

and attire are borrowed from Greco-Roman art. The relation between Armenian and Trans-Jordanian motifs had already been pointed out by Strzygowski independently from these examples.

This transmission of religious conceptions and their pictorial representations from one nation to another is indeed remarkable. Many of the religious images of the Hittites had passed to the Assyrians, for instance Hadad, Ishtar, Ashur, with their winged solar disc, which we also see on the sculpture from Teima. But the Hittites borrowed the winged solar disc from the Egyptians, the Assyrians took it from Hittites, and the Persians adopted it from the Assyrians with minor alterations. This brief account, I believe, will be sufficient to understand this phenomenon of transmission of artistic motifs and forms from one nation to another.

In the Sasanian Section of the Museum of Baghdad we saw a fragment, similar in form to our steles, but in a badly damaged condition.

These are indications, but not positive proofs of the theory of the Hittite origin of our monuments. This transmission may have been direct and immediate, or gradual by way of different intermediaries. New discoveries in Armenia or in the neighboring countries of **Hither** Asia are bringing other evidence which will enable us to grasp fully this complex problem.

#### XIV

We cannot assign a definite chronology to these steles but can only indicate the century to which they belong. We have seen that all of them, almost without exception, are connected with the basilicas, and from all the evidence available have been made between the fourth and sixth centuries, or at the latest the first quarter of the seventh century. Similar works in Syro-Coptic Art point to the same conclusion. We have also seen that during the 7th century when national architecture had reached its highest stage of development, figure sculpture on Armenian buildings

gave way to decorative forms. As the only exception to this, we mentioned the decorative carvings of Zvartnotz. But through its architectural form as well Zvartnotz holds a unique place in Armenian art. In saying this we are naturally not taking into account the later copies.

During the 6th century, there were two conflicting mental attitudes in Armenia concerning the figurative arts. In his "Haghaks Badgeramardits" — Concerning the Iconoclasts — Vertanes Kertogh gives us most valuable information on this subject. In fact, this work is as important for the Christian art of the 6th century as the letter of St. Nilus of Sinai to the Prefect Olympiodorus was for the preceding century (\*). We shall examine at a later date, when we consider the origins of Armenian illumination, the problem of the authenticity of this letter, questioned by Dashian in his Catalogue of the Vienna manuscripts. For the time being we shall be content to mention it as far as it is necessary to explain the art of the period to which belong our steles.

Vertanes writes that the Opponents of picture worship or picture veneration say that "it is improper to put pictures and paintings in the church, and in defense of their thesis, they cite passages from the Old Testament — which in fact referred to the idolatry of heathens". Vertanes points out that testimonies quoted from the Old Testament allude to heathen practice and are not applicable to Christian pictorial art, which is entirely compatible with the tenets of the Old and New Testaments. "In the temples of the idols", he says, "are pictures of Ormuzt (Aramazd) of his fornications and frauds. But in God's churches we see painted the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, holding in her arms Christ, her creator and also her son, and the creator of all". Then as a contrast to the pictures in heathen temples, he enumerates the scenes from the life of Christ "his birth and his baptism, his passion and crucifixion, his burial,

\* Strzygowski, Origin of Christian Church Art, page 144.