

## THE CONDITION OF ARMENIAN HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The genocide is not only the physical extermination of an ethnic or religious group but also the annihilation of its national and spiritual culture.

Throughout their centuries-old history the Armenian people have erected numerous and diverse cultural monuments most of which are currently located on the territory of Armenia - the historical cradle of the Armenians. Due to known historical events the present-day Republic of Armenia includes only about 1/8 of the territory of ancient Armenia while the rest forms part of the adjacent countries. That is the reason why the majority of Armenian historical monuments are located outside the borders of the present-day Republic of Armenia as well. Armenia's neighbours (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran) have displayed different approaches towards the question of the preservation of Armenian historical monuments.

As a result of the state policy of destruction and appropriation of the Armenian historical monuments in Turkey and Azerbaijan that has been in process for many decades, thousands of cultural monuments (monastery complexes, churches, cross-stones (*khachkars*), gravestones, Armenian lapidary inscriptions, etc.) that were of universal value, have been lost forever. Unfortunately, the historical monuments whose state has become inconsolable in the recent years, are subject to unprecedented demolition and appropriation on the territory of Georgia too. It is noteworthy that the policy of annihilation has been implemented particularly on those monuments which prove the Armenians' existence in their historical homeland. It should be noted that the Armenian inscriptions and cross-stones that are obviously an integral part of Christian culture, are the first ones to be obliterated. They are followed by the monasteries and churches whereas the bridges and fortresses, springs, constructions and public buildings have remained almost undamaged since the Turks find it easy to appropriate and present them as Turkish ones.

An eloquent and painful proof of the monument demolition that has been in process in the recent years, is the annihilation of the centuries-old Jugha (Julfa) Cemetery with its more than 7.000 unique cross-stones, a fact that can perhaps be compared with the obliteration of Buddha's statues located in Bamian, Afganistan, carried out by the Taliban.

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) takes proper care of the Armenian monuments situated in its territory: the living proof of the aforementioned is the suggestion of the IRI Board of Monuments Preservation that St. Thaddaeus Monastery, together with five other monuments, should be included in the list of the monuments under the UNESCO protection (in its World Heritage List).

In the recent years the the 17th-century Persian mosque erected in Yerevan has been repaired in cooperation with the Iranian specialists, and the restoration of the mosque in the city of Shushi, Artsakh (Karabagh), has commenced.

Doomed from its very beginning, the annihilation of the civilization of any people is incompatible with and unallowable for a country aspiring to acquire the membership of such international organizations, as UNESCO and ICOMOS, and also become part of the European Community.

Turkey still continues rejecting the genocide of 1894-1896 and 1915-1921 deliberately premeditated by the Ottoman state: annihilating the Armenian monuments this country endeavours to obliterate the traces of the existence of Armenian people and state on its eastern territories about two millennia before.

Armenian culture is part of the worldwide civilization and the preservation of Christian Armenian architecture is one of the most important tasks of the international community.

## TURKEY

The indisputable facts testify that during the mass slaughters of the Armenian people the Government of the Young Turks was aspiring to demolish each and every monument of Armenian civilization. In 1912-1913 on the order of the Turkish Interior Ministry the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople drew up the list of the Armenian monasteries and churches functioning on the territory of the empire. According to the statistics by Archbishop Maghakia Ormanian their number amounted to 2200 but 2150 of them were plundered and set ablaze during the years of the genocide. Thus, a large number of monuments of a whole nation created in their own cradle were destructed, the deliberate form and extent of these actions confirming the Genocide of Armenian culture premeditated by the Turkish Government.

Republican Turkey has not recognized the fact of the Genocide: moreover, the rejection of the Armenian massacres has become a state policy in this country. Special organizations have been established which are engaged in the publication and dissemination of books falsifying the history of the Armenian people. The Armenian spiritual and cultural monuments are either ascribed to the Turks, or deliberately destructed, the small number of Armenian educational institutions of Turkey are exposed to discrimination, and pressure is exerted on the Armenians hindering the teaching of their own history. The planned attack on the Armenian people, their history and culture pursues two main objectives:

1. To prove that Western Armenia never formed part of the homeland and the cradle of the Armenians;
2. To prove that no genocide was ever committed in Turkey.

Since 1928 a process of altering the Armenian names of the settlements, rivers and mountains has commenced in Turkey: the settlement of Moks in Vaspurakan turned into Myukyus, Bakhchisaray and finally Hyuseyniye, Berdagh converted into Dinlenje, Andzav into Gyorushlu, Sevan into Ortaja, Aren turned into Gyolduzlu, and Hajn into Salimbeyli.

