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**« Small mural khachkars in medieval Armenian communities of Crimea, Galicia, Podolia, and Bessarabia »**

dans :

***На межі між Сходом і Заходом***  
***On the borderline between the East and the West***

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## SMALL MURAL KHACHKARS IN MEDIEVAL ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES OF CRIMEA, GALICIA, PODOLIA, AND BESSARABIA

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### Identification of a specific type of small mural khachkars

The type of tall khachkars, standing isolated or in groups, often, but not always, in cemeteries, in front of graves, is a well-known form of Armenian art, emblematic for this country<sup>1</sup>. But it is less known that simultaneously with it, approximately at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, also in Armenia, a “minor” type of mural khachkars has been elaborated<sup>2</sup>. The stone plates belonging to this second category also show the image of a cross, but they have smaller dimensions, and are intended to be inserted in the façades of churches or civil buildings. Sometimes they are deprived of inscriptions, therefore their only message is the glorification of the cross, represented, as always in Armenian art, as a tree of life. More often, inscriptions carved on them add a votive or commemorative content, which can be linked to a donation. In Armenia, this “minor” type remains relatively “secondary” compared to the huge number of monumental khachkars, and their very impressive “presence” in Armenia’s landscapes. On the contrary, in the communities of the Armenian diaspora, the second category can be considered as very characteristic, because it is almost exclusively the only one attested.

Outside Armenia, examples of such kind of small, mural khachkars appear first in Cilicia and Jerusalem, in the 12<sup>th</sup> c. In Cilicia, for the moment, only 8-9 plates with cross are known. However, in this “new Armenia”, the conditions did not correspond to diaspora criteria. In Jerusalem, there are 287 examples of small, mural khachkars, which have been recently exhaustively studied<sup>3</sup>. But again,

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Jerusalem stands separately, as an exceptional place of pilgrimage. Besides Cilicia and Jerusalem, this category is used in various diaspora centers. Among these colonies, New Julfa in Isfahan (with 382 plates of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cc.<sup>4</sup>) and Crimea (with around 200 plates, from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> c.) distinguish themselves by the number of plates with cross. Far behind them,

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<sup>1</sup> Պետրոսյան Հ., *Խաչքար. Ծագումը, գործառնությունը, պատկերազարդությունը, իմաստաբանությունը*. – Երևան: Փրինթինֆո, 2008. [Petrossian H. *Khachkar. Origin, function, iconography, semantics*. – Yerevan: Printinfo, 2008].

<sup>2</sup> Donabédian P., «Spécificité typologique des khatchkars diasporiques : les petites plaques à croix murales» [Soon to be published in:] *Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashyan (1927–2009)*. Series: Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity / Edit. by C. Horn, B. Lourié, A. Ostrovsky, and B. Outtier. – Leyden: Brill.

<sup>3</sup> Khatchadourian H., Basmadjian M., *L’art des khatchkars. Les pierres à croix arméniennes d’Ispahan et de Jérusalem*. – Paris: Geuthner, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Khatchadourian H., Basmadjian M., *L’art des khatchkars...*, P. 30-34, 102-103, 169-249, 334-383, and *passim*.

Aleppo had, before the destructions by the Islamist terrorists in 2015, 32 plates<sup>5</sup>, Lviv has 6 pieces, etc.

All these examples in foreign countries clearly demonstrate the specificity of this type: these are small, usually thin plates, often in marble, which do not stand isolated, orientated towards the East, like the monumental khachkars of Armenia, but are mounted into the surface of walls and, therefore, are deprived of proper orientation. Their decoration presents mainly the same kind of cross-tree of life, as on the tall khachkars, often surrounded with vegetal and geometric ornament, but in a markedly simplified version.

Their main and direct meaning is, of course, the glorification of the cross. But, as for the tall stelas of Armenia, the functions of these small plates are diverse, funerary, commemorative, votive, memorial. The inscriptions carved on most of them contain a prayer for the salvation of the soul and for the memory of the believers mentioned in them. In the case of the Jerusalem plates, these are mainly pilgrims. In the other cases, they are ordinary parishioners and priests, as well as members of their family.

Among the reasons for the choice, in diaspora conditions, of such a modest form, one may probably consider the following factors: a reduction of material means, a loss of technical and artistic skills, the difficulty of erecting relatively high stelas, standing isolated, and perhaps the main reason: a wish of discretion, especially in Catholic or Muslim environment, where external signs of foreign cults could be undesirable or even simply forbidden.

### **The small mural khachkars of Crimea. The town of Caffa.**

In the wide geography of Armenian dispersion, a significant place belongs to the Crimean khachkars<sup>6</sup>. The large Armenian population of Crimea was very active in

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the production of small mural khachkars, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and until the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The main centre was the town of Caffa (nowadays Theodosia), administrative “capital” of the Genoese Crimea, where a very numerous Armenian community used to live, from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century up to the conquest of the peninsula by the Ottomans in 1475, but also later, until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Crimean production has its originality and a certain

<sup>5</sup> Քորթոշյան Բ., *Հալեպի արձանագրությունները*. – Երևան: ՀՃՈԼ, 2013.

[Kortoshyan R., *The inscriptions of Aleppo*. – Yerevan: RAA, 2013]. – P. 95-96, 99-106; Pl. 33-36.

