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The *Zhamatun* of Horomos: The Shaping of an Unprecedented Type of Fore-church Hall

The complex of monastic buildings of Horomos, created in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, is one of the largest in medieval Armenia and in the whole Christian East. Even in its present half-ruined condition this architectural ensemble impresses with its spatial characteristics, and with its refinement and conformity with the natural landscape. Horomos was, perhaps, the most significant monastery in the vicinity of Ani, the medieval capital of Armenia,¹ now located in eastern Turkey. At first, scholarly attention was drawn to the importance of Ani, thanks to publications by nineteenth-century European travelers and the excavations of the Archeological Institute of the Imperial Academy of Science in Saint Petersburg (until 1917) under the supervision of Nikolai Marr. Architect Toros Toramanyan, who worked in region since 1903, began to study and to measure the buildings of the monastery of Horomos.² After the dramatic events of Russian-Turkish military engagement of World War I and following Armenian-Turkish battles, the former Kars Province (*oblast'*) of the defunct Russian Empire was included in the borders of Turkey.³ As a result, the Akhuryan River (Turkish: Arpaçay), on the northern bank of which Ani had been founded in the Middle Ages, as well as Horomos and some other monuments of Armenian architecture, became one of the most strongly contested borderlands between Turkey and Armenia. For a long time, these circumstances and hostile Turkish policy towards the Armenian heritage⁴ of its eastern provinces made studying those monuments nearly impossible. Hence, a research expedition to Horomos by Jean-Michel Thierry was of great value for its documentation of the site.⁵ The second book about the monastery written by French colleagues⁶ was equally valuable for the same reason. Only in 2012, Horomos was opened to some visitors, as the frontier restrictions in the region were somewhat loosened. Shortly before the opening, in collaboration with Armenian and French specialists, I began

to work on a book about this monastery, and, thanks to my Turkish colleagues and the program "Ani in Context",⁷ I had the possibility to visit the ensemble twice (in 2012 and 2013).

In the course of this study, I paid particular attention to numerous buildings that marked the shaping of new architectural types based on the prototypes established at Horomos. This innovative phenomenon was rare in medieval architectural traditions with their well-established typology and a limited number of architectural plans. Often, these were only lightly modified and reproduced. Yet in Horomos, there were no less than four radically new plans: the fore-church hall called *zhamatun*, the entry arch with two chapels above the pylons, a two-story mausoleum with tree chapels above the liturgical hall, and hall-reliquaries. One of these buildings was a large hall referred as *zhamatun* (similar to a narthex or fore-church) in the Armenian foundation inscription. It was built in front of the largest church of the monastery (directly following the construction of the church), and both buildings are dated to 1038 by the same foundation inscription, naming Hovhannes Smbat *Shahinshah* Bagratuni, on the tympanum of the portal of the *zhamatun* (fig. 1).⁸ The *zhamatun* of Horomos has often been commented on, and it is acknowledged as one of the most significant monuments of Armenian architecture.⁹ Nevertheless, extensive research on the monument is still to be undertaken.

Since the second half of the tenth century, Horomos served a resting place of Armenian kings. The first burial was the monumental tomb of Ashot I Voghormats Bagratouni (r. 953–977); it is located in the so-called Lower Ensemble of Horomos. The tomb resembles a sarcophagus placed on a stepped base. In one of inscriptions in the church of St. Gevorg of Horomos, dated to 1036, *Shahinshah* Hovhannes



Fig. 1: Horomos, the church Surb Hovhannes and zhamatun, view from the South

Smbat mentioned the “monastery of ecumenical glory” as a resting place of kings.¹⁰ Taking into account that most of the fore-churches in Armenian monasteries served as burial places or covered cemeteries, the *zhamatun* of Horomos, obviously, had a similar function, and was probably built as the mausoleum of Hovhannes Smbat.¹¹

The very idea of creating a building exclusively for this purpose was innovative not only for medieval Armenia, but also for other Eastern Christian regions; mausoleums had not been built there since the time of Constantine the Great. One can only speculate about the reference to the late antique tradition and its simultaneous correspondence to contemporary mausoleums for Islamic rulers, first of all, the Gunbad-e Qabus (1006–1007 A.D.) near Gorgan, Iran. The plan of this building differs from that of the Armenian *zhamatun*. Nevertheless, the promotion of funerary constructions in regions close to Armenia have may stimulated an original way of creating new architectural plans within the local tradition that were reminiscent of distant but kindred monuments.

Since the buildings of Ani and of Horomos display a stylistic and structural interest in the form of classical architecture,¹² it can be supposed that the concept of the mausoleum was inspired by this tradition, even though there aren't any direct compositional analogies between medieval Armenian and classical funerary monuments. The probability of a direct link between the Horomos *zhamatun* and the imperial tradition of Rome, and its ancient architecture must, however, be considered carefully within the context of the so-called Armenian renaissance. Along with the Macedonian renaissance in Byzantium, and several phenomena, referred to as “renaissances” in Western Europe, it preceded the Italian Renaissance, and had similarities and differences with some manifestations of that period.¹³ This article is intended to bring us closer to an understanding of the phenomenon of the Armenian renaissance through the study of the monument of Horomos.

Plan and description of the *zhamatun*

The plan of the *zhamatun* at Horomos, as well as its role in the context of other monastic buildings,

differed from the compositions and the function of mausoleums in Late Antiquity. The latter were mostly freestanding rotundas; one local example is the monument of Parkar near Yerevan (middle of the first century B.C. to middle of the first century A.D.).¹⁴ The Horomos building adjoins the monastic church and serves as a kind of fore-church. The concept used by Hovhanes Smbat was, however, not only innovative but also ambitious, particularly in the choice of site. The *zhamatun* was situated on a hill, away from an older, lower group of buildings of the monastery. The new church became the main one in Horomos, and perhaps obtained the dedication of the oldest church of the monastery – Surb Hovhannes (John the Baptist).¹⁵ The dominance of the new two-part complex was provided with its disposition and a monolithic architectural unity. For the first time in Armenian architecture, the complex at Horomos formed an integral composition, in which the volume of the vertically elongated church was continued with the broad and flat volume of the *zhamatun*. The length of the *zhamatun* is approximately equal to the length of the church, and together the constructions extend to more than 35.6 m.

