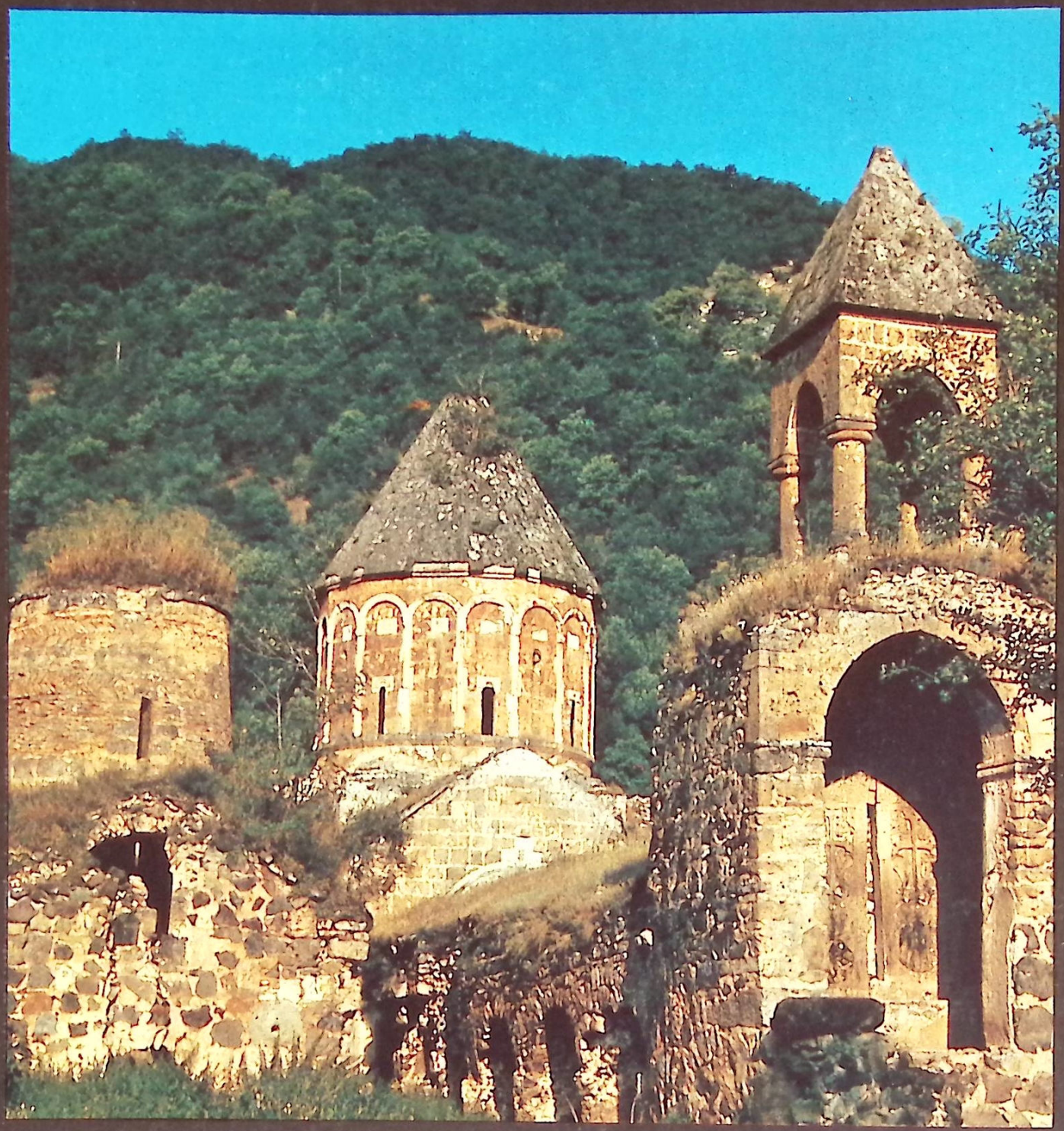
CHIEF DEPARTMENT FOR PROTECTION
AND USE OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MONUMENTS OF
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE ARMENIAN SSR



DADIVANK

ART-A
HASM
1990

Good care for guarding of historical monuments and cultural value is a duty of each armenian citizen.
Constitution of Armenian SSR, article 66



Dadivank (Khutavank), the well-known religious and cultural centre of Khachen Province in the historical Artsakh Region lies east of the Charektar village on the frontier of Kyalbadzhar District of the Azerbaijan SSR and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region. The monasterial complex comprising numerous structures is on the left bank of the Tartar (Trty) River where it stands on a forest-grown mountain slope.

According to legend, the monastery was founded in the second half of the 1st century A.D. over the grave of Dadi, one of the seventy disciples of the Apostol Faddei. Dadivank is first mentioned in historical chronicles dating to the 9th century. In the 12th century the monastery was destroyed by raids of the Seljuk Turks when the military leader Choli made his deceitful entry into the Armenian Principality of Khachen.

Dadivank flourished anew in the second half of the 12th and the 13th centuries. Most of the surviving monasterial structures date to that period.

* * *

The large Dadivank architectural complex comprising numerous structures can be divided into two groups of monuments: the four churches, annexes and belfry in the northern part, and the monastery's secular buildings — in the southern part.

