

Foreword

Throughout our history,
art and architecture have been the shield
with which Armenians have protected our identity. Every time
the whirlwinds of destruction ravaged the land,
a single stone, half-collapsed wall, arch, or pillar would withstand and remain to
remind us who we were. Our people
worshipped the stones, destroyed churches,
and broken graves, not to celebrate the dry,
dead matter, but to honor that which is spiritual, that which for ages,
has remained hidden among these half-destroyed monuments.
Costan Zarian, Vers Ararat, "Sargis Khachents," Yerevan, 2001

Stone and Candle, a photographic journey conceived by the couple Ted Andreasian and Nune Karamyan, is an ode to Armenian landscape, Christian architectural creations, and to the
magnificent churches that were skillfully brought out of the rocks and ingeniously assembled over
the course of centuries. To build their churches and monasteries, the Armenians crossed the Ararat
Highlands, passing through valleys, plateaus, and climbing mountain peaks from which they
observed the landscape and selected sanctuaries for their pagan ancestors. Setting their mark, they
hewed stones, and built walls with frescoes depicting their saints. Each architectural element clearly
reflects the symbolism of both soul and faith, with the ultimate goal of building a Temple of God. This
photographic book of Armenian churches imparts two key impressions: the harmonious synergy
between these places of worship and the natural world, and the unique impression of the majestic
white snow veil, which, like nshkhar (sacramental bread) and manna, descends from the milky sky to
spread over the highlands and monasteries.

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The theme of unity between humankind's artistry and the natural environment is reflected among the pages of this book, through photographs conveying peace, gentleness, tenderness, harmony, melancholy, and grandeur. To the ancient Armenian people, the highland mountains had an important theological meaning. For this reason, many bear religious names of ancient pagan idols, which were preserved even after Christianity was adopted as Armenia's state religion. Armenian mythology interprets Mount Ararat as being a temple dedicated to the God of Time, who, in dominating the highlands, controlled the natural phenomena that took place on its slopes. Honoring this belief, the ancient Armenian, Hittite, Parthian, Greek, and Roman kings built the royal tombs of their dynasties on the heights of Commagene, as close as possible to these idols of the heavenly faith. This mythological tradition has been preserved in Christian Armenia—the church or monastery is never built on top of the hill, but always in a lower location. It was believed that the mountain itself was a sacred temple, and that building a place of worship on the top of a mountain would be sacrilegious.

In visiting Armenia and Artsakh, many of us have noted the unity shared between the natural landscape and its spirituality. Few of us prefer to visit this region in the snowy winter months. When snow falls gently over the highlands, it covers everything beneath a white veil, hiding the peaked cruciform veghar-like domes and headaddresses of the monasteries which emerge like sprouts from under the cozy layer of snow. The peaceful and equalizing white universalizes every volume and faith, making everything appear equal, flat, and infinite. Ted and Nune passed through the snow, descending from the highlands to the fields, in order to guide us to these churches, where a mysterious, sensitive world unfolds. Here, architectural elements—be it column, base, arch, capital, conch, pendentive, cornice or cross-stone—weave their fabric, directed towards the universal dome and heavenly center of God.

The elements of Armenian architecture are distinctive and unique. They are both similar and distinct from the Christian structures existing in the East and the West. The free-standing church, with its upright or central-dome concept, is an embodiment of symbolic thought, a geometrical analysis, and

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a spatial, dimensional, dynamic ~~configuration~~. A distinctive feature of the monastic complexes' spatial design is that all the buildings of the complex—both religious and secular—are united and positioned adjacently; often the wall of one structure will have been shared in the construction of another. In *Stone and Candle*, this phenomenon becomes apparent through photographs taken from a distance, prominently conveying features characteristic of a "stack" of separate buildings existing within Armenian monasteries, as well as their harmonious connection with the environment.

Ted and Nune present us with light-imbued images of the Armenian Highlands' spiritual buildings, leaving a lasting impression with their depictions of Armenian architecture.

Arà Zarian

translated by Zaruhi Grigoryan

Descriptions

Akhtala Monastery, Lori Province, 10th-13th century ↓

Akhtala Monastery, also known as Pghndzahank (translated into the English as "Coppermine"), is situated upon mineral-rich grounds which have been mined since ancient times.

Akhtala Monastery was founded as a fortress in the 10th century by the Kiurikian-Bagratian princes. It was converted into an Armenian Chalcedonian monastery in the 13th century, when the main church of St. Astvatsatsin, as well as the western hall and south chapel, were built.

The Monastery's pointed dome was damaged during an invasion by Tamerlane—a 14th century Turco-Mongol military leader who conquered most of the Muslim world, central Asia, and parts of India.

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The damaged dome was replaced by a wooden, semi-spherical one in the 19th century.

The monastery, in its current state, contains brightly colored 13th century frescoes.

Hnevank Monastery, Lori Province, 7th-13th century.

Hnevank Monastery is situated in a valley on the hillside near where the Dzoraget and Gargar rivers join. The main structure features a three-apsed domed church with two sacristies adjacent to the altar. An altar is preserved from a third church located north of the main structure, whose name remains unknown. Hnevank was turned into an Armenian Chalcedonian monastery by Prince Ivane Orbelyan in the 13th century. The narthex and hall were attached to the western side, and a single-nave church attached to the north.

