

In the lower part of the second side we see the same three-leaved acanthus. Above it is some kind of round flower, on a thin stalk, framed by two leaves, similar to the composition on one of the capitals of Prtatzor. Above the flower stands a man; the part from the waist up is broken off (Fig. 98). He wears narrow trousers and boots in the style of the Sasanian period. The empty sleeve of his over-garment, which seems to be made of broadcloth, hangs at the side. The figure probably represents the deceased.

At the bottom of the third side there is the same acanthus as on the preceding sides, but the figure is unique and has no parallel elsewhere. His tunic is narrow and reaches the knees, tightly bound at the waist, with a girdle, which hangs down in front. The shape of the headgear, partly broken off, is not very clear. His feet are hidden behind the acanthus, a hellenistic device (Fig. 9). With both hands he holds over his head a tray with two round loaves of bread (?) on the surfaces of which are carved eight-armed crosses. Is this an offering which he is making to the person figured above, whose feet with odd shoes (sandals?) only are visible? The meaning of the sculpture is not clear to us.

At the bottom of the fourth side we see again the same acanthus, and on top of it an arrow with the sharp end pointing upward (Picture 100). The meaning of this design is probably the same as that of the pointed triangles or darts we saw at Talin (Figures 70, 71).

## XI

We have another important stele at Masdara, on the western slopes of Mount Aracadz, somewhat west of Talin and Adiyaman. The oldest records about this place date from the middle of the 7th century, when the church, still extant, was built in the days of Bishop Theodoros of the Knooni (Kntooni?), who took part in the Council called by Nerses Third in 645 A.D. We reproduced this dedicatory inscription in

our Album of Paleography. But there must have been here an older church, before the 7th century, as evidenced by the sepulchral stele which can be dated as far back as the 5th century, if not earlier. On one of its sides (Fig. 101) we see the horse-shoe arch on pilasters, characteristic of the early basilicas. Under the arch stands a nimbed figure, unfortunately badly damaged, holding the Gospel in his left hand, and blessing with his right hand. This figure represents Jesus. Above the arch, in a square frame, is a crouching lion (?) and next to it a man with one hand resting on the lion. The meaning of this sculpture, which resembles the fragment No. 1693 of the Coptic museum of Cairo, is not clear. Greek graffiti can be seen on the pilasters, but they are not related to the original monument, for none of our steles has any inscription on it.

The second face shows a definite relationship with the basilican style, which, as we have repeatedly stated, gave way to the national style at the end of the 6th century. We see here, between two engaged columns, a cross raised on a long staff and with balls at the centre and at the inner ends of the arms. Farther up is the bust of Jesus (Fig. 102). We found an exact duplicate of this cross with arms of equal length and balls in the Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg (Leningrad), a work of the early Byzantine period, assigned to about 400 A.D. We have discussed this question elsewhere in our book entitled *Հաւոց թառի Ամենաբարկիչը*

(The Saviour of All' of Havoots Tar)\*. The engaged columns also point to the basilican style, recalling those which frame the entrance of Digor (See Strzygowski, Fig. 368).

The third side of the stele furnishes other interesting proofs of its early date. (Fig. 103). It also has a cross of equal arms with balls, raised on a long staff and framed by two engaged columns. Above,

\* Our «Հաւոց թառի Ամենաբարկիչը» The "Saviour of All of Havoots Tar". Page 38.