<sup>6</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба Каффы XIV-XVIII веков*. – Симферополь:

Сонат, 2001. [Aybabina E., *Decorative stone sculpture of Caffa in the 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries*. –

Simferopol: Sonat, 2001]. – P. 62-98, p. 146-150. Гаврилова А., «Хачкары из фондов

Феодосийского краеведческого музея» // *The Second International Symposium on*

*Armenian Art (1978). Том III*. – Ереван: Академия наук, 1981. – С. 95-102 [Gavrilova A.,

«Khachkars from the collections of the Theodosia Regional Museum» // *The Second*

*International Symposium on Armenian Art (1978). Vol. III*. – Yerevan: Academy of Sciences,

1981. – P. 95-102]. Гаврилова А., «Феодосийские хачкары XIV-XVII вв.» // *V*

*республиканская научная конференция по проблемам культуры и искусства Армении*. –

Ереван: Ереванский гос. университет, 1982. – С. 278-280 [Gavrilova A. «Khachkars of the

14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cc. from Theodosia» // *Vth Republican Scientific Conference on questions of*

*Armenian culture and art*. – Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 1982. – P. 278-280].

Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվան հայ վիճագրության. Պրակ VII. Ուկրաինա, Մոլդովա*. –

Երևան: Գիտություն, 1996. [Grigoryan G., *Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum. Vol. VII.*

*Ukraine. Moldavia*. – Yerevan: Gitutyun, 1996]. – P. 20-145.

typological diversity. This production is particularly important for Eastern Europe, because it has exerted its influence on the other Armenian centers of the region. This influence can be observed in Galicia (Lviv/Lvov), in Podolia (Kamenets-Podolskii) and in Bessarabia (Akkerman/Belgorod-Dnestrovskii).

First, we must note that the Armenian community of Caffa, is the only one in the whole diaspora which has preserved, at least in some examples, the national tradition of monumental khachkars standing alone. It's true that it doesn't seem to be an early phenomenon, but rather a late "mode". Two such stelas have been inserted into the western façade of the narthex of Saint Sarkis church in Caffa. One of them (153 x 62 cm) is dated 1761 (*fig. 1*), the second one, markedly bigger (254 x 78 cm), is probably from the same period, as it presents the same composition and proportions, and the same trefoil arch above the cross (*fig. 2*). These khachkars sometime used to stand isolated; they were obviously made on the model of the famous elongated stelas of the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> – the very beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> c., in the cemetery of Julfa, alas destroyed by Azerbaijan's authorities at the beginning of our century. Fragments of two or three khachkars of the same type, and probably the same period, are kept in Theodossia Regional Museum<sup>7</sup>. A relatively small khachkar (95 x 56 x 24 cm), now in the same museum<sup>8</sup>, was perhaps also standing alone (*fig. 3*); it seems to date back to the same late period (perhaps the 17<sup>th</sup> c.). Besides these reused stones and fragments, and the khachkar of the museum, Minas Bzhshkiant reports the existence, in the 1820s, of khachkars «of human size», fixed «on large pedestals», in the Armenian suburb of Caffa called Quarantine or Armenian Fort, but, as per this testimony, they had been taken to Saint Petersburg<sup>9</sup>, and their subsequent fate is unknown.

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Except for these rare (and probably late) cases, the Crimean Armenians have chosen the same path as all their compatriots abroad: they have carved small mural khachkars. Most of them are in the medieval town of Caffa. The oldest was a plate dated 1301, inside the church of Saint George of Caffa; unfortunately, it is lost<sup>10</sup>. More than one hundred plates are still preserved in Caffa, mainly in Saint Sarkis church<sup>11</sup>. The small khachkar (76 x 34 cm) mounted in the north wall of its narthex, dated 1356, is the oldest among the dated pieces that have reached us (*fig. 4*). Many of these plates are in marble, some are made of limestone or sandstone.

The dimensions are relatively modest: from 30 to 90 cm high, and from 20 to 45 cm wide. The pieces detached from the walls on which they were fixed show a reduced thickness, generally from 5 to 7 cm. In some rare and late cases, the height may reach 120 cm, for example on the plate of 1698 dedicated to the memory of the famous miniaturist Nikoghos Tzaghkarar<sup>12</sup> (*fig. 5*); here again, perhaps, one may observe an influence of the slim khachkars of the Julfa cemetery.

In decorative compositions, along with the traditional repertoire, clearly simplified and somewhat "rustic", there are also features of fantasy. For example, on some plates from the 1420s, we find an original motif: a design of heart with a lily in its center, interlaced on the

<sup>7</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, P. 87-88, fig. 22; P. 98; P. 215, pl. XXIX.

<sup>8</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, P. 90, 93, 214, pl. XXVIII, n° 2.

<sup>9</sup> Բժշկեանց Ս., *Ճանապարհորդութիւն ի Լեհաստան*. – Վենետիկ: Սուրբ Ղազար, 1830. [Bzhshkiant M., *Travel to Poland*. – Venice: Saint Lazarus, 1830]. – P. 334.

<sup>10</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վիճազրույթի...*, P. 97, n° 192.

<sup>11</sup> Гаврилова А., *Хачкары из фондов...*, P. 95.

<sup>12</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, P. 208, pl. XXII, n° 1. Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վիճազրույթի...*, P. 36, n° 29.

edges of the cross branches<sup>13</sup> (*fig. 6-7*). As we shall see further, the same hearts are represented on one of the Lviv plates, dating back, precisely, to 1427.

At the foot of the cross, in Crimea (mainly in Caffa), a rectangular fragment of interlace is often represented (*fig. 8*). It is known in several traditions, from Far East to Celtic Europe, under the names of “knot of infinity”, “knot of happiness”, “knot of wisdom”. This motif, in such a treatment, is not found on other groups of khachkars, neither in Armenia, nor in diaspora, except for the East-European colonies under Crimean influence. Under the cross, the traditional three-stepped pedestal is often replaced by a three-foiled arch with an interlace, more or less vegetal (*fig. 8*). As for the round medallion often carved under the cross of the Armenian khachkars, it is almost absent in Crimea.

