

we have documentary evidence in the literature of the latter part of the 6th century, or the early part of the 7th. A similar artistic motif may be seen in Sasanian art where a genius is placing a crown on the king's head, for instance at Tag i Bostan, where the goddess Anahid is placing a crown on the king's head. We have already pointed out the formal similarity between these capitals and those of our own basilicas, where the figure of Anahid has been replaced by the cross symbolizing Christ or Christianity. A similar idea is expressed in the carvings on the arch of the cave where the goddess, or the spirit, holds a crown in her right hand, and a vessel full of pearls in her left hand (\*). Here is another example which shows the Syro-Mesopotamian connections of the art of Otsoun. We find a similar motif also in Coptic art where the eagle holds a crown in its beak.

If we leave aside the steps and the arches resting on piers, the sepulchral steles of Otsoun, as well as that of Prtatzor which we shall see later on, show great similarity to the cross of Akka, and to the steles of Ruthwell (Fig. 44a), and Kewcastle (Fig. 34b), with respect to form and, in part, to content. In the opinion of Strzygowski, it is not improbable that such art which he considers as belonging to the 8th century, should have passed through Armenia and Syria (\*\*).

In the ornamental sculpture of Otsoun, the geometrical figures and particularly the lily deserve special attention. The lily appears repeatedly, we have already seen it on the crowning arch of one of the windows at Budghavank and we shall see it again elsewhere.

From all that has been said above, we can conclude, without any hesitation that the stele and the church belong to the same period and the same artistic trend, they were built at a time when the basilican and local-Iranian styles were beginning

to merge, but when the basilican style was still the dominant factor, hence at an earlier period than Budghavank erected in the first half of the 6th century, or St. Gaianè built around 630 A.D., or Mren, of about 640 A.D., or Arooj dating about 660 A.D.

### III

From the standpoint of the sculptural style as well as the setting of the scenes in squares, the sepulchral stele of Prtatzor is very much like the memorial of Otsoun. The earliest mention of Prtatzor known to us dates in the year 1273 A.D. when one of the noted bishops of Hagpad, Hovhannes Topian, states in the inscription of a magnificent cross-stone known as the "Saviour of All" (Amenapurgich): "I ordered the costly reliquary of the Holy Cross of Prtatzor". The church of Prtatzor, therefore, existed in the 13th century, but judging from the ruins and remains of the small basilica, it was much older and had been in existence many centuries before. Fortunately the sepulchral stele erected next to it is still in a good state of preservation; it is related, in style, to the sepulchral steles built near basilican churches, to the stele of Otsoun, already discussed, and to many others we shall mention later. The head or crown of this quadrangular stele is unfortunately partly broken. The side shown in the first picture is decorated with a stylized design of ears of corn (Fig. 45), a characteristic motif of Sasanian art as may be seen on the silver plates (\*\*). The frieze of the pedestal consisting in a row of vertical grooves, also appears in the sculptured fragments of Goghpa as we shall see later on, and cannot be later than 6th century. Farther down are spirals symbolizing eternity. On the second face (Fig. 46) we see a vine scroll with alternating

\* See our *Havoots Tarri Amenapurgiche*, 1937, Jerusalem, page 61.

\*\* Smirnov *Bestochnoe Serebro Taf. CXX. St. Peters, — Orbeli et Trever. Sasanidsky Metall. Moskwa-Leningrad, 1935, 51, see also here Fig. 53, 57, 59.*

\* Sarre, *Die Kunst des Alten Persien*, page 44, 45, Fig 12 and 91.

\*\* *Origin of Christian Art*, Oxford, 1923, p. 239.