Katokhike, the principal church of the monastery, built in 1214 by Arzukhatun, the wife of Prince Vakhtang, is in the eastern part of the northern group of monuments. Its exterior is a rectangle (10.6x12.2 m), the interior — a cross-beam domed structure with two-storeyed vestries in its four corners. Many Armenian monasterial churches of the 13th century (Ovannavank, Sakhmosavank, Arichavank among them) like the Gandzasar Church of St. Ovanes Mkrtich (John the Baptist) in historical Artsakh, are built along traditional Armenian architectural lines. It is indicative that there is a similarity not only between the layouts and volumes-and-space compositions of the main churches of Dadivank and Gandzasar, but also between their main exterior façades. If one takes into consideration that the building of the Gandzasar church was started only two years after the Katokhike was completed in Dadivank then it can be surmised that both of these well-known monuments of 13th century Armenia are the work of the same architect or master-builders. Katokhike has two entrances: on the north and west. The northern entrance was later blocked up (13th c.) when the church was decorated with frescos. The exterior façades of the church, erected of well-polished coloured tufa of different type are embellished with niches having triangular cross-sections and decorative arcades (made up of five archs) supported by dual-columned pilasters. The use of arcades and niches on church façades, which has roots in early-medieval Armenian architecture, became widespread in the Ani school of architecture.

Portals are the basic elements of the building's exterior décor. The rectangular embrasure of the northern entrance is emphasized by a triple arcade and semi-columns of the 'perspectivegiving' portal inscribed into the rectangular form. To the right of the entrance there are three small carved crosses with latticework design and the sculptor's name in between: 'Remember the artist Pogos'.

The drum of the Katokhike cupola with its cylindrical exterior has 16 facets and is decorated with a flat arcade with semi-columns. Eight facets boast windows with carved casings, the blind facets between them embellished with niches. In the upper part of the arcade ornamentally decorated rectangular blocks of a whitish stone have been established along the flat of the facet base.

The Katokhike Church in general is distinguished for the polychromy of its façade décor. The greyish surface of its walls is enlivened by arcades of cream-coloured felsite, while the portal walls and their ornamental décor are of pink tufa.

General view of Dadivank (outset of the 20th c.)

The southern and eastern façades of Katokhike show a high-relief group of churchwardens bearing a model of the church. On the southern façade, bordering the window, are the full-grown images of Arzukhatun's sons Asan and Grigoris in princely headdress and girdles. A high-relief model of the church projects over the window. The sculptural group makes up a single composition with the arch, window and Arzukhatun's inscription covering the entire wall below. Carved in large beautifully inscribed letters the inscription is a major element of the décor on the southern façade, underscored as it is, with masonry of cream-coloured felsite that contrasts well against the general grey plane of the façade. The princes are depicted with halos around their heads, a rare phenomenon among similar Armenian basreliefs. It is interesting to note the similarity of clothes on the sculptures in Dadivank and Arichavank. The fact that the Artsakh princes are shown wearing the same robes as the Armenian rulers Zakare and Ivane in Arichavank (the time break is ten years), testifies to the power and authority of the Aterk Family.

The model of the church projecting from the wall is an exact replica of the building and its architectural forms: the arcades (on the wall and drum), windows, texture of the dome, etc.

The sculptural image on the eastern façade also constitutes a single composition with the window which, as in the southern façade, serves as the axis for the entire sculpture. The images are those of the patrons of the monastery, St.Dadi and Prince Vakhtang, which are given only in bust-size. On distinction to the southern façade the portrait images are more flat and generalized. Both patrons are shown extending their hands to the model of the church that rests over the window along its axis.

An important place in the décor of Katokhike Church in Dadivank belongs to the frescos painted between 1214 — 1251. They have been badly damaged with time. According to L. Durnovo, one of the best specialists in Armenian medieval art, the large fresco on the southern wall shows the scene where Christ returns the mitre to Nicholas the Miracle-worker and the Virgin Mother of God gives him back the omophorion. The one on the northern wall depicts the slaying of the Archideacon Stepanos with stones.

In the 13th century a gallery was built on to the Katokhike Church in its western part, abutting its eastern transverse side on the façade of the church. The gallery is a disproportionally wide structure of little artistic worth with an elliptic cross-section and six massive columns (with a diameter of 1.4 m) intercrossed with archs of roughly-hewn basalt. According to the inscription on the wall '1241', even if it does not belong to the builder, the hall must have been erected somewhere in the 20's—30's of the 13th century.

On the north the gallery abuts on the southern façade of the one-nave church and its annexe, on the west — on the wall of the belfry.

The one-nave church (13th c.) in its turn abuts with its eastern façade on the western wall of Katokhike. This is a long and narrow (2.2x7.6 m) vaulted hall ending in its eastern end in a rectangular altar apse, this altar form being used in early-medieval Armenian churches. It is interesting to note that the rectangular altar can be also observed in several other monasterial churches of Artsakh: Gtiche (13th c.), Khatravank (1204), Urekavank (1297). With the exception of the last, where the altar is much narrower than the prayer hall, the altar in Gtiche and Khatravank, like in Dadivank, is the extension of the hall and has a common vaulted ceiling. On the west the church has a rectangular (3.7x8.25 m) annexe (gavit) which having the same width as the church is situated on a lower level so as not to obstruct the upper window on its western façade. The tombstone in the annexe dating to 1293 sets the time of its construction at not later than the 13th century.

The Church of St.Dadi (13th c.) serves as the northern wall of the one-nave church with a rectangular altar and annexe. This is a large one-nave hall (interior:

9.05x21.4 m) which is much larger than that of other Armenian monuments of the same type, the width being more typical of three-nave Armenian basilicas.

Along the entire perimeter the walls of the church break off at one and the same level giving the impression that they had never been completed: either because of unfavourable political conditions or economic and technical hardships (such as raising a vault over 9 metres of unsupported space). A specific feature of the one-nave church of Dadivank is the layout of its vestries: they are located between the semi-circular altar apse and the rectangular framework of the walls and are fenced in by masonry work (like in the monasteries of Bardzrakash dating to the 10th c. and Tezharuik — to the 13th c.).