The photo of a small khachkar in marble (*fig. 9*), now preserved in the Kherson regional museum, has recently been published<sup>14</sup>. It is dated 1557 (or perhaps 1637), and its inscription, still unpublished, can be read as follows:

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ԹՎԻՆ ՌԶ (= 1557) [or perhaps ՌԶԶ = 1637]  
 ԲԱՐԵԽԱԻՍ Է Ս[ՈՒՐ]Բ Ն-  
 ՇԱՆՔՍ ԽԱԶԱՏՈ-  
 ԻՐԻՆ, ԶԱԻԱԿԱՅՆ  
 և ՀԱԻՐՆ ԿԱՐԱՊԵՏ- [or perhaps ՀԱ[Յ]ՐԱՊԵՏ-]  
 ԻՆ և Խ[Ա]Թ[ՈՒՆ]ԻՆ

The following translation of the inscription can be proposed:

«In the year 1557 [or 1637]. This holy sign intercedes for Xač'atur, [his] children, [his] father Karapet [or Ha(y)rapet], and [his mother, or wife] Xaʼun».

Besides a curious imbalance in the ornamentation, with a somewhat tightened branch in the lower left quadrant, this plate presents several features quite characteristic for the Crimean works, especially of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.: the form of the leaves at the tips of the cross, the design of the two branches growing from its foot, the interlaced knot under the cross...<sup>15</sup>. The presence of a second, smaller cross, in a corner of the lower register, where the inscription is carved, also appears on plates of Caffa<sup>16</sup>. These similarities allow us to consider the Kherson khachkar as coming from Caffa.

Epigraphy is present on many Crimean plates, with the usual content, as mentioned above. But we find here an original feature, which seems to be very rare in Armenia herself, but is sometimes present on mural khachkars of Jerusalem: the number of sculpted crosses often corresponds to the number of persons named in the inscriptions. For example, on a plate dated 1451, nine crosses are present (*fig. 10*), and the inscription quotes nine names<sup>17</sup>; on a plate of 1460 (*fig. 11*), to three crosses correspond three names<sup>18</sup>.

In the collections still preserved in Caffa, the presence of homogenous series makes probable the existence of workshops specialized in the production of this kind of small

<sup>13</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, Р. 64, fig. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Гаюк І., *Ілюстрована енциклопедія вірменської культури в Україні*. – Львів: Афіша, 2012. – Том I [Hayuk I., *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Armenian Culture in Ukraine*. – Lviv: Afisha, 2012. – Vol. I]. – Р. 142, fig. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, Р. 74, fig. 15; Р. 206, pl. XX.

<sup>16</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, for ex.: Р. 210, pl. XXIV, n° 2.

<sup>17</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվան հայ վիճարրչյան...*, Р. 45, n° 48. Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, Р. 66, fig. 13, n° 1; Р. 70-71, n° 10-III.

<sup>18</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվան հայ վիճարրչյան...*, Р. 60, n° 83.

khachkars. As we shall see further, these workshops could even “export” their “products” to the Armenian colonies settled in other towns of the region, as far as Lviv, Kamenets or Akkerman.

### Small mural khachkars in other settlements of Crimea

Apart from Caffa, Armenian plates with a cross can be found in other places of the peninsula. For example, in the village of Topty-Topolyovka, one finds several

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stones of this kind, and among them a small, modest khachkar of 1381<sup>19</sup>, in the remnants of one the two Armenian chapels (*fig. 12*). In the village of Sala-Grushovka eight plates are preserved [2]. In the village school, there is a triangular marble plate with a cross, and an Armenian inscription of 1483 (*fig. 13*). The inscription has been recently published<sup>20</sup>. We propose here a new deciphering with light corrections:

ԹՎ ՋԼԲ (932 = 1483)

Ս[ՈՒՐ]Բ ՆՇ[ԱՆ]ՔՍ ԲԱՐ[ԵԽԱԻՍ] [ԵՆ] ՏՕՆԱՎԱՔԻՆ

ԵԻ ԻԻՐ ՏՂԱՅՈՅՆ

It can be translated as follows: «In the year 1483. These holy signs intercede for Tōnavak / and his sons».

Besides small flat plates carved with a cross, in the same two villages, Topty-Topolyovka and Sala-Grushovka, two elongated stones, more like stelas than khachkars, deserve our attention. As it is not the place here to analyze them, we just mention them. Two crosses are carved on them, one upon the other, the upper one in a round medallion. These unusual monuments remind, to a certain extent, Early Christian stelas of Armenia and Georgia. But they have a more precise likeness to a famous stela kept in Rostov-on-Don, in the Armenian monastery of the Holy Cross<sup>21</sup> (*fig. 14-16*)<sup>22</sup>. The kinship between these three works could be linked with the Crimean origin of the New-Nakhichevan Armenian population, precisely for some of them, from Sala. Local Armenians consider the New-Nakhichevan stela as a venerable relic, brought to the bank of the Don, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c., from Crimea, but with a previous, much more ancient origin, directly linked to Armenia<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, it has archaic features which could confirm such a tradition. As for the two stelas still in Crimea, the one in Sala (*fig. 15*) seems to be a relatively new copy, made perhaps in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. (it has, on the upper cross, the Greek inscription IC XC NI-KA [= «Jesus Christ is victorious»], usual on Orthodox crosses), whereas the one from Topty-Topolyovka (*fig. 14*) has a relatively old appearance (several pairs of birds are carved on the sides of the cross).

<sup>19</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվան հայ վիճազրույթյան...*, P. 117, n° 264.