The space of the large hall, 12.40 m wide and 18.80 (18.85) m long (the outside width is 14.48 m), is regularly structured with 16 columns (four columns in four rows), which are interconnected with twenty-four arches (fig. 2, 3). Twelve of them are set along the perimeter of the walls, and twelve others divide the hall into nine roughly equal areas. Only four columns stand in the middle of the space.¹⁶ This central four-column structure is covered with a high canopy crowned with a skylight or oculus (fig. 4, 5). The axial zones to the west and to the east of the central area are covered with octopartite vaults (fig. 6), whereas the axial zone to the north of the central area is overlaid with a flattened barrel vault. The area located to the south of the central bay, and all corner zones, on the other hand, have perfectly flat stone ceilings (fig. 7).

When the coverings begin at one level marked with horizontal cornices over the ends of arches, flat ceilings are situated lower than the vaults. The coverings located along the two axes of the building have differ-

ent characteristics. The north vault is constructed by analogy with a branch vault of the cross-domed church, and it does not have a symmetric solution on the south end of the transversal axis. The western and the eastern octopartite vaults are central in structure, and they are in accordance with the central tent due to fan-shaped conical squinches and the decorative arches. Both of these shapes are attached to the ceilings of all three bays along the longitudinal axis. The rejection of central planning is implemented through an elongation of the plan from east to west. In order to create a rectangular, axial plan, firstly, the aisles of the hall are slightly narrowed in comparison with the central nave; secondly, the square pylons are set over the western and eastern rows of columns.

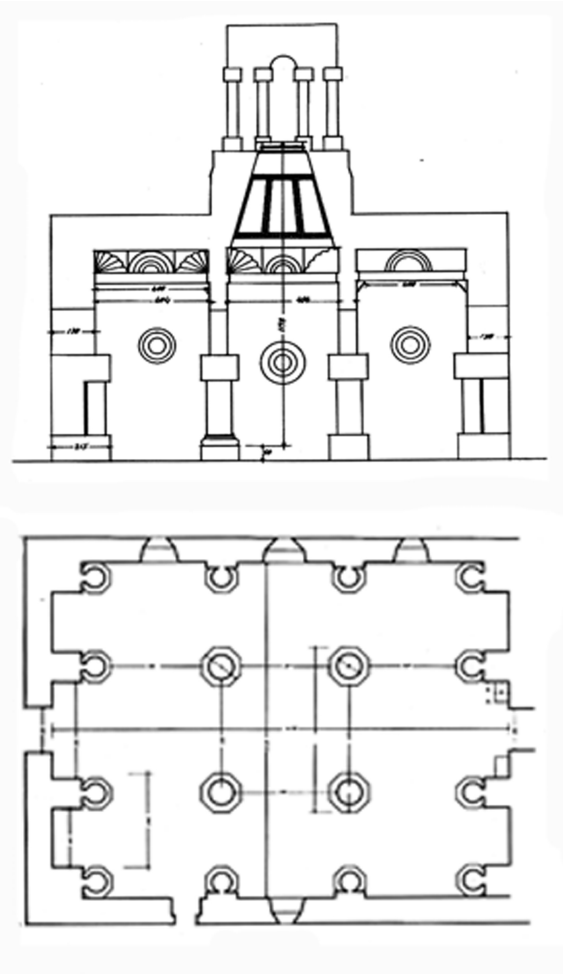


Fig 2: Horomos, *zhamatun*, plan and longitudinal section by Toros Toramanyan



Fig. 3: Horomos, zhamatun, interior view from S-E corner



Fig. 4: Horomos, zhamatun, view into the central bay



Fig.5: Horomos, zhamatun, tabernacle or tent

The flat ceilings of the corner zones and the southern axial bay were constructed with amazing technical skill. Each ceiling is assembled from narrow intersecting beams and stone slabs set into four frames. At first glance, it may seem that there is a crisscross rail in the middle of the rectangular bay. In fact, however, this cross-shaped framework consists of console blocks and a central crossing resting against the con-

soles. The ceiling is decorated with carvings: a central cruciform block contains a large cross with elongated arms; the consoles are covered with a meander ornament, the slabs contain a relief disk (fig. 7).

The integrity of large structures is imitated in the flat ceilings, and the use of large stone blocks enhances the image of monumentality. This mode of construction was part of the ideological and aesthetic concept of the *zhamatun*. Additional features, composed of large stone blocks, were promoted with the same goal, such as: the powerful shafts of the columns, broad simple arches (in other constructions of the same epoch arches are stepped or profiled), and the sophisticated octopartite vaults of the western and eastern bays.

In the central zone, above the square base of the cornice, a transition zone on squinches and an octagonal tent were constructed. The squinches are of a conical shape; they are formed like seashells due to fan-shaped cannelations. The wall surface between the squinches is adorned with a decorative arch with a conical rim. This lower transition zone forms an octagonal base for the next cornice. The huge trapezoidal stone panels of the roof are installed directly onto the cornice. These high, tight-fitting blocks are covered with ornaments and reliefs; they form a tall pyramid, the top of which is completed with a profiled cornice. An octagonal oculus is used as a base of the high octagonal rotunda that can barely be seen from below.

The measured sketch drawings by Toramanyan¹⁷ provide a full understanding of the architecture of the *zhamatun* and its basic proportions. It is noteworthy that the distance from the floor to the level of the ceilings is only 7.20 m. The height of the end of the western and the eastern zones' coverings, as well as the height of the level of the central squinches, is equal to the half of the inner length of the *zhamatun* (16.70 m). The total height of the building up to the oculus (12.50 m) is nearly equal to the width of the hall (12.43 m). The proportions of the central zone are especially elongated and create a contrast to the adjacent bays. The slabs of the pyramid, about 3.90 m tall, look particularly majestic in comparison with the area of the

squinches that are only one meter tall. A stream of light slides from the top of the pyramid through ornamental surface, recalling a light pillar falling from heavens (fig. 2, 5).



