

here an example (fig. 9). Furthermore, on the horse-shoe-shaped crowning arches which join the pair of windows to the right there is a row of birds following one another which recalls the canon-arcades with birds of the Syriac gospel of Rabbula or of Armenian tenth-century gospels. They are also comparable to the animal sculptures on the entrance of the fourth century tomb of Aghtz, of which we shall speak later. The church of Mar Jacob at Nisibis, built in the year 338 or 359, has a pair of windows joined together like those of Budghavank, but the sculptures on the crowning arches are different.⁷ Up above the windows there is a frieze with an unusual ornamental sculpture consisting of a row of vases. Finally, the crowning arch of the high window of the northern end of the western wall is composed of lilies, which, as we shall see, is characteristic of the Sasanian-Hellenistic period of Mesopotamian art. This sculpture of lilies is to be considered as one of the last of its kind in Armenian architectural sculpture. We do not see that motif on churches of the seventh century, with the exception of the church of Zevartnotz, where however it is considerably modified and likewise has many Mesopotamian elements.

III

Let us now try to ascertain the date of the founding of Budghavank. A comparison with the churches which are known to belong to the seventh century, immediately shows that it cannot be later than the middle of that century. The external structure of the church, the ornamental sculpture of the windows, the foundation with its three steps surrounding the building — all these, characteristic only of our ancient churches, convince us indubitably of the truth of this statement. But at the same

7. Strzygowski, *L'ancien Art Chrétien de syrie*, fig. 87. Sarre und Herzfeld, *Archaeologische Reise in Euphrat und Tigris-Gebiet*, band II 342-343.

time, the example set before us shows us

how careful we must be in such matters; for the period to which the dated examples belong barely covers half a century, while the number of similar undated churches is very large, and they may be and some of them actually are older than the dated churches.

Fortunately, in regard Budghavank and some monastery churches we have authentic and exact information of the beginning of the seventh century to which sufficient attention has not yet been directed. We are referring to the account and ecclesiastical council records preserved in the Keerk Tughtotz (*Book of Letters*). As is well known, there had arisen in the last years of the sixth century serious disturbances in the Armenian Church, due to the policy of the Emperor Maurice and to internal dogmatic disputes. Not only had the Georgians seceded from allegiance to the Armenian Catholicos—all but the Albanians, the Armenians of Siunik, some of the bishops of the Byzantine part of Armenia were also showing similar inclinations. To counteract this situation the bishop Vurtanes Kertogh, who was at the time the locum tenens of the catholical see, and Simpad Bagradouni were endeavoring to gather the episcopates and abbotcies around the patriarchal see and effect unity. Such an oath of union has come down to us dated in the seventeenth year of Abrouez Chosroes, which corresponds to the year 606 A.D. Amongst a list of bishops and abbots "Israel of Budghavank" has also signed the oath of union. This document has come down to us in the Keerk Tughtotz and in the history of Oukhdanes, this latter being a tenth century historian. Budghavank was already in existence, therefore, in the beginning of the seventh century and was one of those monasteries whose abbots' signatures were of importance for the preservation of the Patriarchal See. Thus we have the year 606 as definitely the latest date for the founding of Budghavank.

But this document is much more important for the history of Armenian architecture than it appears at first. The abbots who