<sup>20</sup> Байбуртский А., «Хачкары и росписи позднесредневековой армянской церкви в селе Грушевка (Сала)» // *Исследования по арменистике в Украине*. – Симферополь: PrintPix, 2008. – Выпуск I. – С. 13-20. [Bayburtskii A., «Khachkars and frescoes of the late medieval Armenian church in the village of Grushovka (Sala)» // *Studies of Armenology in Ukraine*. – Simferopol: PrintPix, 2008. – Vol. I. – P. 13-20]. – P. 14, fig. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Пештмалджян М., *Памятники армянских поселений*. – Ереван: Айастан, 1987. [Peshtmaljyan M., *Monuments of Armenian colonies*. – Yerevan: Hayastan, 1987]. – P. 165, fig. 283. Халпахчян О., *Архитектура Нахичевани-на-Дону*. – Ереван: Айастан, 1987. [Khalpakhchyan O., *The Architecture of Nakhichevan-on-Don*. – Yerevan: Hayastan, 1988]. – P. 90, fig. 67; P. 92.

<sup>22</sup> The author is indebted to Tathevik Sargsyan for the three photographs published here.

<sup>23</sup> Пештмалджян М., *Памятники армянских поселений...*, P. 165.

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Another interesting group of monuments from Crimea must be mentioned: the stones with crosses mounted into the walls of the Genoese citadel of Sudak. There are several tens of them. Most of them are inserted on the tower of Consul Federico Astaguera of 1386<sup>24</sup>. These are modest, rather rough blocks, obviously displaced, scattered on the walls without order, sometimes with a row of two, three or four crosses (*fig. 17-19*). The very few scholars who dealt with them considered them, without any hesitation, as Armenian and called them “khachkars”. Yet the extreme simplicity of the crosses makes quite acceptable a doubt on their national attribution, more exactly made it possible until Armenian inscriptions were found on two of them.

The first inscription, without dating, is carved on a fragment of a plate from tower n° 16 (*fig. 20*), now kept in the citadel museum. The text has been published<sup>25</sup>, but again a slightly amended version can be proposed here:

ԿԱՆԿՆԵՅԱԻ Ս[ՈՒՐ]Բ  
ԽԱԶՍ Ի ՅԻՇԱՍԱ-  
Կ ԴԹԻ [= ԴԱԻԹԻ ?] ՆՈՐՇԱՀԻՆ  
[...]

With the following attempt of translation:

«This holy cross was erected in memory of Dawit‘ (?), of Noršah» [...].

The second inscription is on a plate fixed on Barnaba di Franchi di Pagano’s tower (tower n° 14). Carved on the upper edge of the stone, the inscription remained unnoticed until now, and unfortunately has almost totally disappeared during the last twenty years (*fig. 21*). The old photos are not clear enough (*fig. 21a*); they just let us guess, on the right half of the strip, the words ՀԱՅ[ՈՅ (?)] ԹՎԱԿԱՆԻ[Ն (?)] (= in [the year of] the Armenian era). The new photos allow us to read only some Armenian letters (probably the word ԹՎԱԿԱՆ) on the right end of the strip<sup>26</sup>.

These two plates with Armenian epigraphs distinguish themselves from the rest of the extremely “rustic” “khachkars” of Sudak. They present, albeit very modest, some elements of decoration, common to both: two small lateral crosses (usual reference to the thieves of the Golgotha), a three or four-stepped pedestal under the foot of the cross (usual reference to the cross of the Golgotha, and also perhaps to the general idea of elevation), trefoil-like tips of the branches of the cross, and finally, “crescents” on the flanks of the cross, elsewhere unknown in Armenian

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context. Besides these peculiarities, common to the two pieces, the first one, from the citadel museum (*fig. 20*), despite its relatively small size (in its present state), has the appearance of an “independent” khachkar, which could stand isolated, unlike the second one (*fig. 21*). We leave aside the interpretation which could be inspired by the distinction between the numerous “ordinary”, anepigraphic crosses, deprived of any decoration, whose “owners” were so humble

<sup>24</sup> Майко В., Джанов А., *Археологические памятники Судакского региона Республики Крым*. – Симферополь: Ариал, 2015. [Mayko V., Dzhanov A., *Archaeological monuments of the Sudak region of the Republic of Crimea*. – Simferopol: Arial, 2015]. – P. 239.

<sup>25</sup> Майко В., Джанов А., *Археологические памятники...*, P. 321, 396, fig. 197/6.

<sup>26</sup> The author is grateful to Alexandr Dzhanov for having generously shared with him his documentation.

that their name could be omitted, and those, more adorned, on which a nominative prayer was engraved.

### Small mural khachkars of Galicia

After this short survey of the Crimean small khachkars, we propose to observe the traces of their influence on other Armenian colonies of the region, beginning from Galicia, and its capital, the town of Lviv/Lvov. In the Armenian cathedral of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, founded in 1363, besides several crosses directly carved on the walls and pillars, and besides a rectangular stone adorned with a cross, in the southern gallery, more related to a lintel<sup>27</sup>, one finds six plates with crosses, which belong to the category of small mural khachkars. It should be underlined that this collection of small khachkars in the Armenian cathedral of Lviv has been studied by Yaroslav Dashkevych, who was the first and the only scholar to pay attention to this category of monuments, neglected before (and after) him<sup>28</sup>.

The six plates in question are inserted in the central pillars of the church. Five of them are in the lower part of the two western pillars, on their face turned towards the central nave, very accessible to the faithful (*fig. 22-23*). The sixth khachkar, bigger than the others, has been embedded into the north-east pillar, on its south face looking to the altar, above the ogee arch which surmounts the passage between the altar and the north-east sacristy (*fig. 24*). They are made of marble and alabaster. Judging from the dating provided by the inscriptions of three of them<sup>29</sup>, and from the homogeneity of five of them, all can be attributed to the 15<sup>th</sup> c. The dimensions are very small: no more than 23 x 25 cm.