Fig. 6: Horomos, zhamatun, eight-partite vault



Fig. 7: Horomos, zhamatun, ceilings of the south nave

The upper third of the pyramid is illuminated especially brightly. It is marked with a separate type of ornament – a row of vertical floral motifs; there are four on each facet. The main, lower, zone of the slabs is quite simply framed with balls or beads on the carved background. The eastern axial slab includes a multi-figure composition. The closest diagonal slabs involve *khachkars* – ornamental crosses, which in the Armenian tradition were usually installed for the sake of recalling the promise of salvation inherent in the Crucifixion, without, however, showing the image of Christ that is implied in these symbolic representations.¹⁸ On the northwestern slab, there is an image of the Tree of Life. Other slabs are decorated with a carpet ornament of pseudo-meander (or swastika). This ornament and the flourishing crosses are presented also in the central tent and on the flat ceilings of the *zhamatun*.

The pointed roof and the surrounding ceilings are treated as a relief and ornamental fields, opposed to smooth walls, arches, and profiled but also smooth elements of columns. The upper zone, divided from the lower one with horizontal cornices, is emphatically marked off. The vertical division of the space is peculiar within Armenian ecclesiastical architecture in that no other related buildings show such a marked difference between registers and structural parts. And if in ecclesiastical architecture the building-up of space towards to the central dome was carried out smoothly and cadenced, in the Horomos *zhamatun* flat or relatively flat ceilings were juxtaposed to walls and arches. Moreover, the pointed roof looks as if it breaks that horizontal surface.

The tent-like structure of the pointed roof also demonstrates new forms of decoration. The full surface ornamentation, which had not been practiced in earlier Armenian architecture, originated from the East. In this connection, we need to recall the art of Iran, first of all, where the idea of coating surfaces with ornaments had been cultivated. The increase of architectural production in Iran in the late tenth and the early eleventh centuries had an impact on the builders of the monument in Horomos, where the architect's familiarity with eastern trends is apparent.

The ornamentation of the wide surfaces of the ceilings and their contraposition to the walls are only present in the *zhamatun*. These peculiarities remained unusual for the architecture of Armenian churches, which has smooth vaults and transitions to the walls. Therefore, the conception of the *zhamatun* was quite different from that of a church, and we focus our search for the roots of the *zhamatun*'s decoration to a particular functional significance of that very monument.

That significance was, undoubtedly, connected with the structuring of the sources of light in the interior. The light from the upper oculus and round windows, strongly narrowed towards the outer surface of the walls, seems almost mystical. These round windows pierced the northern and the southern walls at the level of the springing of the arches. Moreover, they were placed in all areas of the walls, except in the western section of the southern wall that had an entrance opening. The only rectangular window was located on the axis of the western wall, above the main entrance to the *zhamatun*. Just as the distribution of the windows in the interior, the external appearance of the *zhamatun* is well balanced and severe. The composition is not a literal reflection of the internal structure, but represents an intermediate form between this structure and the shapes of the cross-domed church.

A transparent lantern, based on the octagonal prismatic volume, stands above the roof of the *zhamatun*. The domed lantern was most likely added in the thirteenth century judging by the stylistic features of its columns and arches. It replaced, perhaps, an earlier dome, since it is logical that the upper opening is to be protected from the rain and direct sunlight with an "umbrella". The whole composition is created with large wall surfaces, smooth cornices, and low-pitched roofs. The southern entrance, leading to the western transversal aisle, has no portal. Instead of a broad tympanum, here a lintel is set into the doorway; it is composed of wedge-shaped blocks with a central keystone. The walls' masonry is laid with exceptionally large and perfectly cut blocks. Smooth walls, as well as faceted cornices with broad watersheds, give a special aspect of monumentality to the building.

The portal of the main entrance, set along the axis of the western façade, is the most striking element of the external composition of the monument. The single, flat and very wide arch of the portal contoured the tympanum. Columns have thick bundles of vertical rods, a feature that is unusual in eleventh-century architecture. Only the portal of the Amberd Church (1026) has something common with it.

The shapes of cornices and the severe, bare ornamentation style of the *zhamatun* and of the nearby church of St. Hovhannes have the closest resembles to the exterior of the church of the Savior in Ani (1036). Furthermore, the interior columns of the *zhamatun*, especially the peripheral ones, have something in common with the columns of the interior of the same church. The interpretation of the under-cupola arches and the cornices under the tholobates of the two mentioned churches is also quite similar. Taking into account that the Savior Church in Ani and the complex of two buildings of Horomos were created with an interval in two years, we can conclude that they were erected by the same architect, a talented individual recognized by the Bagratid royal court. Following the construction of churches of the 1020s in Amberd, Marmashen and Khtskonk, those works brought a new emphasis to the development of the metropolitan school of the "classical" architecture of Armenia.

The architectural idea of the *zhamatun* in the context of the "renaissance" of Armenian architecture in the first half of the eleventh century

Since the donor of the Horomos construction was the *Shahinshah*, and since other preserved early examples of this type of *zhamatun*, i.e. in the monasteries of Teghenyats (1167), Sanahin (1181), Goshavank (1197), Makaravank (before 1207), Bagnayr (late twelfth or early thirteenth century) were built a century or more later, we could suggest that the monument was the first implementation of the new architectural idea which was fresh and innovative both in its functional aspect and plan.¹⁹ There was, obviously, a causal link between the donor being the *Shahinshah* and the selection of a new type of a building. Hence,

we could consider that the royal status of the first *zhamatun*'s donor had a direct impact on the origin of its architectural type.

