

(Nerseh Abohibad, patricius of Shirag and Lord of Arsharoonis) is known to us by the inscriptions of Alaman and Mren, the first of these two churches being built in the 27th year of Heracles' reign, the second in the 29th year, that is, in 637, and 639 A.D. respectively (*). The second church larger and more sumptuous, again bears no date, but it cannot be later than the 8th century when building activities ceased in Armenia for about two centuries due to the Arab persecutions and wars. A subsequent inscription of this church bears the date *ULB*, that is, 783 A.D. (**)

Talin could not have remained without a church until the middle of the 7th century. The large number of remains of sepulchral steles found here, and which, as we have seen, are related to basilican churches, should be taken as evidence of this. They are now near the large church, but they were brought by the villagers from a near-by place and used as tombstones for their dead. Unfortunately, we were unable to find the original site, the ruins of which have entirely disappeared or lie buried under the vineyards.

On one of these steles (Fig. 38) is represented a human figure with a pig's head, familiar to the one seen at Otsoun, and on other steles of Talin, (Fig. 39, 40, 41); the last example represents a woman. On two of these steles, the upper figure is that of a saint who, considering the entire literary tradition, must be identified as Gregory the Illuminator. The pig-headed figure, who is king Dirdad, is kissing the feet of the Illuminator, he raises his left hand in a gesture of worship or adoration, as we see in the representations of the Annunciation or of the Holy Virgin; hence, a common feature of the figure sculpture of this period.

The upper figure holds the Gospel in his left hand; the right hand is lowered. He is nimbed and his garment is similar

to that of the apostles of Otsoun, a tunic, and over it a mantle which covers his breast, is thrown over his left shoulder and falls on both sides down to the hem of the tunic. The narrow folds of the tunic and the mantle are worthy of interest and characteristic of those monuments which reveal Syrian influence. The bound book in the saint's hand, instead of a parchment scroll, need not make us hesitate in dating the relief in the 4th or 5th century, for the book, or codex, is of much older origin. We see it on Christian carvings of the fourth century (*), and we have an actual Biblical manuscript of the fifth century, the Codex Sinaiticus. The face of the figure is broken off, but we may get an idea from the other stele, on which we can see the hair on the head, the bushy beard, the eyes and the nose. The sculptured part of the stele, as it stands today, is 150 centimeters high; the pedestal measures 16 centimeters in height and 45 centimeters in width.

On the reverse side, the stele is 46 centimeters wide, the sculptured part only 120 centimeters high. The figure appears to be that of a woman whose face is obliterated. (Fig. 66). The under-garment reaches the feet, while the over-garment is somewhat shorter. She has a long mantle thrown over her right shoulder and hooked under the neck. Her left hand comes out from under the over-garment and is raised in a praying attitude, thus her under-garment is visible in the left side and the over-garment has the general appearance of the chlamys worn by Byzantine dignitaries. She appears to be wearing shoes without heels. Under the figure's feet is an acanthus; three of the pointed leaves are erect, the other two are bent down; similar examples occur on other monuments. The third face of the stele shows a cross set by its stem on a pedestal (Fig. 67). The vertical arm is very long, the horizontal is short and broken. Figures 68 and 69 give a complete idea of the figure. On the

* See our "Art of Calligraphy", Chapter 6.

** Ibid. 11. See the original, also Alishan, Ararat, page 138.

* Burckhardt, Die Zeit Constantine des Grossen. Figures 90, 91.