One however, the one just mentioned in the north-east pillar, is a little bigger: 45 x 32 cm. It distinguishes itself by its decoration and technics (*fig. 25*). It is

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probably the oldest; it bears the date 1427<sup>30</sup>. Besides the originality of the small cross under the foot of the main one, several traits – the proportions of the cross, the central square with sharp lily-like tips, the heart pattern already mentioned, on the end of the cross branches... – reveal a deep kinship with the Crimean works, particularly with two small khachkars from Caffa<sup>31</sup> (*fig. 6-7*). Such a narrow similarity allows us to suppose that the Lviv plate may have been brought from Caffa. This reminds us of the Crimean origin of a part of the Lviv Armenians, including the founders of the cathedral.

The other five plates (*fig. 26-30*) are so intimately related to each other, they have so specific characteristics: a small size, a very low relief, the thin linearity of the designs, several common elements (the form of the cross branches and their tips, the small leaves at the angles of the center of the cross, the triangles ended by a lily hanging from the upper angles, the thin half-palmette growing from the foot of the cross...), that the hypothesis of a common local production, in other terms, a local workshop, seems very probable. At the same time, they also

<sup>27</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վրիժարարություն...*, P. 178, n° 458.

<sup>28</sup> Дашкевич Я., «Армянские рельефные кресты Львова и Каменца-Подольского» // *Историко-филологический журнал*. – Ереван: Академия наук, 1980. – Т. 3. – С. 120-140. [Dashkevych Y., «Armenian sculpted crosses from Lvov and Kamenets-Podolskii» // *Journal of History and Philology*. – Yerevan: Academy of Sciences, 1980. – Т. 3. – P. 120-140].

<sup>29</sup> Дашкевич Я., «Армянские рельефные кресты...», P. 136-137. Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վրիժարարություն...*, P. 190-191.

<sup>30</sup> Дашкевич Я., «Армянские рельефные кресты...», P. 136, n° II. Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վրիժարարություն...*, P. 190, n° 477.

<sup>31</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, P. 64, fig. 12.

present features of Crimean influence, the main one being the interlaced knot under the cross. Another typically Crimean motif can be seen on one of the Lviv plates, adorned with two crosses, and dedicated to the memory of a certain Tēr Grigor: the *Agnus Dei* (a lamb holding a cross) in a small medallion, between the crosses, on the upper part of the composition (*fig. 31*). This theme, rare in proper Armenia, appeared in Cilician art at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> c., and was particularly popular among the Crimean Armenians. On the Armenian monuments of Crimea, at least 11 occurrences of it can be found<sup>32</sup> (*fig. 32*).

### Small mural khachkars of Podolia and Bessarabia

In Podolia, in the town-fortress of Kamenets-Podolskii, among the remnants of Armenian monuments, three plates with crosses have been preserved. One of them, inserted in the wall of a building near the (non-Armenian) cathedral of St. Peter and Paul, is dated 1548. Because of the horizontally elongated form of this fragment of stone (*fig. 33*), it could be a part of a lintel, but the content of its inscription confirms that it is a memorial plate. Its epigraphy was known from the *Corpus of Armenian*

[p. 333]

*Inscriptions*<sup>33</sup>, but its photo has been published only recently by Tathevik Sargsyan<sup>34</sup>. It is close to Crimean khachkars by the form of the trefoil frame, the interlaced ends of the cross branches, and the design of the wound leaves on both sides of the left cross.

The second small khachkar from Kamenets has been inserted in the south buttress of the Armenian (now Ukrainian Orthodox) chapel of the Annunciation (rebuilt in 1597). It wears an inscription of 1554<sup>35</sup>, and has a very simple decoration (*fig. 34*). Here again a certain link with Caffa can be observed through the trefoil upper arch of the clumsy frame. On the other hand, the presence of four round medallions around the center of the cross, instead of the usual two, and the small flowers at the junctions of the cross branches create a link with the plates from Lviv, especially the one dated 1441/1449 (*fig. 26*).

A third khachkar from Kamenets can be seen in the History Museum of Lviv. Irina Hayuk published it<sup>36</sup>. It is in sandstone and shows, inscribed in a two-sloped frame, a central cross flanked by four little crosses (*fig. 35*). A dove descending on the cross occupies the upper triangle. The inscription runs continuously along the edges of the stone, as if it were on the binding of a manuscript. These two features, the form of the frame, and the surrounding text,

<sup>32</sup> Donabédian P., «Un des premiers exemples d'hybridation : l'architecture arménienne de Crimée» // *Series Byzantina. Studies on Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art. Art of the Armenian Diaspora* / ed. W. Deluga. – Warsaw: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, 2011. – Vol. IX. – P. 47-67. – P. 63-64.

<sup>33</sup> Փրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վիճազրույթային...*, P. 246, n° 582.

<sup>34</sup> Саргсян Т., «Новые данные о строительстве и восстановлении армянских духовно-культурных центров в Каменец-Подольске» // *Художественная культура армянских общин на землях Речи Посполитой* / ред. Ирина Скворцова. – Минск: Арт Дизайн, 2013. – С. 61-87. [Sargsyan T., «New data on the construction and restoration of the Armenian spiritual and cultural centres in Kamenets-Podolskiy» // *Art culture of Armenian communities in the lands of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* / ред. Irina Skvortsova. – Minsk: Art Design, 2013, P. 61-87]. – P. 63, fig. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Дашкевич Я., «Армянские рельефные кресты...», P. 138, n° VIII. Փրիգորյան Գ., *Դիվանի հայ վիճազրույթային...*, P. 244, n° 577.