Historians of Armenian architecture suggested that the sources of the *zhamatun*'s plan lay in the old tradition of four-columned wooden structures of traditional houses and palace halls.²⁰ Although all known preserved examples of such kind of halls in civil architecture have been dated to the late medieval period, archaeological findings confirm that the same type of halls was built in royal palace structures from very early times. Among them is a monument of the fifth-fourth centuries B.C. in ancient Draskhanakert discovered by an Armenian-French archaeological expedition in 1989,²¹ and a complex of Bagratid medieval palace buildings of the tenth century on the hill of the Ani Citadel.²² The idea of such structures with wooden columns and a ceiling could be adopted from a monastic milieu. It is impossible to verify, however, the evolution from wooden constructions to stone buildings of the type in question. The proportions of columns, shapes of arches, ceilings, and central tent dome are quite different. We should take into account a new function of the *zhamatun*, as a fore-church and, probably, a mausoleum, that was reflected in the architectural shapes and in the general artistic image.

Scholars have often considered the development of medieval architecture as an evolutionary process, or a repetition of existing models. There is little place for individual creativity (including collaborative creation by a patron and an architect) and original implementation of new philosophical and artistic ideas in such an understanding. Of course, we have to consider specific medieval perceptions of conventionality and traditional approaches of working on the base of certain patterns; but, as well, we cannot ignore a possibility of transformation of basic perceptions. The so-called "renaissance" of Armenian architecture (the end of the tenth – the first half of the eleventh century) can be put in the context of European medieval "renaissances", and compared with the so-called Macedonian period in Byzantine art. It appears to be the moment when a general interest in antiquity led to innovative creativity both in the search for new imagery (the

Cathedral of Ani by architect Trdat, 985–990, 992–1001), and in the sphere of invention of new structures.

Arising at the end of the tenth century, the phenomenon of the Ani school of Armenian architecture invoked antique forms, including particularities of the Greco-Roman Hellenistic tradition, and specific features of Late Antiquity: rotunda-type constructions, the idea of the triumphal arch, dados, round columns, the blind arcade, framed portals, and sandric, pseudo-Doric and pseudo-Ionic capitals. In the second quarter of the eleventh century, few adapted Hellenistic patterns were thoroughly modified (portals, for example); others were implemented in an original way (meander ornaments, chaplet, for instance). Interpretations of particular details, such as transformation of the blind arcade into an order, or the creation of a composite capital on the basis of two above-mentioned pseudo-classical ones (both interpretations can be observed in the Surb Sargis Church of Khtskonk), were developed into the revaluation classical architectural forms and principles. In the atmosphere of searching and critical address to the Hellenistic and late antique heritage, builders created unique solutions: the rotundas with outside order-like blind arcade, and with colonnades on the tholobate, which are supported the 'zigzag' cornice of the umbrella-type dome; the triumphal arch with a chapels on the towers beside of the arched vault; new Ani-type portals; new type of composite capitals, among others. I tend to believe that the construction of the *zhamatun* of Horomos can serve as a perfect example of this kind of innovative architectural setting.

Yet before we consider the sources of the *zhamatun* in earlier architectural traditions and try to understand the innovations of its plan, we should compare our monument with contemporary parallels. The only analogues in Christian architecture can be found in the structure of *litae* in some Greek monasteries. It was a kind of a fore-church construction, and most of its known samples have four columns in the middle of the square space with nine sections of their ceilings (associated with bays). Paul M. Mylonas argues convincingly, however, for the absence of any connec-

tions between the narthex-like structures in Greece and Armenia.²³ The origin of *litae* lies in the specific local tradition of architecture of the Middle Byzantine period. Those halls translated the idea of a typical Byzantine four-columned church with its cross-domed system, although the dome was transformed by using a spherical vault over the pendentives. The idea of a large fore-church space was discussed, perhaps, among Armenian and Greek monks, but in each region its realization was different. Moreover, the main function of the Armenian *zhamatun* was funerary. Thus, while assessing a probability of exchange between two traditions, we have to keep in mind that the earliest Greek *litae* date to the twelfth century,²⁴ later than the construction of the Horomos *zhamatun*.

Fewer similarities can be observed between the Armenian *zhamatuns* and Eastern Iranian mosques of the eighth to tenth centuries. Both structures are divided into nine sections with arches and four central columns. The proportions of the columns are more or less equal, and at the top of the central dome of the Degaron Mosque near Bukhara there was an oculus over 1 m in diameter.²⁵ But similarities stop here: none of these mosques has 16 columns, and Degaron had only four columns and smooth walls. In the examples, such as Chor Sutun in Termez,²⁶ all nine sections were covered with blind domes. Some other details also differ from the Armenian *zhamatuns*. The spread of that kind of four-columned mosques, however, could provide a background for the architecture of Western Asia contemporary to the *zhamatun* of Horomos. Both the function and architectural aspects of those mosques seem more distant analogues to the *zhamatun* than *litae* and local Armenian palace halls. Nevertheless, I suggest that the halls of Armenian civil architecture were only the starting point for the innovative plan of the Horomos *zhamatun*. Its assumed function as a royal mausoleum facilitated the translation of some of its features into monumental memorial architecture.

In this context, the closest resemblance between the proportions and structures of the floor plan of the Horomos monument and the oldest Armenian cathedral of Ejmiatsin in Vagharshapat, founded near the Ar-

shakids' royal palace in the early fourth century seems rather notable. (Reconstructions at Ejmiatsin took place in the end of the fourth, and in the end of the fifth centuries, and c. 620, as well as in later times).²⁷ Besides the association with the first Christian Arshakid King Trdat, Hovhannes Smbat, the donor of the *zhamatun*, could have been interested in the memorial significance of Ejmiatsin, which was connected with the history of the Christianization of Armenia and the activity of St Gregory the Illuminator (Gregor Lusavorich) in the early fourth century – the first archbishop of Armenia who baptized the King Trdat Arshakuni. Hence, I think that on the iconographical level, some features of Ejmiatsin were translated into the architectural plan of the *zhamatun*, e.g. the number of central and peripheral rests (pillars rather than columns), a slight elongation of the square plan in the longitudinal direction, and the presence of three square compartments in the central aisle, the middle of which was designed as a high and well-lit space covered with a dome.

