

The sculptural ornamentation of Fig. 64, also related to Sasanian art, is in the form of ears of corn; we saw other examples in the third chapter, (page 69), and earlier, in this chapter. This ornament frequently occurs in the art of neighboring nations during the 5th and 6th centuries, for example, on the silver plates of Cyrene, now in the Morgan Collection, in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. Charles D'ehl considers them as works of the late 5th century or early 6th century (**), while Strzygowski assigns them to the 6-7th century (***). As a basis for determining the date of our building, we may also take the inscription in Georgian "Khut-zuri" script on the façade, which we were not able to decipher.

Near-by is another stone fragment with Armenian inscription uncials, which by origin must be as old as the so-called Mesrobian uncial. Thus the fact that the letters are slanting does not militate against their antiquity. Unfortunately, because the inscription has been badly effaced and, circumstances were unfavorable, we were unable to decipher it on the spot, nor were we able to do so later on from the photographs. But even if there were no Armenian inscription, the presence of the Georgian is no reason for rejecting its Armenian origin. Contemporary documentary evidence kept in the Keerk Tugh-totz (Book of Letters) reveals that in the province of Koukar, during the 6th century, both Armenian and Georgian were equally used in church services; — a custom that was discontinued after the first decade of the 7th century when the two churches separated and when there was increasing hostility between the two nations. However, during the Zakarian period — when close political cooperation was established between the two nations, Georgian inscriptions reappeared. Taking into consideration all the comparisons and evidences brought forward above,

** L'école artistique d'Antioche et les trésors d'Argenterie Syrienne, Pl. 1 and 2.

*** Strzygowski, *l'Ancien Aart de Syrie. Medallions de Chypre*, P. 24. *Alta-Iran* 44-45. Taf. VII.

we may assign to the church of Goghpa a date not later than the latter part of the 6th century, and possibly somewhat earlier.

The varying forms and motifs of the remains we have discussed, the lilies, and rosettes, the four-arm, and six-arm crosses set in circles; the bases of the columns and the round shape of the latter, all these give ample proof that this church is a product of the artistic trend that existed in Armenia before the 7th century, and began to die or was already dead during the period of full development of the national architecture. The other cross-stones in figure 65, with the exception of the last one on the left, which is a remnant of an earlier period, belong to the period of the founding of the church, and some to a later period.

VI

In the first chapter of this section, when listing all the known sepulchral steles, we mentioned Talin with its numerous examples. This place was the residence, — in modern parlance, the capital, — of the Gamsaragan princes. According to tradition, they settled in Armenia at the beginning of the fourth century during the reign of the Christian king, Tiridates, as lords of the provinces of Arsharouni and Shirag. They played an important part in Armenian history, together with the Mamigonians, in the defense of the Armenian church and the fatherland; and they disappeared, or took a secondary place during the 8th century selling their estates to the Bagradites (Pakrodounis). Not less important is their place in the history of Armenian architecture and sculpture; for some of the most important monuments were erected by them, or within their territories, for instance Digor in the latter part of the 5th century, the twin churches of Talin, the magnificent church of Mren of the 7th century. The smaller of the Talin churches is a work of the first half of the 7th century; its inscription bears no date, but the person who is named in it: "Nerseh abohibad batrik Shiraka yev Arsharooniyats",