On the west the one-nave church is annexed to a specific type of structure known as 'zhamatun' (11.6x15.0 m) built in 1224 by the Bishop Grigoris, the Father Superior. It belongs to the most widespread in medieval Armenia four-column cupola type if annexes and 'zhamatuns'. The plan of the 'zhamatun' in Dadivank adheres to basilica proportions where the length is 1.5 times that of the width (interior proportions: 9.1x13.8 m). Its architectural peculiarity is also observed in its volumetrical solution. The upper part of the building has a gable roof (on a south-north axis) typical of basilica structures, with a dome in the centre. The corner parts of the roof, along with its northern and southern parts, are topped by a vault in the form of the quarter of a cylinder. The cupola stands on four central pylons with square cross-sections. The transition from the square base of the drum to the circle of its dome is achieved by means of cross vaults. The octagonal drum is constructed of smoothly-hewn rocks. In the eastern and western walls running lengthwise, due to the absence of pediments the dome stays free of the upper part of the building projecting directly from the gabled roof. The 'zhamatun' is laid of roughly-hewn basalt and only the columns, arches and drum are made of smoothly-polished stones. The building is almost devoid of all décor. Apart from the portal the only artistic element of décor are the gracefully ornamented different-sized khachkars (cross-shaped stones) built into the wall. Due to the absence of windows the only light-giving opening is the 'erdik' lantern in the dome. The semi-dark interior is quite in tune with the purpose of the edifice to serve as the tomb of the House of Aterk.

The fourth church in the monastery (13th c.) is in the southern part of the complex grounds right across the gallery. According to composition it is a cupola-domed hall, the most widespread type of religious edifices in medieval Armenian architecture. The church is small (exterior size: 6.4x8.0 m) and belongs to the subtype of cupola-topped halls with double (western) pylons along the walls. Its simple architectural forms are free of all décor. The main structure is worked from roughly-hewn basalt, the exterior and interior surfaces of the façades are partially plastered. There is only one entrance — on the western side. Quite remarkable is the construction of the dome. The first layer making up the base of the round drum is of finely-worked stone, the entire drum is made of brick, and the topmost layer is again a row of finely-worked stone blocks. Another feature of the cupola is the narrowing of the drum towards the top to achieve additional stability.

The domes impart a special expressiveness to the skyline of the northern groups of monasterial monuments. Along with the cupolas of the churches and annexes a substantial element of the volume-and-space composition is the belfry. It adjoins the gallery from the west and owes its existence (1333) to the Bishop Sarghis, son of Prince Vagram Dopyants. The belfry is a two-storeyed structure, its upper part being a four-column cupola-topped rotunda with a pyramidal tent-roof. The first storey is in effect a small museum displaying khachkars set up in 1283 by the Father Superior Ter-Atanas.

Some 12 metres west of the belfry is the main Gateway to the monastery, a one-arch structure (with a span of 2.6 m) built of roughly-hewn basalt.

As testified by the date 1200 on the khachkar plastered into the monastery's fortification wall northwest of Katokhike church, the wall itself was built after the 13th century.

The southern group of Dadivank monuments whose buildings are set on an east-west axis is made up of secular buildings. Dominating them is a large-sized hall adjoined on the eastern side by a library with auxiliary rooms, and on the west — by the refectory and kitchen. Still westward are the dwelling and working buildings.

Among Dadivank's secular buildings special interest in terms of architecture goes to the palace hall. The inscription on its southern façade claims that the hall was built in 1211 by Grigoris as a 'tachara'-church.

According to I. Orbeli (on the subject of the name 'tachar' given to the 10th century palace in Akhtamar by the historian Tovma Artsruni) the term defined a palace hall in the Iran of the Akhemenides while in the ancient Armenian language (grabar) the word 'tachar' was used to denote a palace, a temple, a palace chamber, and above all a 'banquet hall'. Undoubtedly, the hall in Dadivank was used for feasts: it abutted on the kitchen building (between the hall and the refectory). The Dadivank hall built of basalt blocks follows the compositional layout typical of Armenian annexes and 'zhamatuns': a centric and almost square (interior size: 8.4x9.0 m) composition with four columns in the centre. The hall is lighted by a lantern. Half-a-metre-high benches of huge stone blocks stretch along the northern wall. The palace hall of Dadivank holds a special place among all its counterparts in medieval Armenia. It extends our knowledge of rare monuments of this type and takes its compositional layout not only from 'zhamatuns' but from the still earlier architecture of the Armenian dwelling house.

The refectory at Dadivank has two significant distinctions from other structures of this type. Contrary to other 13th century monasterial refectories, that in Dadivank was erected among secular buildings to become a regular element of the general ensemble. Moreover, the refectory at Dadivank is actually a single compositional layout that includes the kitchen premises.

The rectangular (6.0x11.5 m) hall of the refectory lying along an east-west axis is divided by its two vaulted arches and the respective wall pylons into three parts. The arches are constructed of finely-hewn stone and the walls and vaulted ceilings of rough-hewn stone. By its architecture and outlay proportions the Dadivank refectory is a replica of 13th century Armenian refectories. Nevertheles, here the kitchen forms an entity with the refectory, its volume being an extension of the latter: it is sandwiched between the refectory and the palace hall. The kitchen, a rectangular (4.7x5.85 m) vaulted structure is linked to the western side of the refectory by two wide arches. There is a lantern window in the middle of the ceiling. The only entrance is in the southern wall. On the same wall near the entrance is the huge hearth (1.85 x 2.55 m). Due to this the exterior part of the southern wall has been given an additional thickness of 2.8 m and holds a large vertical flue.

The Dadivank library abuts on the palace hall from the east.