Hovhannes Smbat became the penultimate and yet most powerful king of Bagratid Armenia since the time of the Arshakuni dynasty, which broke down in 428 A.D. Thus, we have suggested the possible intention of the founder of the *zhamatun* to draw a connection between Trdat Arshakuni and himself, which could be reflected in the iconographic borrowings for the plan of the *zhamatun* from the old and venerated church-martyrium of Ejmiatsin. In the eleventh century, Ejmiatsin was known, and it preserved its architectural forms of the fourth to seventh centuries until the reconstruction in the seventeenth century.

We know, as well, that St Gregory the Illuminator was extremely popular in Armenia and, particularly, in Bagratid Ani where two new churches were dedicated to this saint. There is also another important parallel between the Horomos's *zhamatun* and one of those churches. The shape of the *zhamatun*'s round columns, quite rare in Armenian architecture, in the first instance recalls the columns of Zvartnots (641–661)²⁸ and Surb Gregor (Gagikashen) in Ani (about 1001).²⁹ Unlike in those monuments, the columns of Horomos serve the main support of the ceiling, and

they are more massive. Nevertheless, their measurements bring to light the Horomos masters' dominant orientation towards Zvartnots; in such a choice *Shahinshah* Hovhannes followed his predecessor Gagik, the creator of Gagikashen. Thus, the diameter of the central columns of the *zhamatun* is 93 cm, much more than the diameters of columns in the *exedrae* of Zvartnots and Gagikashen; however, it is close to that one of the diagonal columns of Zvartnots (81.5 cm). The height of the shaft of the *zhamatun*'s columns is 220 cm; it is very close to that one of the fragments of the shafts of the diagonal columns of Zvartnots, which is 222 cm³⁰ (fig. 8). The height of the bases of the columns in Horomos is the same as the height of the bases of columns of the *exedra* of Zvartnots, and the total height (405 cm) of those columns of Zvartnots was repeated in Horomos. Moreover, the same measurement (405 cm) was used in the width of the central square of the *zhamatun*.



Fig. 8: Church of Zvartnots, diagonal column and part of the ambulatory

A return to the comparative description of the Horomos columns gives us a chance to reveal a possible reference of the architect of the *zhamatun* to Zvartnots. That church, now ruined, was erected by Catholicos Nerses the Builder (641–661) on the historical place of meeting of St Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat in the early fourth century. Therefore, it allows us once more to consider the references to previous kings and to the history of the Christianization of Armenia that are inherent in Hovhannes' foundation, and to suppose the patron's intention to have the most important, characteristic details reflected in the architecture of the *zhamatun*. Moreover, the plan of Zvartnots was connected with the representation of New Jerusalem.³¹ Thus, we have further evidence that the *zhamatun* was created in the context of memorial iconography through the references to Zvartnots – those very details which seemed the most significant to the founder of Horomos, and which had to be integrated into the main architectural concept of the *zhamatun*.

It seems that the memorial function of the *zhamatun* at Horomos also dictated an essentially new interpretation of light in the interior. Specific features, the decoration of flat ceilings and the slabs of the tent, highlight the memorial significance of the *zhamatun*. In general, those ornaments and rosettes represented the starry heavens on which several crosses ascended. The choice of the flat shape and ornamentations testified a purposeful dialogue of the architect with Greek and Roman architecture. They distantly recall ceilings in the Temple of Garni in Armenia (c. 2nd A.D.), but closer examples are in the Temple of Bel in Palmyra (32 A.D.) and in the Library of Celsus in Ephesus (completed in 135 A.D.) (fig. 9). At present, I am unable to answer how these ancient forms were linked to the idea of the Horomos *zhamatun*. A general reference to the antique trend of the architectural school of Ani seems insufficient in this context. The question remains unsolved, as I only have a weak indication that the above-mentioned references aimed at the creation of an everlasting secular "heaven", in line with the possible liturgical function of the *zhamatun* in its position as a fore-church, and that those pre-Christian forms were to underline the archaic

character of the construction. The archaic style, as it is, might embody the idea of eternity and immortality.

It is more difficult to understand the presence of the pyramid-shaped tent over the central area of the *zhamatun*. Simple wooden analogues exist in the four-column halls known in civil architecture. There are no known examples of the same type in constructions preceding the Horomos complex. Later edifices and imitations of that tent structures in stone architecture (e.g. over the hidden room inside the western wall of the Ani Cathedral, over the thirteenth-century *zhamatun* in the Arakelots Monastery) are structurally different from the tent of the Horomos *zhamatun*. Unlike the latter's block work of inclined slabs, they were created with rows of small horizontal lintels.

I confirm my previous judgment on the similarity of the general form of the church and the *zhamatun* in Armenian monasteries, on one hand, and of the church and the Anastasis Rotunda in the ensemble of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, on the other hand (fig. 10).³² The Anastasis Rotunda has been popular in the Armenian community since the early Christian period. Armenian churches in the Holy Land and Armenian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, mainly to Christ's tomb, create the foundation of our supposition that Armenians were well aware of the architectural forms of the Holy Sepulcher. The image of the Anastasis Rotunda had a close connection with representations of the New Jerusalem, and was reflected in the plan of Zvartnots and other Armenian churches.³³ Medieval historiographers, particularly Samuel Anetsi, mention extensive ecclesiastic construction works in Ani in the year of 1001, on the occasion of the millennium: that Cathedral was completed, and the huge rotunda of Gagikashen according to the pattern of Zvartnots had been begun or finished.³⁴ Under the reign of *Shahinshah* Hovhannes, one round church dedicated to Surb Sargis was built in the Khtskonk Monastery (1024), and another one was erected in Ani – quite close to the Cathedral. This was the church of Surb Prkich (Savior), dated on the base of two inscriptions to 1035 or to 1036 (possible dates of its completion). According to the first inscription, it was built by Prince Abulgharip Pahlavuni to house a piece of the True Cross,

which the founder had brought from Constantinople “with great effort and great expense”.³⁵



