

in a larger rectangle, are two confronted birds on the sides of a plant or flower; a motif often seen, with slight variations, on the diptychs and sarcophagi of the 4-6th centuries. (\*\*), as well as in the Christian art of the same period of Armenian history, as a symbolic image of the tree, or the fountain of life. We may mention, among other examples, a fourth-century fragment on the north wall of the Etchmiadzin church (Fig 104); a contemporary relief from the underground chapel of the cemetery of Aghts (See Fig. 12), the fifth century lintels from the churches of Kasakh (Fig 8), and that of Apn village, which is not later than the 6th century (Fig. 20). We find the same composition on Coptic textiles of the 5th century, on both sides of the monogram of Christ. (Fig. 105).

Coptic art also furnishes examples of compositions similar to the carvings on the first side of our stele, for instance the wood carvings from Bawit, reproduced by Strzykowski in his book on Coptic Art. Here Christ stands under an arch resting on columns; He blesses with his right hand, while in his left hand He holds a Gospel. Instead of our composition in a square frame, that is the man and the lion, there is a cross of equal arms in a circle. Strzykowski states: "Das Kreuz in Lorbeer kranz ist typische auf Grabsteinen (\*\*\*) (The cross in a laurel wreath is typical of tombstone). We saw this form on another side of our stele, and many times in other places. For instance at Dzarrayishen (Fig. 19) the scepter cross in a circle; on the capitals of Arooj or Talin (\*) (comparable to an example in Egypt (\*\*)) on a base at Talin in a square frame (Fig. 84), in a triple

\*\*Kraus, *Geschichte der christlichen Kunst*, I, 99, 253, Kaufman, *Christ. Archeol.* 294, 3ii-313, 306.

\*\*\**Die Koptische Kunst*, page 120, Taf. VII, No. 8775. Compare with 7825, considered to be a work of 5th century.

\*Strzykowski, *Die Baukunst*, page 411, Figures 439, 440, 441.

\*\**Die Koptische Kunst*, page 64, 4-5th century work.

circle (Fig. 14) at Avan of Aracadz, (\*\*\*) and elsewhere.

Finally, we shall mention the remains of two more places which are slightly different in form, but which we think are related to sepulchral pillars. One of these is at Oshagan where Vahan Amadooni built a church over the tomb of Saint Mesrob in the forties of the 5th century which, judging by the foundation, and a photograph made by Goosigian must have been a basilica. This building already about to fall, was completely destroyed by George IV Catholicos, who, in its place, erected a new church, without any artistic merit. On this site may be seen a stele, with an octagonal base and crowned with a capital, recalling, in style, the capitals of Zvartnotz. In our opinion, this monument was a sepulchral stele.

The bases discovered at Touvin by Khachig Vartabed's excavation, which also recall the capitals of Zvartnotz, must have been part of a similar sepulchral steles. We cannot tell whether they are remnants of the church built by Nerses (651-661), according to the Catholicos Hovhannes, or older. On one of these bases is carved a cross, also with a ball on each arm, while on the horizontal arms stand two confronted birds, as was pointed above (\*\*\*\*). On the capital-shaped fragments can be seen ornaments similar to the fragments and capitals of Goghq and Prtatzor, as also carvings of flowers and ears of corn on high stalks — and evidence of identical artistic trend.

## XII

In the preceding chapters we had occasion to discuss sculptures of the Holy Virgin rather than of other saints.

In Christian art, the earliest images of Mary appear in the murals of the cata-

\*\*\**Ibid.*, page 100, and Fig. 153; 8761, work of 600 A.D.

\*\*\*\* See Figures in Strzykowski's "*Die Baukunst*", page 320-321, Figures 361 and 363. Fig. 361 should be compared with our figures 51, 53, and 59, of about the same size.