The tourist guide-books include only the monuments of Akhtamar and Ani, which are presented as Turkish ones without any reference to their Armenian origin. Akhtamar has converted into Akdamar (*white vein in Turkish*), Ani into Ane (*recollections in Turkish*) while Mount Ararat has been renamed as Aghredagh. These steps pursued the objective of collating the changed names after the Turkish language.

According to the UNESCO's data for 1974, 464 of the 913 buildings that remained standing after 1915 were completely destructed, 252 were reduced to ruins while 197 need immediate reconstruction. Contrary to the fact that Turkey passed a law on the preservation and reconstruction of historical monuments, up to now no Armenian monument has been repaired in that country without altering its Armenian characteristics. At present they have started "repairing" the walls of Ani actually implementing a programme of falsifying the monuments. The Armenian architectural monuments that are being blasted persistently, become targets during military exercises whereas their finely-finished stones are used as building materials. The standing ones serve as cattle-sheds, warehouses and even jails turning into mosques or being declared monuments of "Seljuk architecture" in certain cases.

The Turkish Government often substantiates the destruction of the Armenian churches with earthquakes taking place in this zone, but how do the same earthquakes fail to destroy the monuments of Seljuk architecture?

Throughout many years the Turkish mass media have disseminated rumours according to which before "leaving" Turkey the rich Armenians hid their jewelry under the stones bearing "gyavur" (*infidel*) writings or engraved crosses. Motivated by this disinformation, the present inhabitants of these territories destroy everything suggesting something Armenian in an insatiable desire to find these treasures.

During the construction of the dam of Keban in 1965 the artificial lake became a threat for a

number of historical monuments and the task of their rescue emerged. Five monuments were especially important: 2 mosques and 3 churches (2 of them Armenian, and 1 Syrian), one of which had unique frescoes dating back to the 10th century. Thanks to the implemented saving actions the two mosques were moved to another site while the Armenian churches were completely neglected and doomed to annihilation despite the fact that they were the most ancient ones among these monuments.

- **The Church of Tekor** which was erected in the 5th century and was standing until 1956, served as a target during the artillery exercises of the Turkish army.
- **The Church of Tzepni** situated in the village of the same name and erected in the 7th century, was renamed Zibini and turned into a mosque.
- **The Monastery of St. Bartholomew the Apostle** erected on the site of his martyrdom, Aghbak District of Vaspurakan Province, and considered to be one of the most important sanctuaries of the Armenian people and Christians in general, was blasted.
- **The Monastery of St. Karapet** that had been plundered and partly devastated in 1915, turned into a heap of stones during the artillery exercises of the Turkish troops in the 1960s. The stones were later used for the foundation of a village on the same site.
- In 1915 **Varagavank** was consigned to great devastation after which some parts of it were used as a warehouse and cattle-shed. In 1998 the stones of the monastery served as building materials for the construction of a mosque erected in the same place.
- Out of the 5 churches of **the Monastery of Khtzkonk** erected in the 10th-12th centuries, only **St. Sargis** has “miraculously” survived despite the fact that its destruction resulted in gaps in six distinct parts of the sanctuary.
- **The Monastery of St. Makar** situated 30 km north-east of Nicosia, in the occupied territory of Cyprus, was plundered and reduced to ruins in 1997.
- **Sourb Arakelots (of the Holy Apostles) Church of Kars** converted into a mosque in 1998.
- In 1973 the numerous stone fragments engraved with Armenian lapidary inscriptions that had fallen near the Turkish spiritual school of Bitlis became “building materials” for the repairs of a mosque.

Today Turkey enjoys UNESCO membership but the numerous facts evidence that this country continues obliterating the history and culture of the Armenian people.

## TURKEY



Before 1965

ST. HOVHANNES OF BAGREVAND. 613-619



In 2000



At the beginning of 20th century

MONASTERY OF KHIZKONIK, VI-XI C.C.



In 2000 (blown up in 1964)



Before 1912

MONASTERY OF KHIZKONIK, VI-XI C.C.



In 2000

## AZERBAIJAN

Throughout the past decades the Azerbaijani Republic made every possible effort to annihilate the diverse and centuries-old Armenian cultural monuments hoping to appropriate the Armenian lands occupied by Soviet Azerbaijan. Year after year more and more monuments are destructed in territories the number of which is constantly increasing. The historical monuments situated in such Armenian-populated lands, as NKR, Northern Artsakh and the areas on the left bank of the river Kur also suffered demolition. Particularly heavy damage was inflicted on the ones located in Northern Artsakh (especially, in the regions of Getabek and Dashkesan) and the adjacent districts of the present-day NKR recently liberated by the local self-defense army.