Fig. 9: Ephesus, the library of Celsus, the portico

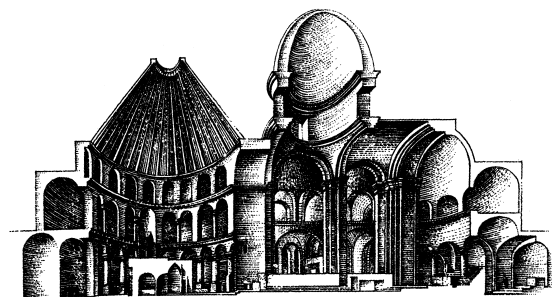


Fig. 10: Holy Sepulchre, longitudinal section, engraved by Fratello Bernardino Amico, 1619

Over the course of time, the concept of the Heavenly Church was transformed, partly, because of changes in the real architectural image of the complex of the Holy Sepulcher due its reconstruction. A comparable outlook of the main structure of Armenian monasteries was formed from the eleventh century onwards,

on the base of the common structure of the Horomos church and *zhamatun*, and the contemporary image of the ensemble in Jerusalem, that suggests a direct correlation between them.

Historical evidence for the reconstruction of the complex of the Holy Sepulcher, begun just before the foundation of our monument of Horomos, seems especially important for the understanding of the origin of this Armenian construction. After the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher by the Fatimid Caliph al-Hākīm in 1009, its reconstruction was a topic of discussion between Byzantine Emperor Romanus (r. 1028–1034) and al-Zāhir, a son of al-Hākīm. The large-scale rebuilding of the complex according a new plan was completed under Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (r. 1042–1055),³⁶ but work started as early as 1037.³⁷ That date immediately preceded the year 1038 when *Shahinshah* Hovhannes Smbat commissioned the new complex in Horomos monastery. These two facts should be juxtaposed, taking into account traditional relations between the Armenian Church and the Holy Land, as well as intense interest in the main shrine of Jerusalem, the Anastasis Rotunda, in Bagratid Armenia. Therefore, the suggestion that the buildings in Jerusalem served as models for the pair of constructions in Horomos (the church and the fore-church-mausoleum, i.e. the *zhamatun*) could also rest on their functional peculiarities.

The architect of Hovhannes Smbat could have been guided by the image of the main volumes of the two buildings of the Holy Sepulcher and have implemented the idea in the traditional for Armenian architecture shapes of the "domed hall" type of the church, and in the innovative plan of the *zhamatun*, where he combined some above mentioned features of famous Armenian monuments of Late Antiquity, deeply rooted in the Hellenistic tradition. At the same time, instead of the typical Armenian *hazarashen* type of roof, the architect tried a shape that could recall the characteristics of the Anastasis Rotunda with its high tabernacle. The unknown architect of Horomos, who, undoubtedly, served at the court of Hovhannes, interpreted the idea of tabernacle in an original way, using eight huge stone slabs; and he covered them with a

big *khachkar* (stone cross) decorated with the Tree of Life, a relief composition that represented the Church, and carpet ornament of classical pseudo-meander. These motives were joined in a single combination originating, mainly, from the idea of the Resurrection, especially important in a Christian burial space and in the fore-church building.

In line with previous Armenian references to the Holy Sepulcher, the architect used only some imaginative quotations in the complicated idea of the Horomos *zhamatun*. Therefore, that unusual architectural work was neither as a step in an evolutionary process, nor a direct copy of any one pattern – be it a civil palace hall, Ejmiatsin and Zvartnots, or the Holy Sepulcher. All of these monuments, however, were known to the builders of Horomos, in addition to Hellenistic ornamentation that was included into the idea of the *zhamatun*. In this transfer of forms, we are not faced with the mere adoption of a famous pattern; rather some impressive and important forms or methods were reinterpreted in the artistic formulation of a new idea. In this case, it seems necessary to reveal the character of creative work of the architect. He did not use ready-made shapes and traditional solutions, but he created the idea involving vivid quotations from various sources. This method of forming of a new architectural space could be associated with the classical tradition of Late Antiquity broadly manifested in Armenian architecture of the seventh century³⁸ and passed through a period of its "renaissance" in the architectural school of Ani in the second quarter of the eleventh century.

Endnotes

1. About the conceptual connection between Ani and Horomos, as between the capital and the most important monastery and royal burial place, see: Արմեն Չարյան, *Այնպիսիք էին և միջնադարյան Հայաստանի հողաբաշխման պատմություն* (Armen Zarian, *An outline of town-planning history in ancient and medieval Armenia*), Yerevan 1986, p. 125; Կարեն Մարտիրոսյան, *Անի, եկեղեցական կյանքը և ձևազարման ժառանգությունը* (Karen Matevosyan, *Ani: Ecclesiastical Life and Manuscript Meritage*), Holy Ejmiatsin 1997, p. 17.
2. For the first time, a part of those measurements was published in: Josef Strzygowski, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, vol. 1, Vienna 1918, s. 236–237. All drawings see: Ani T. Baladian and Jean-Michel Thierry, *Le couvent de Horomos d'après les archives de Toros Toramanian*, Paris 2002.
3. Richard Hovannisian, *The Contest for Kars, 1914–1921*, in: *Armenian Kars and Ani*, Edited by R.G. Hovannisian, Costa Mesa, California 2011, pp. 273–317, esp. pp. 304–317.
4. Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, London 2006, p. 56–59.