Like many other medieval Armenian monasteries Dadivank was a large centre of culture and enlightenment with its own scriptorium which produced numerous manuscripts. Some of these dating to the 13th—16th centuries were saved during the many calamities and preserved to our days.

Only five Armenian libraries, not to mention the one in Dadivank, have been preserved to our time. The designation of these buildings is determined by the inscriptions and historical information. These are the monasterial libraries at Sanain, Akhpat, Goshavank, Sagmosavank and Oromos. The library was usually a single square structure with a tent roof and a lantern window. The books were kept in special recesses. The same features are observed in the Dadivank library: a rectangular, almost square, hall (5.15x6.30 m)

with a pyramidal ceiling and skylight serving as the only source of daylight. The ceiling of Dadivank library has much in common with its counterpart in Sanain: a unique and clever solution quite different from the intersecting arches in the other libraries. The pyramidal ceiling (1063) with its octagonal foundation is supported by four arches resting on pilasters stationed in the middle part of the walls. The ceiling in Dadivank virtually follows the same pattern: arches in the corners of the hall form along with the middle parts of the walls the octagonal base of the semi-spheric dome-shaped ceiling. It can be surmised that the architect of the Dadivank library was acquainted with the library in Sanain monastery. A distinctive feature of both libraries is the vaulted hall-like corridor before the entrance.

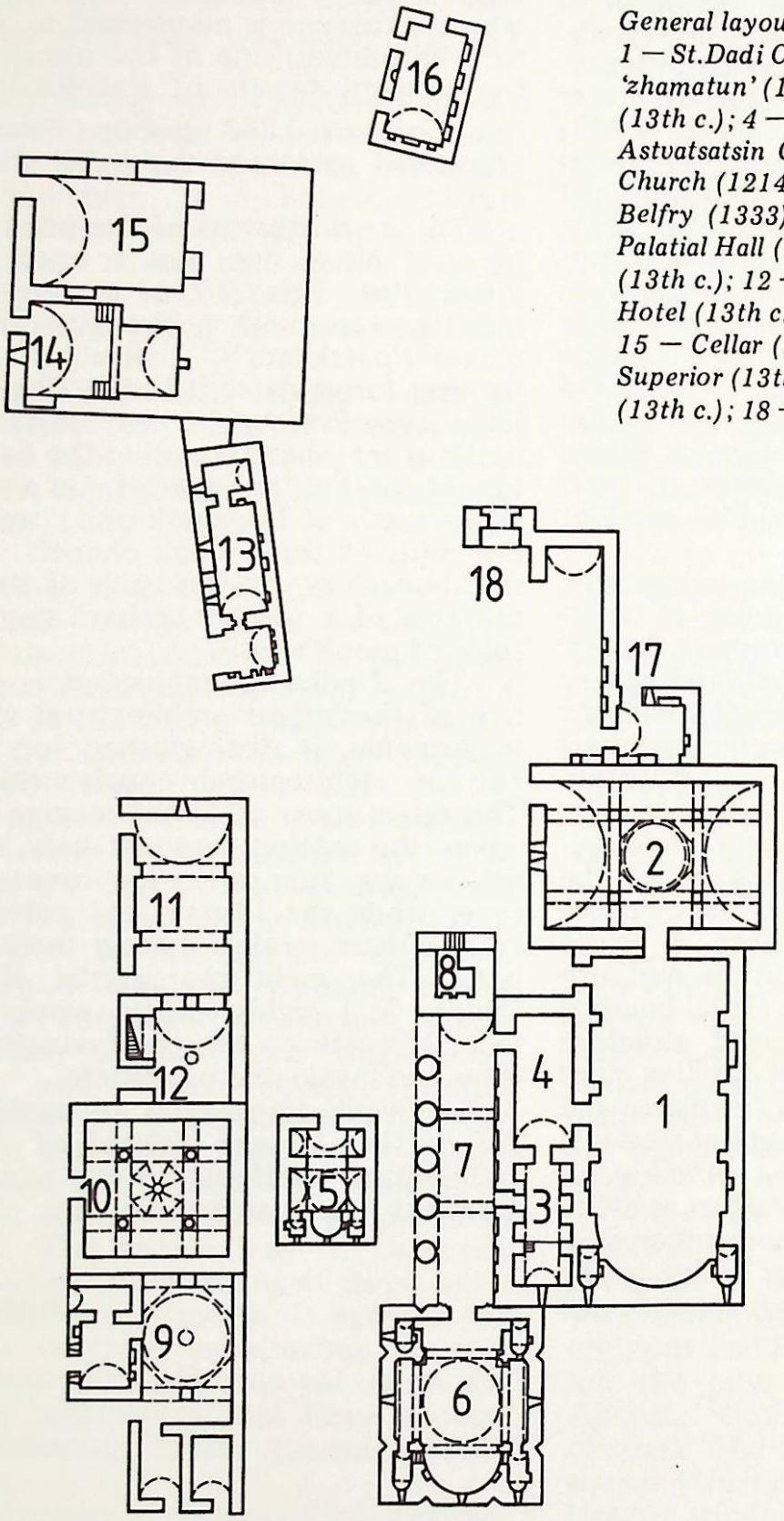
The western part of the monasterial complex comprises a small group of buildings including the two-storeyed Pinces' Palace (with a cellar ('maran') and winery on the ground floor). The palatial building is a large structure on a north-south axis whose upper storey has unfortunately turned to ruins. Old photographs, however, show that it once held a large vaulted hall with two great arched doorways on the southern façade, giving on to the picturesque gorge of the Tartar river. A palace chapel has been preserved in the northern end of the hall. East of the palatial building there is another two-storeyed structure which presumably contained dwelling quarters. This is testified by the fire-places and recesses in its chambers — typical elements of all monasterial dwelling premises in Armenia. However, this structure is architecturally quite different from other well-known monasterial dwellings dating to the Middle Ages. Its ground floor reminds one of a caravanserai, the second is an open-air hall and porch girdled by dwelling chambers. It may well have served as a hotel, whose existence is mentioned in 13th century chronicles; one of the inscriptions on the western façade of Katokhike church says that in 1253 Bishop Nerses from Charaberd presented the hotel with an orchard.