It is noteworthy that the process of destroying the Armenian monuments at state level coincided with the attempts to appropriate some of them by declaring them "Albanian", a coincidence that was by no means accidental. However, it should be noted that the Albanian tribes that disappeared in the 9th century, inhabited only the area between the Caspian Sea and the river Kur.

Since the end of 1988 the process of destroying the historical monuments has expanded to an unprecedented extent. Taking advantage of the war the Azerbaijanis gave up their principle of blasting the Armenian churches, as they used to do before the beginning of the hostilities, and began to destroy them by cannon and tank volleys accompanied by the explosion of large-calibre shells, which could not leave undamaged even the most durable walls. Thus, the Monastery of Yeghnasar located near Getashen that stood thoroughly undamaged, was instantaneously levelled with the ground in the days of the occupation of the village, i.e. in May 1991.

In the 1950-1960s the cross-stones, gravestones and Armenian lapidary inscriptions (about 133 fragments) were removed from the large historical cemetery of Tzar Village dating back to the 13th-18th centuries. Being crumbled to pieces the stones were set in the walls of the school built at the southeastern extremity of the village.

- The traces of the main church (13th century) of Tzar Village that was in a semi-destroyed state till the end of the 1950s, have been entirely obliterated.

- **St. Sargis Church** (1274) of Tzar Village, that was completely preserved till the late 1950s, has been totally annihilated.
- **Getamijo Monastery** (1301) was destroyed in the 1960s: its stones served as building materials for the construction of several houses and the school of Jrag Village. The 22 fragments of an Armenian lapidary inscription can still be seen in the latter's walls.
- The church (12th-13th centuries) situated 2 km south-west of Yeghegnut Village (Ghamshli), region of Karvajar, was blasted in 1983.
- In the 1970-1980s all the cross-stones of the cemetery (12th-13th centuries) situated at the edge of Aghghaya Village were displaced and broken.
- The church (13th century) erected between the villages of Arakelots (Arokhlu) and Movsisashen (Kyurd-Hajji), region of Kashatagh (former Lachin), was blown up in 1983.
- The territory of the cemetery (12th-20th centuries) situated at the southwestern extremity of Harar (Nerkin Parajan) Village, region of Kashatagh, was smoothed away in the 1970s-1980s and a cattle-breeding farm was built on its site.
- The medieval church known among the people as "*Ohana eghtsi*", i.e. *Ohan's church*, and situated to the north of Zangelan, on the wooded mountain range of Susansar, in the vicinity of the fortress of Grham, has been blasted in the recent years.
- The church of Old Tumas Village, region of Jebrail, erected in the 12th-13th centuries, was destroyed in the 1970s. Its stones were used during the construction of the stairs of a school.
- The church of Vankasar (6th-7th centuries) was altered in the mid-1980s under the pretense of "restoration": its only preserved cross-stone was moved to the Aghdam Museum being represented as an "Albanian" monument.

- Out of the 12 churches (9th-11th centuries) situated in Ghalakyand Village, region of Getabek, only one has been preserved in a semi-destroyed state.
- The church (9th-11th centuries) situated 8 km south of Banants Village, region of Dashkesan, was destroyed in 1986-87: its stones were thrown into the ravine.
- The church (16th-17th centuries) erected in Tsntzahal Village, region of Dashkesan, was razed to the ground in the 1960s and a school was built on its site.
- In the late 1970s the church situated near Kirants Village was reduced to ruins under the pretense of erecting an electricity transmission pole.
- In the 1970s the church (16th-17th centuries) situated in Verin Karhat Village was demolished under the pretense of exploiting the mines.
- Before the liberation of Shushi the church of the city known among the people as "*Kanach Zham*", i.e. *Green church*, served as a hall for mineral water drinking, while Ghazanchetsots Sb. Amenaprkich (*Holy Saviour*) Church converted into a public lavatory.
- Two bridges dating back to the 12th-13th centuries, 3 chapels erected in the 13th-17th centuries, about 70 cross-stones and vaults that were neither measured nor photographed, fell victim to the construction of Sarsang Dam: the stones were either set in the barrier or left at the bottom of the dam.
- In the 1980s under the pretense of "repairs" the exterior of St. Sargis Church erected in Gandzak (Gyanja) City in the 17th century was faced with brick thus losing its Armenian features. The sanctuary used to serve as a palace of peoples' friendship.
- In the recent years the cemetery (18th-20th centuries) situated in Baku has been razed to the ground: its tombstones were used in the construction of the stairs of the road extending from the "Intourist" Hotel to the Kirov Park.
- Being under the Azerbaijani control for only 11 months Parin Pizh Monastery (liberated on 17 May 1992) in Shushi region, NKR, was almost completely destroyed: the chapel was totally reduced to ruins but the church built in 1658 was only partly devastated.
- Sb. Astvatzatzin Monastery of Meysari, region of Shamakhi, was blasted in the early 1970s.