5. Jean-Michel Thierry, *Le couvent arménien d'Horomos*, Louvain-Paris 1980.
6. Baladian and Thierry 2002, *Le couvent de Horomos*.
7. The architect Yavuz Özkaya organized the first visit in September 2012. The international field workshop "Ani in Context" (September 28th – October 5th 2013) was organized by initiative of Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU) and thanks to its cooperation with the World Monuments Fund and Turkish nongovernmental organizations.
8. Baladian and Thierry 2002, *Le couvent de Horomos*, p. 176.
9. The main studies on monastery were: Strzygowski 1918, *Die Baukunst*, pp. 236–237; Թորոս Թորամանյան, *Նյարբեր եայիական հարաբերակարարական պատմություն* (Toros Toramanyan, *Materials on the history of Armenian architecture*), vol. 1, Yerevan 1942, pp. 176–178, fig. 105, 210, 211–212; Степан Х. Мнацаканян, *Архитектура армянских притворов* (Stephan Mnatsakanyan, *Architecture of Armenian Fore-churches*), Yerevan 1952, pp. 35–36; Thierry 1980, *Le couvent arménien d'Horomos*, p. 15–48; Baladian et Thierry 2002, *Le couvent de Horomos*, pp. 72–95.
10. "...ի մեր հանգստարանն ընդհանուր ի սինեքրոսիսի վանքն Հռոմեոսի վանքն մեր մեզոց ընդարիւնեմ..." (...in our royal shrine, in the monastery of Horomos of the ecumenical glory for administering absolution...). The full inscription will be published in Karen Matevosyan's chapter in the forthcoming book: A. Kazaryan, J.-P. Mahé, K. Matevosyan, E. Vardanyan, *Monastery of Horomos: Art and History*, Paris 2014.
11. According to Karen Matevosyan's and Edda Vardanyan's conclusions in: A. Kazaryan et al. 2014, *Monastery of Horomos*. The same opinion was proposed for the first time in: T. Toramanyan 1942, *Materials on the history*, p. 157.
12. About Ani or the metropolitan school, in the framework of which all monumental constructions of the historical province of Shirak were built, see: Paolo Cuneo, *L'architettura della scuola regionale di Ani nell'Armenia medievale*, Rome 1977.
13. Армен Казарян, *Античное наследие в армянской архитектуре конца X – начала XI века. К проблеме 'ренессансов' в средневековой культуре* (Armen Kazaryan, *The Antique Heritage in Armenian Architecture of the late-tenth to the early-eleventh centuries. On the Problem of 'Renaissances' of Medieval Culture*), in: *Arkhitektura*, n. 6, 2013, pp. 21–26. See also: Varazdat Harutyunyan, *Antik avanduytneri jarangutyune mijnadaryan hay tcartarapetutyan mej*, in: *Historical-Philological Journal*, n. 4, pp. 13–21, esp. pp. 18–21.
14. Геворг А. Тирациян, *Культура Древней Армении* (Gevorg A. Tiratsyan, *Culture of the Ancient Armenia*), Yerevan 1988, pp. 120–121.
15. According to Karen Matevosyan's suggestion in our forthcoming monograph on Horomos (see above, note 10), the first dedication of the oldest church was not to Surb Minas (as it was believed in the early twentieth century), but to Surb Hovhannes.
16. In academic literature, the building is classified as a four-columned. However, even Nerses Sargisean mentioned the existence of 12 columns across the walls and 4 columns in the middle of the hall (Ներսես Սարգիսեան, *Տեղագրությունից ի Փարկ եւ ի Մեծ Հայք*, Yerevan 1864, p. 18).
17. Baladian and Thierry 2002, *Le couvent de Horomos*, pl. 39–60. Nevertheless, Toramanyan's drawings were sketches, and, since 1917, nobody has continued his work due to political circumstances. Like the other buildings of Horomos, I hope that the zhamatun will be measured accurately in years to come.
18. On khachkar art see: Levon Azaryan, *Armenian khachkars* (Text in Armenian, Russian and English), Holy Echmiadzin 1973; Анатолий Якобсон, *Армянские хачкары* (Anatoliy Yakobson, *Armenian khachkars*), Yerevan 1986.
19. Մուրադ Հասրատյան, *Հռոմեոսի վանքը*, in: Փրիստոսյան Հայաստանի հանրագիտարան (Murad Hasratyan, *Horomos monastery*, in: *Christian Armenia: Encyclopedia*), Yerevan 2002, p. 603. The other view considered the zhamatun of Horomos as one of the first among those type of buildings only, see: Мнацаканян 1952, *Архитектура армянских притворов*, pp. 35–36.
20. Мнацаканян 1952, *Архитектура армянских притворов*, p. 237.
21. Феликс Тер-Мартirosов, *Вопросы консервации и презентации памятника Драсханакерт-Бениамин, как туристического объекта* (Felix Ter-Martirosov, *Questions of conservation and presentation of the monument of Draskhanakert-Beniamin*), in: *Protection of Armenian Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Armenia and Abroad Round Table*. Yerevan–Oshakan 2008 (2009), pp. 140–146.
22. Мнацаканян 1952, *Архитектура армянских притворов*, p. 237.
23. Paul M. Mylonas, *Gavits arméniens et Litae byzantines. Observations nouvelles sur le complexe de Saint-Luc en Phocide*, in: *Cahiers archéologiques*, t. 38, 1990, pp. 99–122.
24. The earliest litae are shown in: Sotiris Voyadjis, *Observations on the structural history of the Sagmata Monastery in Boiotia*, in: *The Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society*, Περιοδος , Τομος ΙΗ, 1995, pp. 49–70; Χαράλαμος Μ ούρας and Λασκαρίνα Μ ούρα, *Η Ελλαδική ναοδομία κατά τον 12ο αιώνα*, Athens 2002, pp. 92–93.
25. Сергей Хмельницкий, *Между арабами и тюрками. Раннеисламская архитектура Средней Азии* (Sergey Khmelniatskiy, *Between Arabs and Turks. Early Islamic Architecture of Central Asia*), Berlin/Riga, 1992, pp. 72–78.
26. Хмельницкий 1992, *Между арабами и тюрками*, pp. 81–82.
27. Армен Казарян, *Кафедральный собор Сурб Эчмиадзин и восточнохристианское зодчество IV – VII веков* (Armen Kazaryan, *The Cathedral of Holy Ejmiadzin and the Eastern Christian architecture of the 4th – 7th centuries*), Moscow 2007.
28. About Zvartnots see: Թորոս Թորամանյան, *Զվարթնոց, Գագկաշեն* (Toros Toramanyan, *Zvartnots, Gagkashen*), Yerevan 1984, pp. 1–84; Армен Казарян, *Церковная архитектура стран Закавказья VII века. Формирование и развитие традиции* (Armen Kazaryan, *Church architecture of the 7th century in Transcaucasian countries: Formation and development of the tradition*), vol. II, Moscow 2012, pp. 492–549.
29. About Gagkashen see: Թորոս Թորամանյան 1984, *Զվարթնոց, Գագկաշեն*, pp. 84–130.
30. In case of the height of 85 cm for the bases, and of 107 cm for the capitals of these columns (Strzygowski 1918, *Die Baukunst*, Abb. 451–452).
31. Армен Казарян, «Новый Иерусалим» в пространственных концепциях и архитектурных формах средневековой Армении (Armen Kazaryan, «New Jerusalem» in the concepts of space and architectural forms of Medieval Armenia, in: *New Jerusalem: Hierotopy and iconography of sacred spaces*, Ed. Alexei Lodov, Moscow 2009, pp. 529–530; Armen Kazaryan 2012, *Church Architecture of the 7th Century*, p. 440 ff. (detailed bibliography on the question: note 45 on p.474). My colleagues were mentioned the shapes of Zvartnots, which was originated from the Rotunda Anastasis (Степан Х. Мнацаканян *Звартноц* (Stephan Mnatsakanyan, *Zvartnots*), Moscow 1971. p. 45; Elisabeth Tompos, *Meaning of Tetraconch Churches in the Early Medieval European and Middle East Architecture in Particular in Caucasian Area and in Hungary*, in: *Atti del quinto SIAA Venezia*: S. Lazzaro 1991, p. 264–265), and I suggest this transfer as a part of the representation of the viewings of a New Jerusalem.
32. Armen Kazaryan 2009, «New Jerusalem» in the concepts of space, pp. 532–533.
33. Armen Kazaryan 2012, *Church Architecture of the 7th Century*, p. 440 ff. (detailed bibliography on the question: note 45 on p.474).
34. Stepanos Taronytsi Asoghik, *Oecumenical history*, ed. St. Malkhaseants, Saint Petersburg 1885, p. 282.
35. Gabriella Uluhogian, *The Evidence of Inscriptions*, in: *Documenti di Architettura Armena / Documents of Armenian Architecture*, Milan 1984, pp. 72–83; Diane Favro, *Encircled by Time: The Church of the Savior*, in: *Armenian Kars and Ani*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian, Costa Mesa, California 2011, p. 128.
36. Robert Ousterhout, *Rebuilding the Temple: Constantine Monomachus and the Holy Sepulchre*, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. XLVIII, March 1989, pp. 66–78, esp. p. 70.
37. *Гроба Господня (Воскресения Христова) храм в Иерусалиме* (The church of Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem), in: *Orthodox Encyclopaedia*, vol. XIII, Moscow 2006, p. 129.
38. About this event in the world architecture, see: Patrick Donabédian, *L'âge d'or de l'architecture arménienne au VIIe siècle*, Marseille 2008; Armen Kazaryan, *The "Classical" Tradition of the 7th Century Architecture in Armenia and Georgia: Its Meaning for East Christian Art*, in: *Anadolu ve Çevresinde Ortaçağ*, vol. 3, 2010, pp. 23–48; Kazaryan 2012–2013, *Church Architecture of the 7th Century*.

