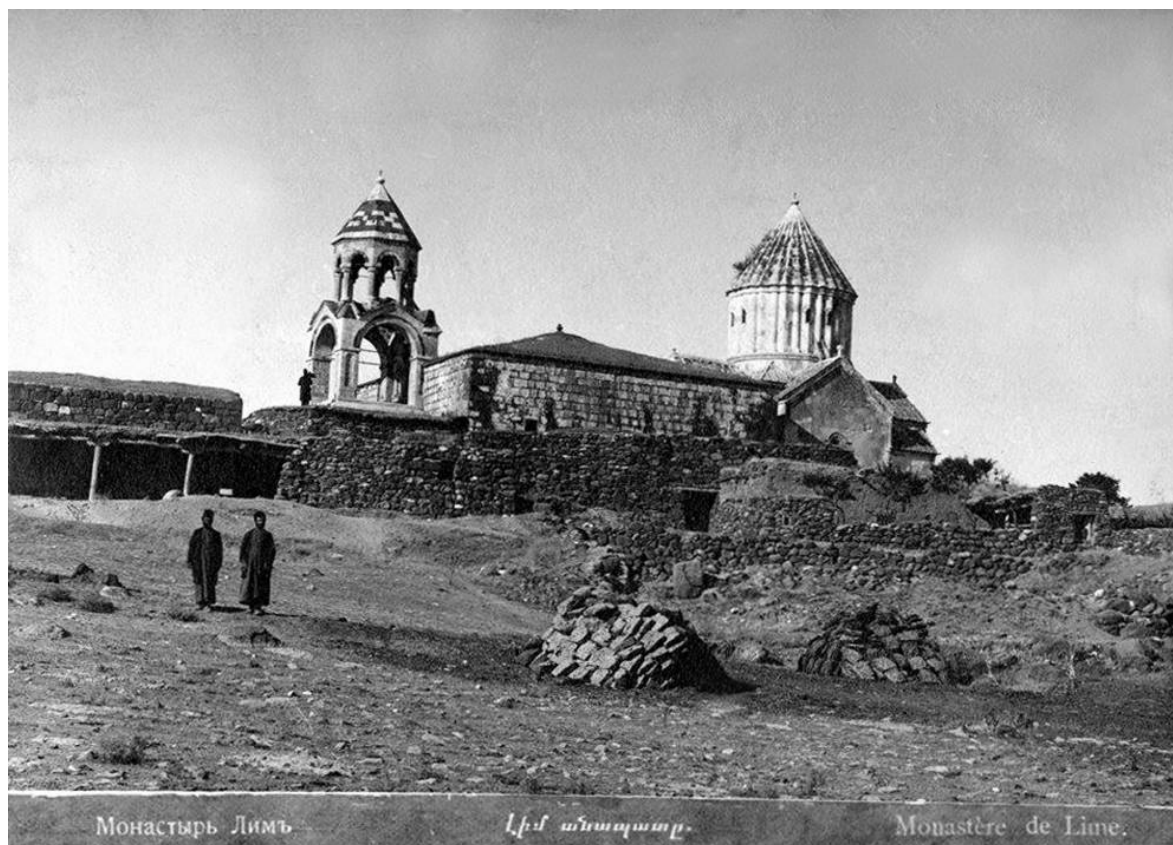


Vaspurakan. In the village Artamet near Van hundreds of medieval *khachkars* of a large cemetery were destroyed and vanished.



Abb. 6. Achlät, Armenischer Friedhof.

Touruberan. The medieval cemetery of Khlat containing hundreds of *khachkars* were destroyed and vanished.



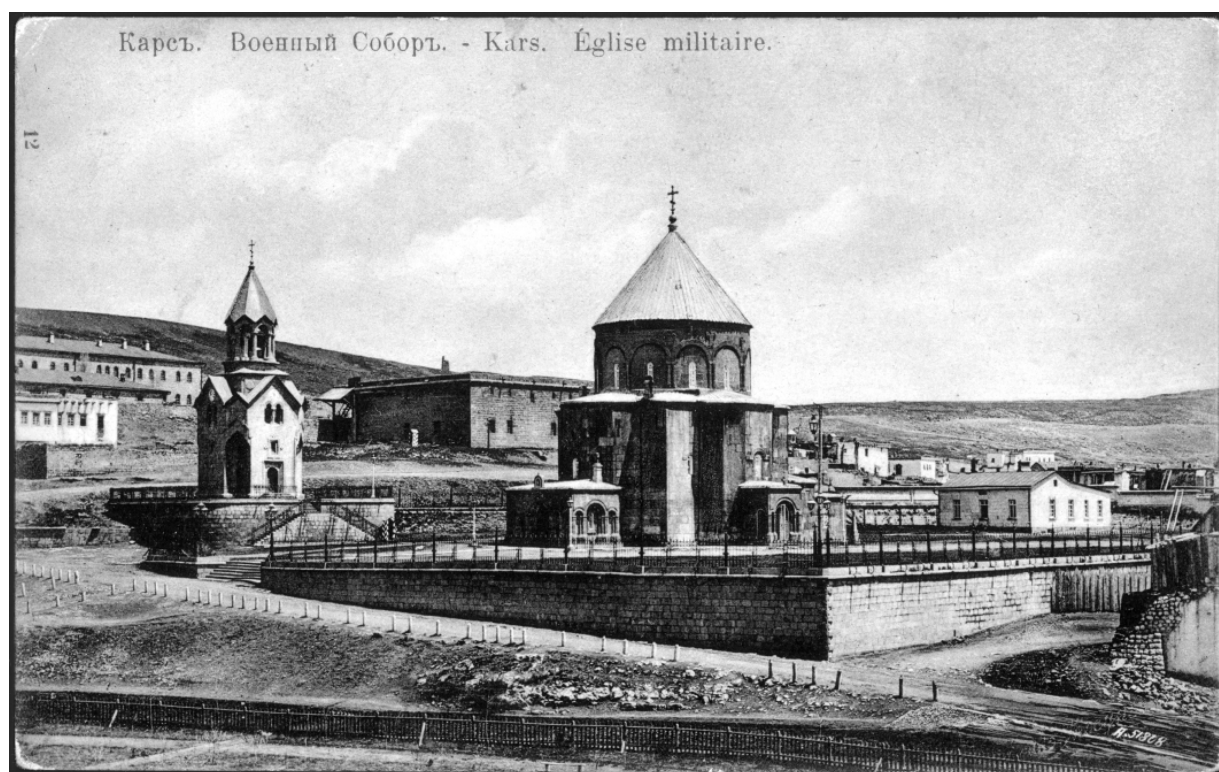
Vaspurakan. The monastery of the island Lim (Van Lake) was exploded as a result of which the church and belfry built in X-XI centuries were totally ruined.