Haghpat Monastery, Lori Province, 10th-13th century

Haghpat (also known as Haghbat) is located on Lori plateau in the village of the same name.

The first church, St. Nshan, was a domed-hall-type church constructed under Queen Khosrovanuysh. The monastic complex includes: the Saint Grigor Lusavorich single-nave church and the large narthex of St. Nshan with intersecting arches, founded by Archbishop Hovhannes Khachentsi; a bell tower, founded by Bishop Hamazasp; Hamazasp's narthex, founded by Marine Kiurikian; a scriptorium; Mariam Astvatsatsin Church, founded by Princess Khatun; the Ukanants tombs; and refectory and fortress walls. The most notable khachkar, Amenaprkich, can be attributed to the sculptor Vahram. The frescoes dating from the 10th-13th centuries, which decorate the south and main altar of St. Nshan Church, were restored in the 21st century by Arà Zarian and Christin Lamoureux (image p. ???).

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The monastery played an important role as a spiritual and cultural center in medieval Armenia.

UNESCO World Heritage Site

Horomayr Monastery, Lori Province, 12th-13th centuries

Horomayr is a monastery with two groups of structures. The upper structure is located on the edge of the Lori plateau cliff, and the lower structure was narrowly constructed in order to suit the steepness of the terrain.

Upper Horomayr consists of two small single-nave churches separated by a narthex.

Lower Horomayr consists of St. Nshan, a single-nave church, a bell tower, founded by Princes Ivane and Zakhare Zakharyan, a second single-nave church, and a small chapel. The St. Astvatsatsin narthex exists sixty feet south of this grouping, and was founded by the Greek priest Ignatius in the 14th century.

Horomayr was a center of education and had several scriptoriums.

Harichavank Monastery, Shirak Province, 7th-13th centuries

Harichavank is built in the village of Harich, located on the rocky edge of the western slope of Mount Aragats. Its oldest church is St. Grigor, a 7th century square church with four apses. The monastic complex includes St. Grigor narthex, St. Astvatsatsin Church, and narthex, a two-story chapel, fortress walls, and a hermit's chapel. In the mid-19th century, Harichavank became the summer residence of the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, who ordered a complete renovation.

Harichavank is renowned for its school and scriptorium.

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Kobayr Monastery, Lori Province, ~~12th-13th century~~,

Kobayr Monastery is built ~~upon~~ the ~~steep~~, wooded flanks of the Debed River gorge.

~~F~~ounded by Princesses Mamkan and Rouzakhan of the Kiurikian-Bagratian dynasty, ~~the~~
monastic complex consists of the main church, *Katoghike*, with ~~its~~ dual-gable roof,
chapel with narthex ~~located~~ northwest ~~to~~ the main church, and refectory ~~positioned apart~~
~~from the group~~. Katoghike Church and ~~its~~ chapel have notable frescoes. Kobayr

Monastery houses ~~the~~ tombs of the Zakharyan family.

As of ~~December 2022~~, the complex is undergoing restoration.

Sanahin Monastery, Lori Province, ~~10th-13th century~~,

Sanahin Monastery is situated on ~~the~~ Lori plateau in the village ~~of~~ Sanahin. ~~Its~~ monastic
structures were built during the period of the Kiurikian and Bagratian dynasties.

~~St. Amenaprkich Church is of~~ a centrally-domed, cross-shaped ~~style and was~~ founded ~~in~~
~~the mid-10th century~~ by Queen Khosrovanuysh. Many ~~additional~~ structures were added
between ~~the 10th and 13th centuries~~. ~~St. Amenaprkich narthex, built by order of the~~
~~archimandrite Hovhannes, the large three-nave narthex of St. Astvatsatsin Church, the~~
~~Academy of Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni and hall located northwest from the main group~~
~~of structures, a three-story bell tower featuring a large, ornately carved khachkar of red~~
~~tuff, built by order of the Kiurikian prince Abas Bagratuni, a library located between the~~
~~churches of St. Amenaprkich and St. Astvatsatsin, and St. Grigor, a round four-apsed~~
~~church.~~

Sanahin Monastery was a school of illuminators and calligraphers, ~~and also served~~ as a
college of religion, philosophy and science during the ~~12th and 13th centuries~~.

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Ardvi Monastery, Lori Province, 8th-17th century,

Ardvi Monastery, also known as Surb Hovhannes Monastery, consists of two small single-nave vaulted churches connected by a common wall. The monastery is best known as being the burial place of Hovhannes Odznetsi, the 34th Catholicos of Armenia, who was a renowned theologian, jurist, thinker and reformist. The bell tower was added in the 17th century.

Marmashen Monastery, Shirak Province, 10th-11th century,

Marmashen Monastery is situated on the eastern bank of the Akhuryan River.