To the northwest of the palatial building and hotel one sees a small (interior dimensions: 3.8x7.15 m) rectangular vaulted structure with a fireplace and many niches ('patrkhans'). Analysis of its architectural forms dates it to the 13th century. Its designation can be only surmised. The building may have served as the living quarters of the Father Superior. On a mountain slope north of Dadivank one comes across the ruins of three small chapels. South of the monastery, on the bank of the Tartar, the area of a former orchard contains the ruins of monk's cells.

The Dadivank monasterial complex, one of the largest architectural ensembles in Armenia, is distinguished for its diversity of architectural construction types. This refers above all to the secular buildings where the palatial 'banquet hall' and hotel are among the rare monuments of this type, while the library and refectory are truly unique models among their counterparts. The main monasterial Katokhike Church is a highly-artistic work of architecture boasting a wealth of concise inscriptions and invaluable bas-reliefs.

Dadivank complex is an exclusive model of the Artsakh School of Armenian architecture testifying to the high level of medieval Armenian building art.

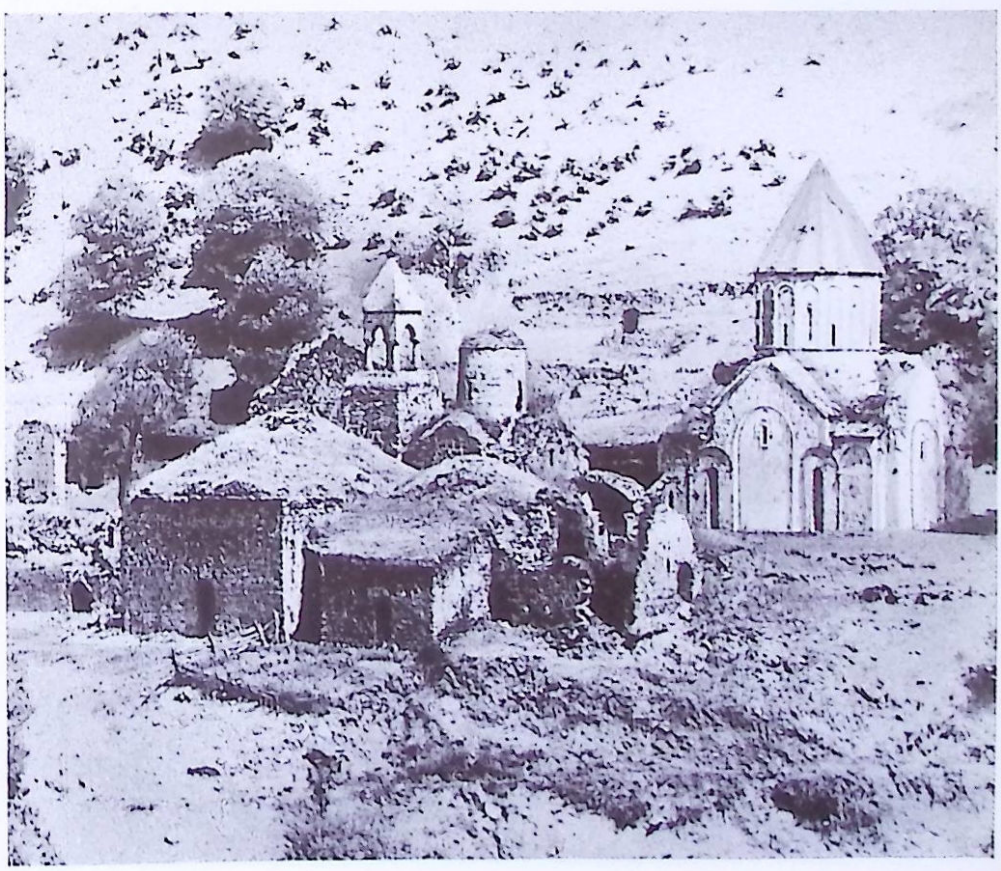
M. M. HASRANYAN



General layout of Dadivank Monastery: 1 — St.Dadi Church (13th c.); 2 — Grigoris 'zhamatun' (1224); 3 — One-nave church (13th c.); 4 — Annexe (13th c.); 5 — Astvatsatsin Church (1182); 6 — Katokhike Church (1214); 7 — Gallery (1241); 8 — Belfry (1333); 9 — Library (13th c.); 10 — Palatial Hall (1211); 11 — Refectory (13th c.); 12 — Kitchen (13th c.); 13 — Hotel (13th c.); 14 — Winery (13th c.); 15 — Cellar (13th c.); 16 — House of Father Superior (13th c.); 17 — Dwelling quarters (13th c.); 18 — Gate (13th c.)