**AZERBAIJAN**



KHUNISAVANK. 9th-10th centuries. The view in 1980 and 1982. during its destruction.

## AZERBAIJAN - NAKHICHEVAN

The districts of Shahaponk, Yernjak and Goghtn of Historical Armenia constitute part of the territory of the present-day Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan.

In the late mediaeval period the centre of the district of Yernjak was Jugha City (in the Azerbaijani language: Julfa) situated on the left bank of the river Araks, on the borderline between Iran and Nakhichevan.

In the 7th century Jugha was a famous settlement that developed into a city in the 10th-13th centuries and became a famous trade centre in the 15th-17th centuries.

In 1605 pursuing the aim of developing crafts and trade in his country King Shah Abbas forcibly deported the Armenian people from Julfa devastating the city where only the cemetery remained intact.

The ruins of Jugha's 18 churches, its magnificent bridge, caravanserais, the closed market, public buildings and dwellings as well as the cross-stones of the cemetery that has been totally annihilated, are the silent but eloquent witnesses of its glorious past.

The cemetery of Jugha is situated in the west of the devastated city, on the hills separated from each other by small ravines.

According to the perfection of masonry the tombstones of Jugha are divided into three groups: the ones tracing back to the 9th-14th centuries; the others carved in the 14th-16th centuries; and those erected in the period between the 16th century and 1605. The khachkars of Jugha with the variety of their architectural design and ornamentation are unique monuments of the art of cross-stones.

We consider it necessary to note that after the deportation of the Jugha Armenians, in 1648 10.000 cross-stones existed in the cemetery while in 1903-1904 about 5.000 khachkars and several thousands of gravestones survived there. In 1971-1973 about 4.000-4.200 cross-stones could still be found in the ancient burial-ground of Jugha.

In the soviet period the cemetery that was included in the Azerbaijani territory was completely neglected by the Monuments Preservation Board in consequence of which the Turk inhabitants of the adjacent villages crumbled its cross-stones to equal cubes for the purpose of using them as building materials.

In November 1998 the eyewitnesses from the Persian border testified that the Azerbaijanis were displacing the tombstones with bulldozers smoothing away their sites and transferring the stones by train...

These barbarities lasted about three weeks during which almost 30 per cent of the beautifully engraved cross-stones of the graveyard converted into ruins. The transfer of the tombstones by railway proves that all this happened on the order of the authorities of Nakhichevan.

The storm of protest addressed to the UNESCO and other appropriate organizations stopped this cultural genocide which resulted in the demolition of about 800 hundred cross-stones. However, the barbarity continues: according to trustworthy information more than 250 Armenian sanctuaries, such as Karmir (*Red*) Monastery of Astapat and Sb. Amenaprkich (*Holy Saviour*) Church of Jugha have been deliberately destroyed in Nakhichevan.

The annihilation of these architectural monuments poses a grave threat to world civilization since they are of universal value irrespective of their geographical position and national identity.







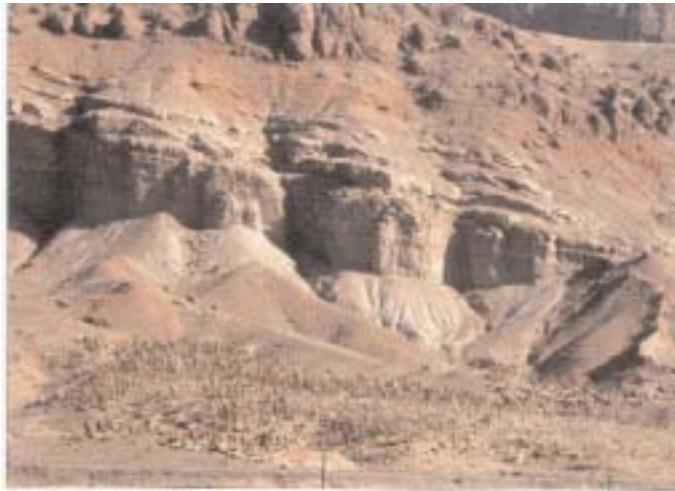
Armenian cemetery of Jugha annihilated



A CROSS-STONE, 1557



A CROSS-STONE, 1605.