In 2000 the trench that had been dug along the whole length of the foundations of the southern wall of the church Mren (639-640) preordained an imminent collapse. In 2007 the facade of the church was completely destroyed.

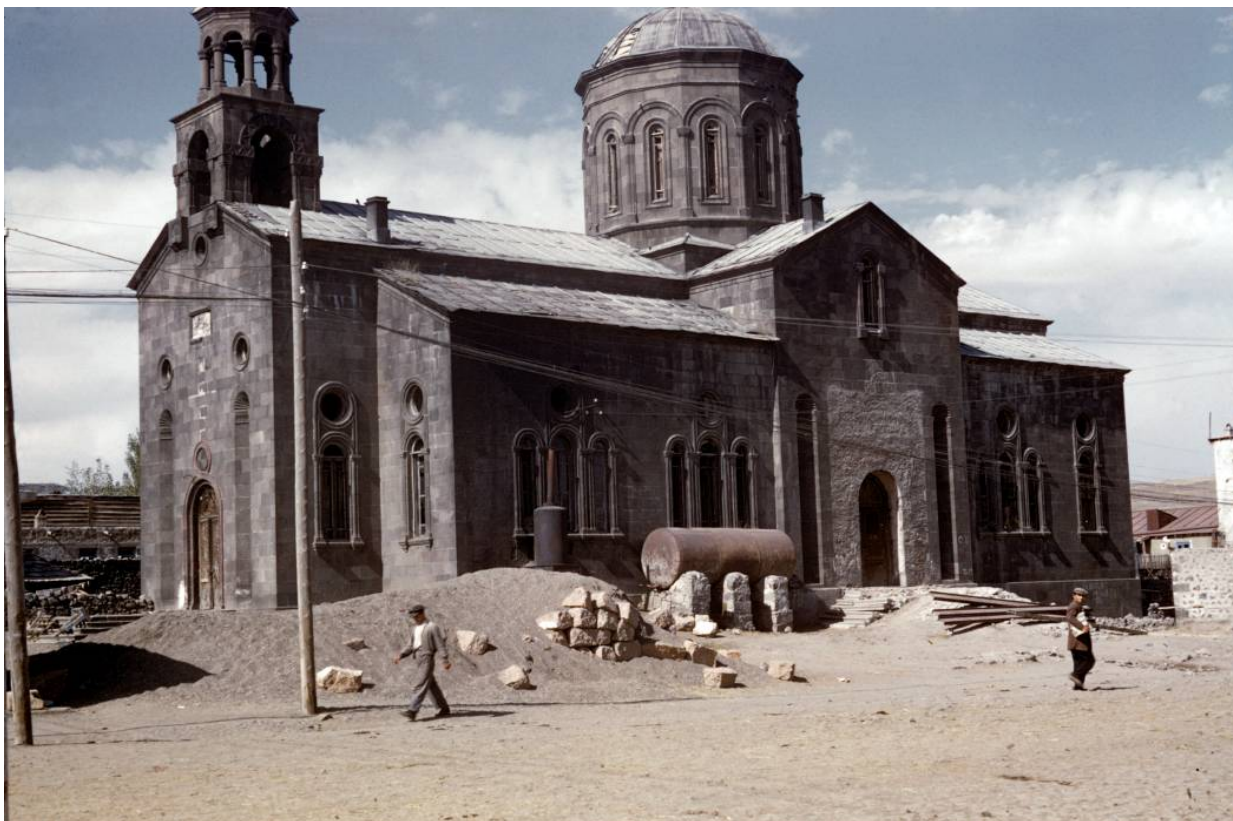


A number of Armenian churches (in Khlat, Khasgegh, Baghesh, Khultik, Parkhand, Mazra, Tspni, Khakhu and many others) were turned into mosques





The church Arakelots in the city of Kars (in 1998 it was turned into a mosque. Some years before, the adjacent construction (duplicating the belfry of Haghpat) to the Arakelots church had been destroyed.



In the 1960s the St. Gr. Lusavorich church of Kars was destroyed.



General view of the castle of Tignis from the south-east (photo by architect Toros Toramanian, the 1900s)



The remains of the Tignis castle (photo by S. Karapetian, 2005).



The church with a round layout built in the X-XII centuries that was in the Chldr district was ruined in the XX century.



To the south of the city of Ani the monastery of Bagnayr was built in the VII-XIII centuries.



Several churches and other monastic buildings of Bagnayr were destroyed in the XX century.