<sup>36</sup> Гаюк І., *Ілюстрована енциклопедія...*, P. 71, fig. 89.

are present on New-Julfa cross plates of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>37</sup>. The text has not been published. It reads as follows<sup>38</sup>:

ՄԲ ՆՇԱՆ Տ[Է]ՐՈ-  
 ԻՆԱԿԱՆ + ՄԻԽԱԼԻՆ,  
 ԷԼՄԷԼԻՔԻՆ, ՄԷԼԻՔՇԱՀԻՆ, ԱՆԱ  
 ԽԱԹՈՒՆ[ԻՆ], ՍԵԻԻՆՁ ԽԱԹՈՒՆ-  
 ԻՆ ՔԱԻԱՐԱՆ

Its translation could be: «The divine holy sign [offers] expiation to Mixal, Ēlmēlikʻ, Mēlikʻšah, Ana Xatʻun, Sewinj Xatʻun». A dating of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. seems plausible.

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Finally, in the town of Belgorod-Dnestrovskii (the ancient Tiras, Akkerman), in Bessarabia, now in Odessa Oblast, among the traces of Armenian presence, three plates of marble are kept inside the Armenian church of St. Auxentius<sup>39</sup>. One of them, dated 1446<sup>40</sup>, is richly adorned with two crosses in an elegant vegetal decoration (*fig. 36*). Here, both composition and ornamentation find direct parallels on Caffa plates of the same period<sup>41</sup>. The elements of composition which remind Caffa comprise the pair of crosses under trefoil ogee arches “resting”, in the middle of the plate, on a cabled column, and, at its bottom, the three horizontal lines of inscription. In the field of “Crimean” ornamentation, one should mention the form of the crosses, the interlaced knot at their foot, and, under it, the semicircular “pedestal” with a vegetal ornament, the winding wine scroll on both sides of the crosses and in the upper quadrants. The link with Crimea is so close that, once again, the hypothesis of a transfer from Caffa seems very plausible.

Another small plate, dated 1474<sup>42</sup>, can be seen in the same church. Here again, a pair of crosses is represented on both sides of a cabled column, and an inscription is carved on the large left surface (*fig. 37*). It says: «These holy signs are in memory of Sarkis and Galust, and of their parents». Once again, the composition reveals a close kinship with Crimea, where such a disposition is frequent, and the vegetal ornaments are quite similar.

Thanks to Irina Hayuk, we know the existence, in Belgorod-Dnestrovskii, of an unusual stela, on which a Greek inscription reports the construction of the fortress, in 1440, by a certain Theodorika<sup>43</sup>. The main part of the field of this relatively high stone (110 x 51 x 20 cm) is occupied by a cross with a vegetal foot, from which rise two lateral crosses (*fig. 38*). Judging from the iconography of the cross and its medallions, the vegetal motifs under its foot, and the treatment of the low relief, it has probably been carved by an Armenian sculptor for a Greek

<sup>37</sup> Khatchadourian H., Basmadjian M., *L'art des khatchkars...*, P. 334, 336, 342, 346, 352, 358, 360, 362, 366, 376.

<sup>38</sup> The author thanks Agnès Ouzounian, for her help in deciphering this text.

<sup>39</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դրվան հայ վրիժարություն...*, P. 259-270. Тораманян А., *Из истории строительной деятельности армян в Молдавии*. – Москва: Внешторгиздат, 1991 [Toramanyan A., *Pages of history of the building activity of Armenians in Moldavia*. – Moscow: Vneshtorgizdat, 1991]. – P. 6-31.

<sup>40</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դրվան հայ վրիժարություն...*, P. 262, n° 626. Тораманян А., *Из истории строительной деятельности...*, P. 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Айбабина Е., *Декоративная каменная резьба...*, P. 64, fig. 12-5, P. 66, fig. 13-1, P. 74, fig. 15-3-4.

<sup>42</sup> Գրիգորյան Գ., *Դրվան հայ վրիժարություն...*, P. 264, n° 630. Тораманян А., *Из истории строительной деятельности...*, P. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Гаюк І., *Ілюстрована енциклопедія...*, P. 150, fig. 235.

(or hellenophone) patron, but without direct references, this time, to Crimean models. One can also assume that the Greek inscriptions were added on a previously sculpted Armenian stele, supplanting notably the usual medallion under the cross.

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This brief survey of small khachkars from Crimea, and from several Armenian settlements of Ukraine, was aimed at giving a general presentation of an interesting group of monuments, which has remained out of the field of interest of the scholars. The only exceptions are an article by Yaroslav Dashkevych devoted to Lviv small khachkars, and, more generally in the frame of medieval Armenian art, a recent study dedicated to the collections of Jerusalem and Isfahan, but where small mural khachkars are not identified as a specific category of Armenian sculpture. In this group, an eminent place belongs to the Crimean works. The plates produced in Caffa, particularly, formed, after those from Cilicia, and together with the small khachkars carved in the Holy Land, an important link between Armenia and the diaspora, in the development of this original branch of Armenian art, and in its spreading through Eastern Europe. The Armenian workshops of Caffa did not only exert an influence on the decoration of the plates with cross sculpted in the whole region, but also directly provided the Armenian colonies of Eastern Europe with artefacts of their own production.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS



