

symbol of the living Word and the person of Christ. On the Prtatzor stele we have also seen carvings of a similar graphic design together with crosses. The infant or adult Jesus always holds a Gospel. Our forefathers of the 5th century took their oath or made their vows on the Gospel. It also furnished material for painting according to the evidence of a text of the 6th or early 7th century, for we read these words in the writings of Vertanes Ker-togh, entitled "Concerning the Iconoclasts": "For we see the Gospel made not only of gold and silver, but also of ivory and purple parchment, and when we bow before the Holy Gospel or kiss it, we are not worshipping the ivory or the lacquer that are imported from the land of the barbarians as merchandise, but we worship the Word of the Saviour written on the parchment" (*). Graphic ornamentation has of course a symbolic meaning in art.

From the pictorial standpoint, the most interesting sculpture is that of the Holy Virgin, enthroned, with a halo around her head and a veil, the ends of which fall down over the shoulders toward the waist. Her face is broken. On her shoulders she has a mantle gathered across her breast. The under-garment is long, reaching as far down as her feet, and has horizontal folds. Her arms come out from under the mantle. With her left hand she is embracing her son; her right hand is placed on his knees. She has soft shoes on her feet which rest on a rectangular footstool. The decoration of the chair, on the right of the spectator, can be clearly seen; a long cushion with an ornate piece from which hang a pair of tassels.

Here Jesus is an adolescent, not a child, and is seated on the mother's left knee. He has a halo around his head, his face is broken off. His right hand is raised, blessing; with his left he must have held a Gospel, now barely visible. His tunic comes down to his feet. On each side stands an angel, with long wings, one of which hangs down to the ground, the

other raised, crosses the wing of the other angel to form an arch and a canopy for the mother and her son as a symbol of worship or service. With both hands they hold the side and upper part of the Virgin's throne. Their garments are very interesting; over the plain, straight tunic which reaches their feet, they wear short sleeveless jacket, a Syro-Armenian type of costume to this day. This means that the composition originated in the Syro-Mesopotamian-Armenian period. This will be discussed further when considering the iconographic type of the Virgin. The carving measures 88 by 60 centimeters. This composition recalls the Virgin of Thebes in the museum of Cairo, seated, between two angels (*) except that in our representation the angels are holding the image of the Virgin as they held Christ's medalion at Budghavank. Hence, we conclude, the sculpture is an imitation of a picture.

On the face of the stele, to the right of the one with the Virgin, is a beautiful cross (Picture 80), with small balls at each end of the arms, on the inside, and also on their outer extremities. The upper part of the vertical arm is broken. From the lower arms of the cross, or from the base, rise up and spread to the right and left two beautiful palmettes. The work is beautifully designed and executed. The height of the cross, including the broken part, must have been 65 centimeters (it should have been 69 cm.) The intact part is 52 centimeters high.

We have already mentioned that the third face has an interlace design of four strands, an exact replica of the one we saw on the stele of Prtatzor—, a characteristic motif of Sasanian art (Fig. 81). These geometric sculptures have, doubtless, a symbolic meaning.

Figures 83 and 84 are also bases, the first has a lily with two leaves; we saw other examples of this type on a capital

* Strzygowski, — *Hellenische und Koptische Kunst. Bulletin de la Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie*, No. 5, 1902, Vienna page 25. Also *Koptische Kunst*. See also *Die Baukunst*, Figures 678 to 680, page 716-717.

* Sion, 1927, page 61.