4gth Century before 19th

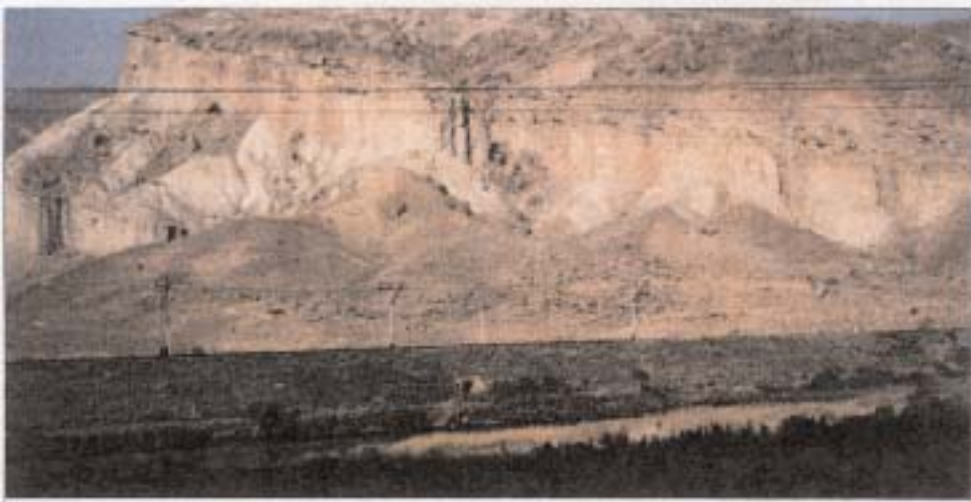


A row of the Cemetery.





**AZERBAIJAN-NAKHIJEVAN**



JULFA. CEMETERY WITH CROSS-STONES, IX-XII C.C., DESTROYED IN 1998-2002.



A BROKEN CROSS-STONE, 16-17 c.c.



BROKEN PIECE OF A CROSS-STONE, 1596.



BROKEN AND STILL STANDING CROSS-STONES.





The last American of Azgha.

## IRAN

Several districts of Historical Armenia (Her, Zarevand, Artaz, Parspatunik) are situated in the northwest of Iran, in the provinces of Eastern and Western Atrpatakan (*the territory lying to the south of the river Araks and included in the present-day Persia*) where the Armenians have lived and created architectural monuments throughout many centuries.

In the 1st century AD two of Christ's disciples, St. Thaddaeus and Bartholomew, came to Armenia where they preached Christianity and were tortured to death. On the sites of their martyrdom later monasteries were built which became famous places of pilgrimage called after their names.

For many years restoration has been in process in the Monastery of St. Thaddaeus the Apostle (in Iran it is also mentioned under the name of Gharakilisa) situated in the province of Western Atrpatakan, Iran. In September 2001 at the suggestion of the Iranian Government the monastery was included in the list of those most important monuments that are under UNESCO's protection.

Contrary to this, the Monastery of St. Bartholomew situated in the east of Turkey was blasted in 1962 by the Turkish army.

The Monastery of St. Stepanos Nakhavka, or Darashamb Monastery situated in Eastern Atrpatakan, on a territory bordering on Nakhichevan, is also being repaired under the auspices of the Iranian state.

The restoration of Sb. Astvatzatzin Monastery of Tzortzor (11th century) situated in the south of the city of Maku, is living proof of Iran's unbiased and benevolent treatment towards the cultural monuments of its neighbour. Since the construction of Barun Dam posed a serious danger to the existence of the church, it was circumstantially measured after which all its stones were numbered. They rebuilt the church on a safe site higher than the lake simultaneously restoring its demolished dome and drum.

A medieval Armenian church situated in the north of Iran, on a territory bordering on Turkey and Nakhichevan, was rescued from destruction like Abusimbel of Egypt.

A great number of preserved Armenian churches are also functioning in those regions of Iran where Armenian communities have lived up to the present, the eloquent proof of the aforementioned being the 15 Armenian churches situated in the city of New Jugha, neighboring Isfahan.

After the Armenian genocide committed in 1915-1921 most of the territory of Armenia was partitioned among the neighbouring countries where the Armenian monuments are exposed to deliberate and premeditated annihilation at present. Their aim is but too obvious: they are trying to obliterate the traces of the Armenian people who have lived there throughout many millennia. Iran is the only country where the Armenian churches and buildings are rescued from demolition.

## IRAN



The monastery of St. Thaddaeus the Apostle, 1 c., Maku District.  
The general views and different stages of reconstruction (1980-1990).