Dadivank. View from the north



Dadivank. View from the southeast

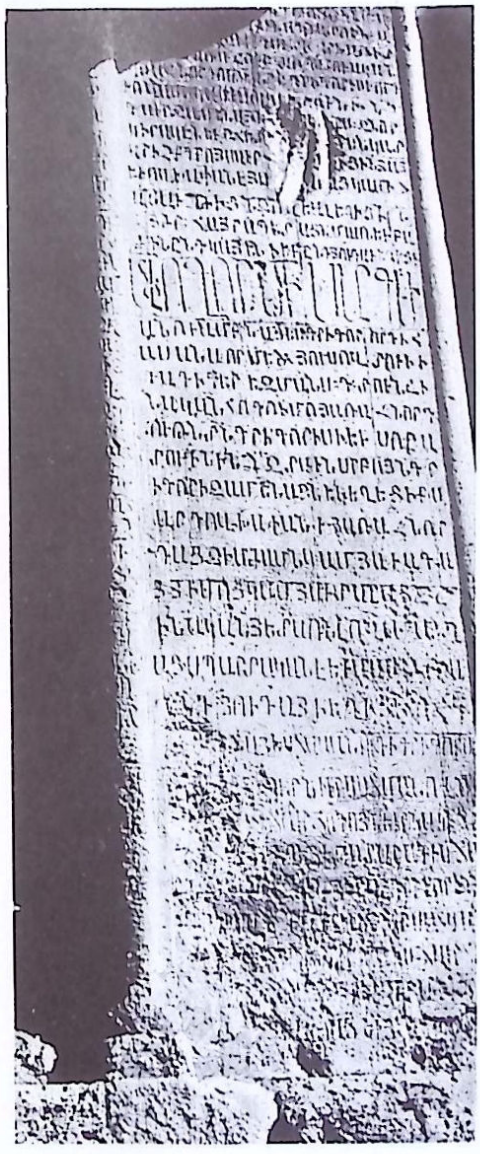


Katokhike Church. View from the west

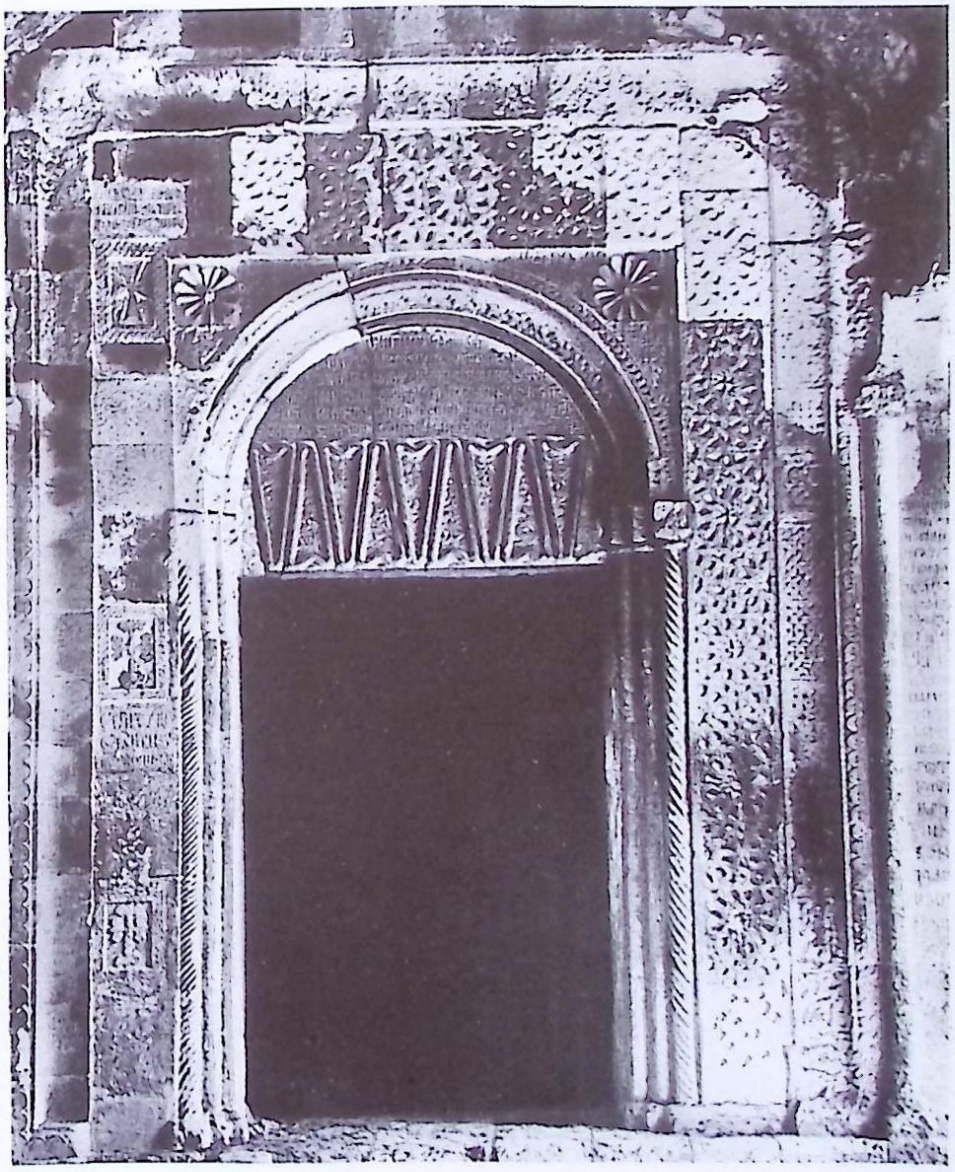