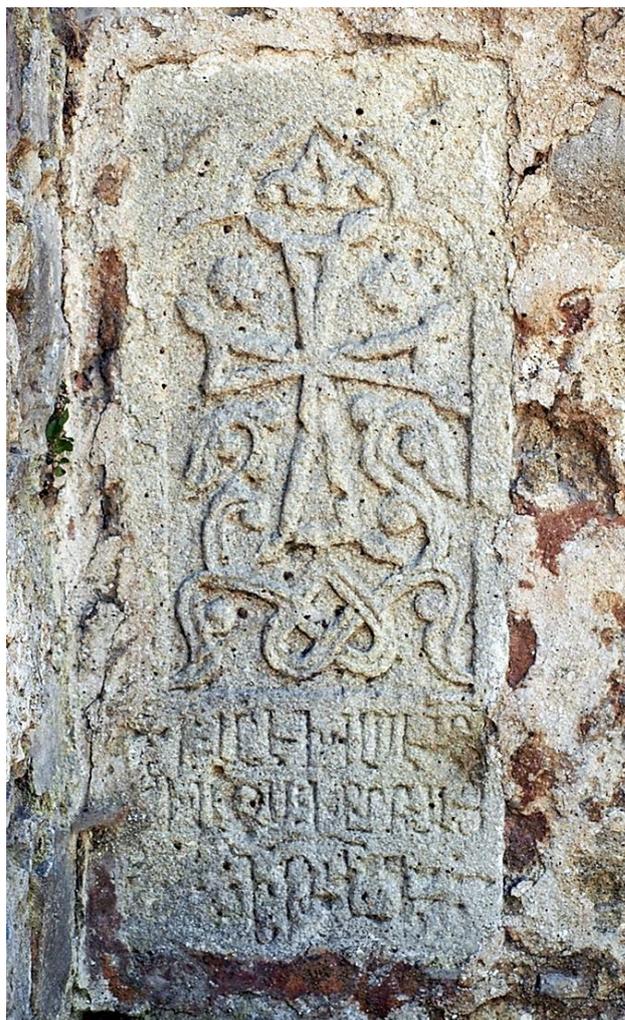
*Fig. 1.* Caffa (Theodosia, Crimea).  
St. Sergius (Sb Sargis).  
West façade of the narthex.  
Khachkar of 1761 to the right  
of the door (153 x 62 cm).  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 2.* Caffa. St. Sergius.  
West façade of the narthex.  
Khachkar to the left of  
the door (254 x 78 cm).  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 3.* Caffa. Theodossia Museum.  
Khachkar (95 x 56 x 24 cm).  
Photo E. Aybabina.



*Fig. 4.* Caffa. St. Sergius. North wall  
of the narthex. Plate of 1356  
(limestone, 76 x 34 cm).  
Photo R. Quirini-Popławski.



*Fig. 5. Caffa. St. Sergius. Interior of the narthex. Plate of 1698, in memory of the miniature painter Nikołos Całkarar (120 x 59 cm). Photo G. Grigoryan (CIA VII, P. 338, fig. 14).*



*Fig. 6. Caffa. St. Sergius. Narthex.  
Internal face of the west wall.  
Plate of 1424. Photo G. Grigoryan  
(CIA VII, P. 339, fig. 15).*



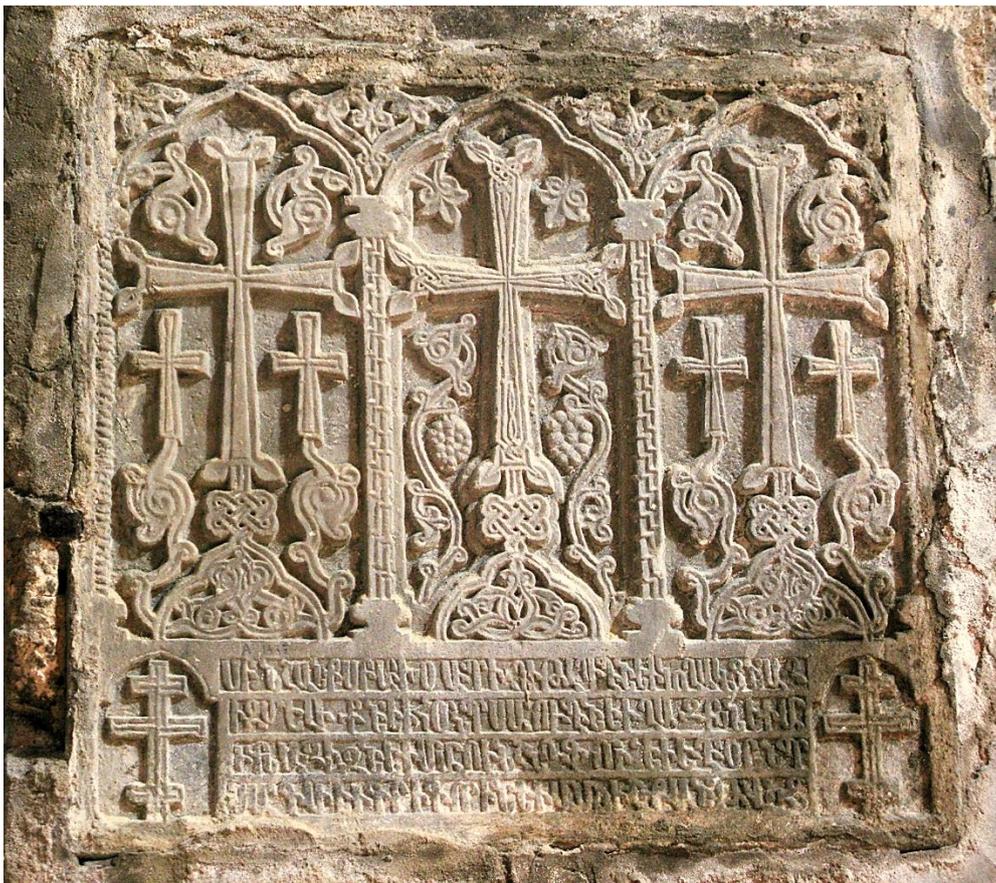
*Fig. 7. Caffa. St. Sergius.  
Interior. Plate of 1427  
(61 x 49 cm).  
Photo J.P. Kibarian.*



*Fig. 8.* Caffa. St. Sergius. West façade of the narthex. Plate of 1528, to the left of the door (65 x 23 cm). Photo R. Quirini-Popławski.



*Fig. 9.* Kherson Regional Museum. Plate of 1557 (or perhaps 1637) from Caffa (?). (Marble, 52,5 x 30 x 7,5 cm). Photo I. Hayuk.