Figures

Fig. 1: Horomos, the church Surb Hovhannes and zhamatun, view from the South (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 2: Horomos, zhamatun, plan and longitudinal section by Toros Toramanyan (Baladian et Thierry 2002, *Le couvent de Horomos*)

Fig. 3: Horomos, zhamatun, interior view from S-E corner (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 4: Horomos, zhamatun, view into the central bay (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 5: Horomos, zhamatun, tabernacle or tent (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 6: Horomos, zhamatun, eight-partite vault (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 7: Horomos, zhamatun, ceilings of the south nave (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 8: Church of Zvartnots, diagonal column and part of the ambulatory (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 9: Ephesus, the library of Celsus, the portico (photograph by Armen Kazaryan)

Fig. 10: Holy Sepulchre, longitudinal section, engraved by Fratello Bernardino Amico, 1619 (Virgilio Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro de Gerusalemme. Aspetti archaeologici dale origini al periodo crociato*. Vol. 1–3. Jerusalem, 1981–1982)

Abstract

The complex of monastic buildings of Horomos is one of the largest in medieval Armenia and the whole Christian East. In the course of the study of Horomos, I paid particular attention to a number of buildings which marked the shaping of new architectural types: the fore-church hall called *zhamatun*; the entry arch with two chapels above the pylons; the two-story mausoleum with tree chapels above the liturgical hall; and hall-reliquaries. Such creativity was extremely rare for the medieval architectural tradition in Armenia, with its well-established typology and a limited number of architectural plans. In Horomos, however, there were not less than four new building plans, each of which initiated a new architectural type. The largest

church of the monastery and the *zhamatun* are both dated to 1038 by an inscription that mentions the patron, Hovhannes Smbat *Shahinshah* Bagratouni. Like other twelfth- and thirteenth-century ‘copies’ of the Horomos *zhamatun*, most of which looked like covered cemeteries, that building may have had a funerary function, and was, probably, built as a royal mausoleum.

The article analyzes the architecture of this 16-column hall. I will focus on the origin of this composition and to the carved decoration. Unlike traditional concepts of this architectural type’s development from local domestic architecture, I offer some architectural models that were based on new concepts: among these were the late antique churches of Armenia, such as Ejmiatsin cathedral and Zvartnots, and the Anastasis Rotunda. This research brings us closer to an understanding of the conceptual architectural idea that was shaped in the last years of the so-called “Armenian renaissance” of the end of the tenth and the first half of the eleventh century.

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on projects at the monuments of this town organized
by Turkish architects.

Title

Armen Kazaryan , The *Zhamatun* of Horomos: The
Shaping of an Unprecedented Type of Fore-church
Hall, in: kunsttexte.de, Nr. 3, 2014 (14 Seiten), www.kunsttexte.de.