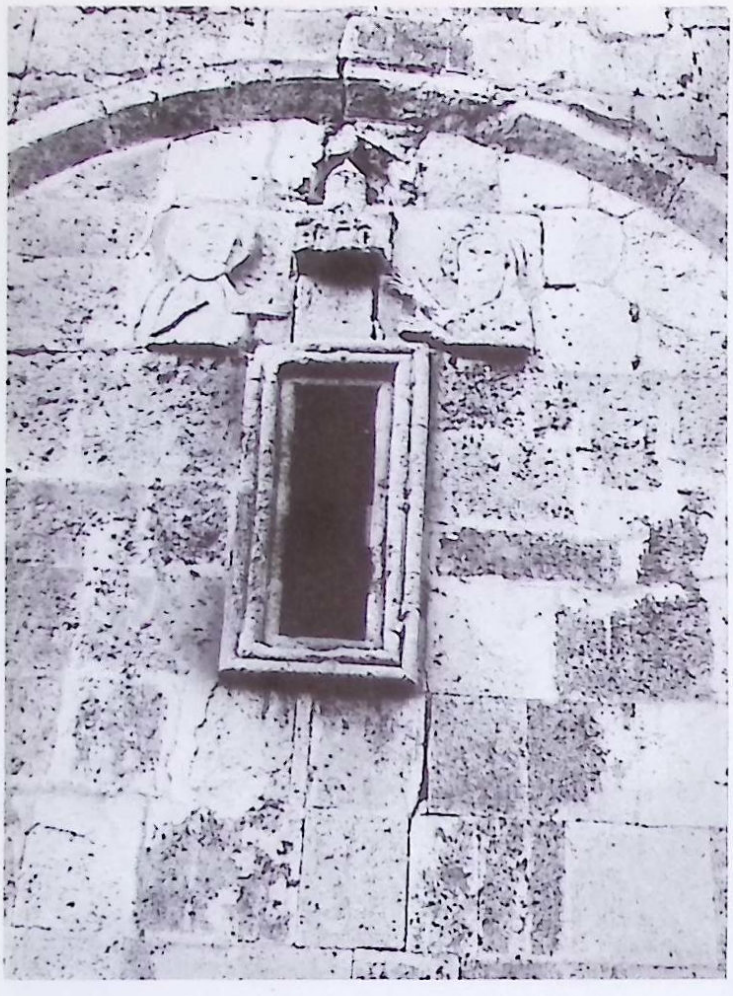
Dome of Katokhike Church

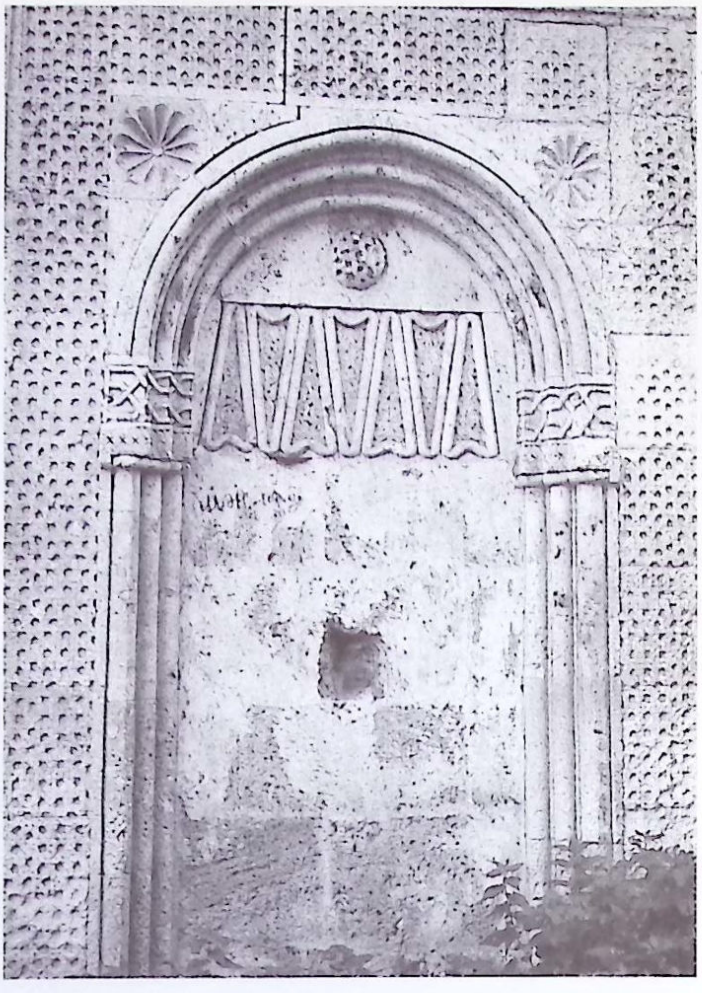
Dedicatory inscriptions of Princess Mamkan and Grigoris on the western façade of Katakhike Church