*Fig. 10.* Caffa. St. Sergius. Interior. Plate of 1451 (marble, 52 x 50 cm). Photo J.P. Kibarian.



*Fig. 11.* Caffa. St. Sergius. West façade of the narthex. Plate of 1460 (marble, 45 x 40 cm).  
Photo A. Dzhanov.



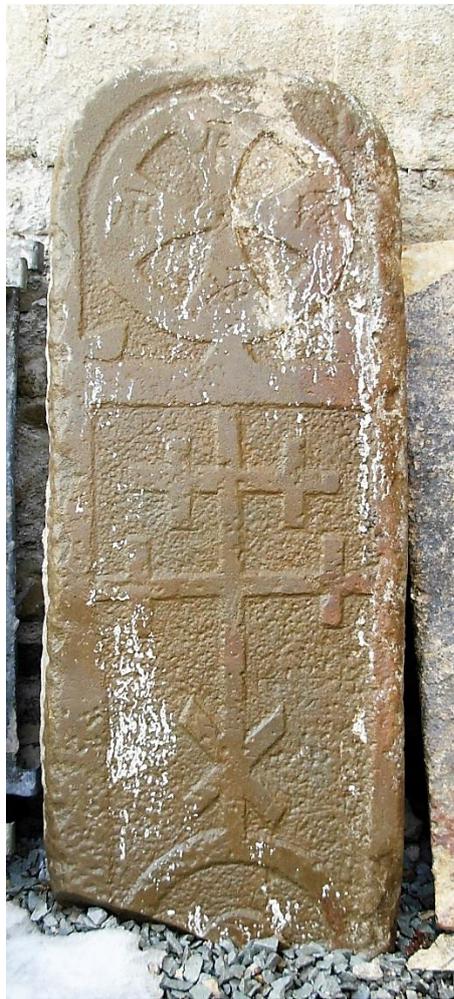
*Fig. 12.* Topty (Topolyovka, Crimea). Chapel of Friday (Urbat'i, St. Parasceve). Plate of 1381 in memory of Karapet. Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 13.* Sala (Grushovka, Crimea). Plate of 1483 in the school museum. (Marble, 34 x 28,5 x 8 cm). Photo A. Bayburtskii.



*Fig. 14.* Topty (Topoliivka, Crimea). Stela with two crosses.  
Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 15.* Sala (Grushovka, Crimea). Stela with two crosses.  
Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 16.* Nor-Nakhichevan (Rostov-on-Don, South Russia). Stela with two crosses.  
Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 17.* Sudak (Sugdeïa/Soldaïa, Crimea). Tower of the Genoese consul Federico Astaguera (1386). South façade. Photo A. Dzhanov.



*Fig. 18.* Sudak. Tower of Federico Astaguera. South façade. Photo A. Dzhanov.



*Fig. 19.* Sudak. Tower of Federico Astaguera. North façade. Photo A. Dzhanov.



*Fig. 20.* Sudak. Museum of the  
fortress. Stela from the  
tower n° 16.  
Photo A. Dzhanov.

*Fig. 21. Sudak. Tower of Franchi di Pagano (1414).*



Photo A. Emanov (c. 1990)



Photo A. Dzhanov (c. 2010)



*Fig. 21a. Sudak. Tower of Franchi di Pagano (1414). Photo A. Emanov (c. 1990).*



*Fig. 22.* Lviv (Lvov, Galicia). Armenian cathedral (1363). Interior.  
South-west pillar, north face. Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 23.* Lviv. Armenian cathedral. Interior. North-west pillar, south face.  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 24.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior.  
North-east pillar, south face.  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 25.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. North-east  
pillar, south face. Plate of 1427 (45 x 32 cm).  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 26.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior.  
South-west pillar, north face.  
Plate of 1441/1449 (20 x 13 cm).  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 27.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. South-west pillar, north face. Plate (23 x 13 cm). Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 28.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. North-west pillar, south face. Plate (22,5 x 12,5 cm). Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 29.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. South-west pillar, north face. Plate of 1461 with three crosses (23 x 23 cm). Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 30.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. North-west pillar, south face. Plate with two crosses in memory of Tēr Grigor (25,5 x 22,5 cm). Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 31.* Lviv. Cathedral. Interior. North-west pillar, south face. Plate in memory of Tēr Grigor. Centre of the upper part. *Agnus Dei*. Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 32. The Agnus Dei in Armenian Crimea (14<sup>th</sup> c.). Examples from the monastery of the Holy Cross (32, 32a), and from the church of the Holy Saviour (32b, 32c).  
Photos P. Donabédian.*



*Fig. 32 a.*



*Fig. 32 b*



*Fig. 32 c*



*Fig. 33.* Kamenets-Podolskii (Podolia). Plate of 1548 near Sts. Peter and Paul cathedral.  
Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 34.* Kamenets-Podolskii.  
Chapel of the Annunciation.  
Plate of 1554 (27 x 19 cm).  
Photo P. Donabédian.



*Fig. 35.* Lviv History Museum.  
From Kamenets-Podolskiï  
(sandstone, 34 x 30 x 5 cm).  
Photo I. Hayuk.



*Fig. 36.* Akkerman (Belgorod-  
Dnestrovkiï, Bessarabia).  
Armenian church of  
Saint Auxentius. Interior.  
Plate of 1446 with two crosses.  
(Marble, 27 x 19 cm).  
Photo T. Sargsyan



*Fig. 37.* Akkerman (Belgorod-Dnestrovkii). St. Auxentius. Interior. Plate of 1474 with two crosses. (Marble, 29,5 x 16 cm). Photo T. Sargsyan.



*Fig. 38.* Kherson Regional Museum.  
Stela from Akkerman  
(Belgorod-Dnestrovkii),  
erected in, or before 1440  
(110 x 51 x 20 cm).  
Photo A. Krasnozhon.