

behind each of these a lion. The deer on both sides of the palm tree (fig. 23) are comparable to the carving on the western entrance of the church of Kassakh (fig 7); the wave-like palmette motif forming a frieze is comparable to the similar ornaments on the capitals of the churches of Kassakh, Digor and other basilicas (e.g. fig. 63). The other western pilaster capital has at its center a cross of equal arms under which is a small tree; on either of the horizontal arms of the cross there is a bird (a dove); under each of these arms there is a small tree, and at its side a larger tree, which looks like an olive-tree. The wave-like palmette forming a frieze is a Hellenistic motif, which we find on other buildings of the same type. There was a capital with animal carvings belonging to the small church of Kassakh, in the western part of the village; (this church is different from the large church;) on one side of the capital there is a human figure with the head of a dog; we have transferred this capital to the Etchmiadzin museum.

The sculpture of the fort-church of Otsoun, which we consider as the oldest, displays definite artistic similarities with that of the sepulchral stele. The materials used and the method of construction leave no doubts as to the origin of the sepulchral stele and of the church of Otsoun (fig. 25, 25a). Their reddish stones and the art they represent show them to belong to the period of the churches of Digor and Yererouyk which are works of the Vth-VIth centuries; they are representative of the same artistic trend, and are similar to these last named churches both in building material and in many of their forms and sculptures. One of the particular points of similarity appears in the presence of halls on the south, the west, and north façades, only remnants of these exist at Kassakh Yererouyk, Dzarrayishen (Molla Ghassum), and Karrni; while at Otsoun the remains are more complete (fig. 26, 27): Fig. 26 shows the western view of the church; fig. 27 the southwestern view.²⁹ On the north and south halls, the vaults in the longitudinal

axis are connected with one another by means of five arches resting on five square, smooth-faced pillars. The halls end, on the east side, in oratories; the south oratory is entirely preserved but only three pillars of the north oratory remain. The semi-circular eastern apse is also preserved. From the south and north halls, one gained access to the church through an opening with a double arch resting on piers. The western wall had rectangular openings at the north and south ends, and, facing the central door, an opening with a horse-show arch. On the cornices of the halls, of the church proper, and of the "belfry" there is again the same row of horseshoe-shaped high reliefs as ornament, which we find only on the most ancient domed chapels or churches, such as the church of Acrag in Kars, or the church of Gharanloukh in Abaran, in a forest, as well as on the upper cornice of the north wall of Etchmiadzin. Simpler forms of this ornament are found in the crowning arches of the windows of churches of the VIIth century, such as the Church of Hripsimè (fig. 4).

We have an authoritative literary reference to church halls at the end of the Vth century in the History of Lazar of Parb: When Vahan Mamigonian became governor of Armenia the people thronged the church and also, because the multitude was so great, the halls and the streets and the public places: "And because the house of God was not sufficient to contain all, the external halls of the church and the streets and all the public places round about were filled."³⁰

VII

Coming now to the figured representations, we can state that none of our oldest churches has retained as much figure sculpture as the church of Otsoun, especially if we also include the sepulchral stele, for the faces and sides of two of its columns

29. See also Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier*, p. 175.

30. Lazar of Parb, p. 178, Etchmiadzin edition.