The monastic complex includes the main church, Katoghike, a domed structure built by military leader Vahram Pahlavuni, as well as a smaller church of similar design, which stands to the south of Katoghike. A third church stands separately to the north of the main church, with still-visible traces of the narthex where Vahram was buried. Of the fourth church, only the lower sections have been preserved. It once featured a circular base, four altars and four sacristies.

Odzun Cathedral, Lori Province, 5th-7th century,

Odzun Cathedral is located in the village of Odzun, on a plateau overlooking the Debed River gorge. It's difficult to date the cathedral, but according to chronicles it was founded in the early 8th century by famous Catholicos Hovhannes Odznetsi. Many historians contest this information, positing the cathedral was built on the ruins of a 5th to 7th century basilica as a cross within a rectangular perimeter, reusing a large number of carvings to create the "new" structure. The structure of the building is unusually narrow, having an elongated appearance, resembling a basilica. A unique double-stele memorial monument as well as numerous gravestones appear around the church.

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Yererouk Basilica, Shirak Province, 4th-8th century.

Yererouk, also known as Ererouk, is situated in the village of Anipemza. The cathedral is located 600 feet from the Akhuryan River, which marks the border between Armenia and Turkey.

Yererouk was built between the 4th and 5th centuries, with renovations having been performed sometime during the 6th or 7th century. An inscription on the cathedral reads: "Martyrion of St. John the Baptist."

Yererouk is one of the best-preserved examples of early Christian architecture with elements of Syrian architectural influence. It is a three-nave basilica, built from red tuff on a six-step base and decorated in the early Christian tradition.

Goshavank Monastery, Tavush Province, 12th-13th century.

Goshavank is located in the village of Gosh, surrounded by valleys, hills, and lush forests.

The monastery was founded by Mkhitar Gosh, an educator and the author of a code of laws and popular fables. Goshavank was built on the grounds of the late Getik Monastery, which was ruined during an earthquake in the late 12th century. Goshavank was initially called Nor Getik and was renamed for Mkhitar Gosh after his death.

The monastic structures include: St. Astvatsatsin Church; St. Grigor Church; St. Grigor Lusavorich Church; a single and double chapel; the narthex of St. Astvatsatsin Church; a bell tower, also serving as a book depository; a school, gallery, and St. Hripsime Chapel, situated southwest of the main group.

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A notable *khachkar* was created in the late 13th century by the carver Pavgos, and is known as "*Aseghnagorts*" ("Needlework").

Goshavank was a prominent cultural and educational center.

Haghartsin Monastery, Tavush Province, 5th-13th century

Haghartsin Monastery is located in a clearing located between forested hills. It was founded in the 10th century and gained its current shape under the reign of patriarch and scholar Khachatur Taronatsi in the 12th century.

The monastic complex consists of St. Grigor, a domed-type church, a narthex located adjacent to St. Grigor, St. Stepanos Church, St. Astvatsatsin Church, and a large, well-preserved refectory built by the architect Minas.

Haghartsin has a sepulcher and highly artistic *khachkars* in its territory.

Khor Virap Monastery, Ararat Province, 7th-17th century

Khor Virap is situated in Ararat Valley, in the shadow of the biblical Mount Ararat at the border of Turkey. Khor Virap translates to "deep dungeon" in English. Khor Virap has historically served as a place of royal exile, as well as a site of pilgrimage, due to its connection with the conversion of Armenia into a Christian nation in 301.

Grigor Lusavorich, who brought Christianity to Armenia, was imprisoned in Khor Virap's well pit for fifteen years by the order of King Trdat III. According to traditional stories verified by the 5th century historian Agatangeghos, St Grigor was brought up in Christian environment. As one of King Trdat's ministers, he refused to offer sacrifices to the pagan goddess Anahit. For this, King Trdat III tortured Grigor Lusavorich and imprisoned him in

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Khor Virap's well pit. He was ultimately rescued by the old woman who was his caretaker and would feed him each day.

During Grigor's imprisonment, King Trdat III sentenced the virgin Hripsime and her companions to death after Hripsime refused his marriage proposal. It is said that God punished the king for his lustfulness and cruelty by turning him into a wild boar. The king's sister had a dream which showed that Grigor was the only person who could cure the king of his affliction. The story goes that when Grigor was freed from the pit, he healed King Trdat, who converted to Christianity in exchange.

After the sanctity of Grigor Lusavorich was established, the monastery was constructed in memory of his imprisonment. The earliest mention of the monastery is from the 7th century, with the present church dating from a later period—likely the 17th century.

The complex of Khor Virap includes the fortress walls, the courtyard, St. Gevorg Basilica and St. Astvatsatsin Church.

Amberd Fortress, Aragatsotn Province, 7th-13th century and Vahramashen Church,

Aragatsotn Province, 11th century.

Amberd Church and Amberd Fortress are located on the slopes of Mount Aragats, 7500 feet above sea level. The Arkashen and Amberd rivers converge in the valley below. The fortress' high-ground position above the valley forms a natural defense. The original settlement dates to prehistoric times.

It is likely the fortress dates from the 9th-10th centuries, with foundations dating to the 7th century. The water supply would be delivered by clay pipes to the fortress. A bath house with hot and cold baths was added in the 11th century.

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