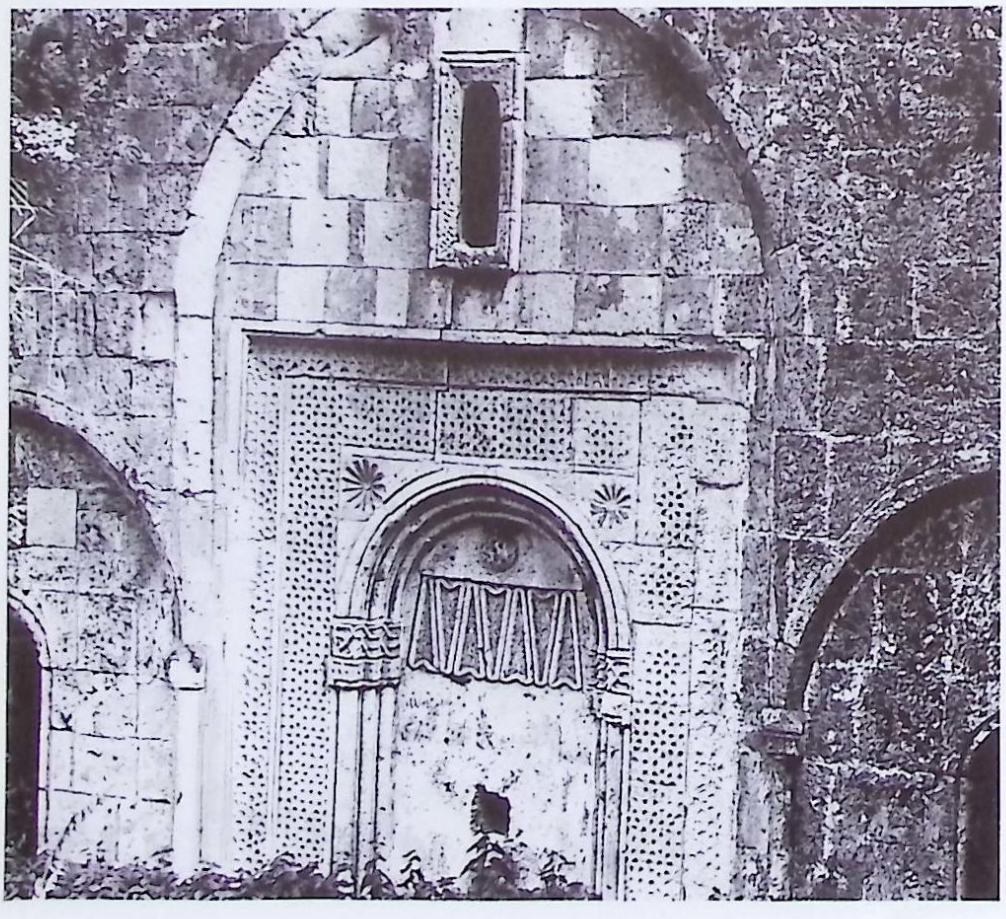


Portal of western entrance of Katokhike Church







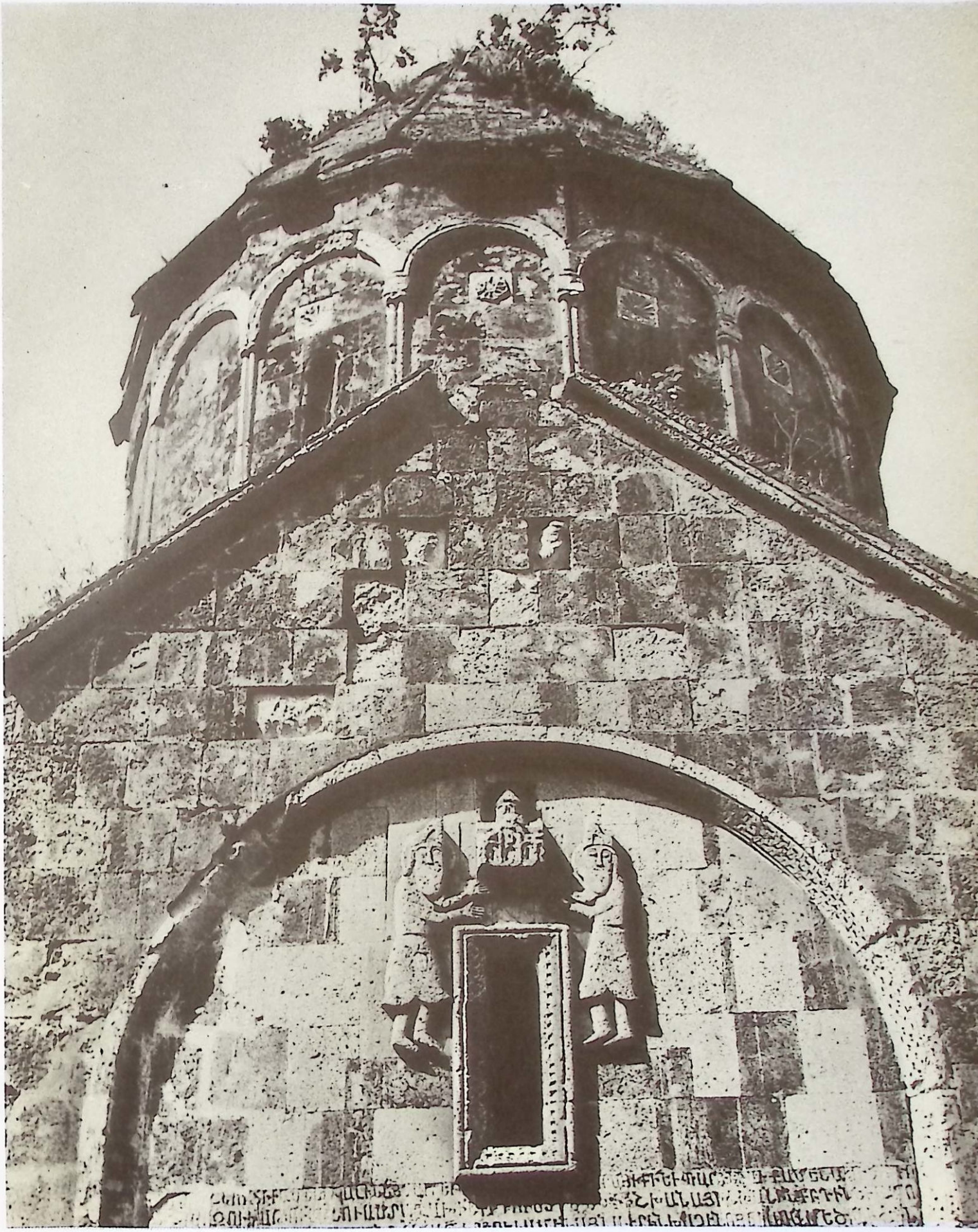


Portal of northern entrance to Katokhike Church (now blocked)

Northern façade of Katokhike Church (detail)

Southern façade of Katokhike Church (detail)

Bas-relief of churchwardens on the eastern façade of Katokhike Church





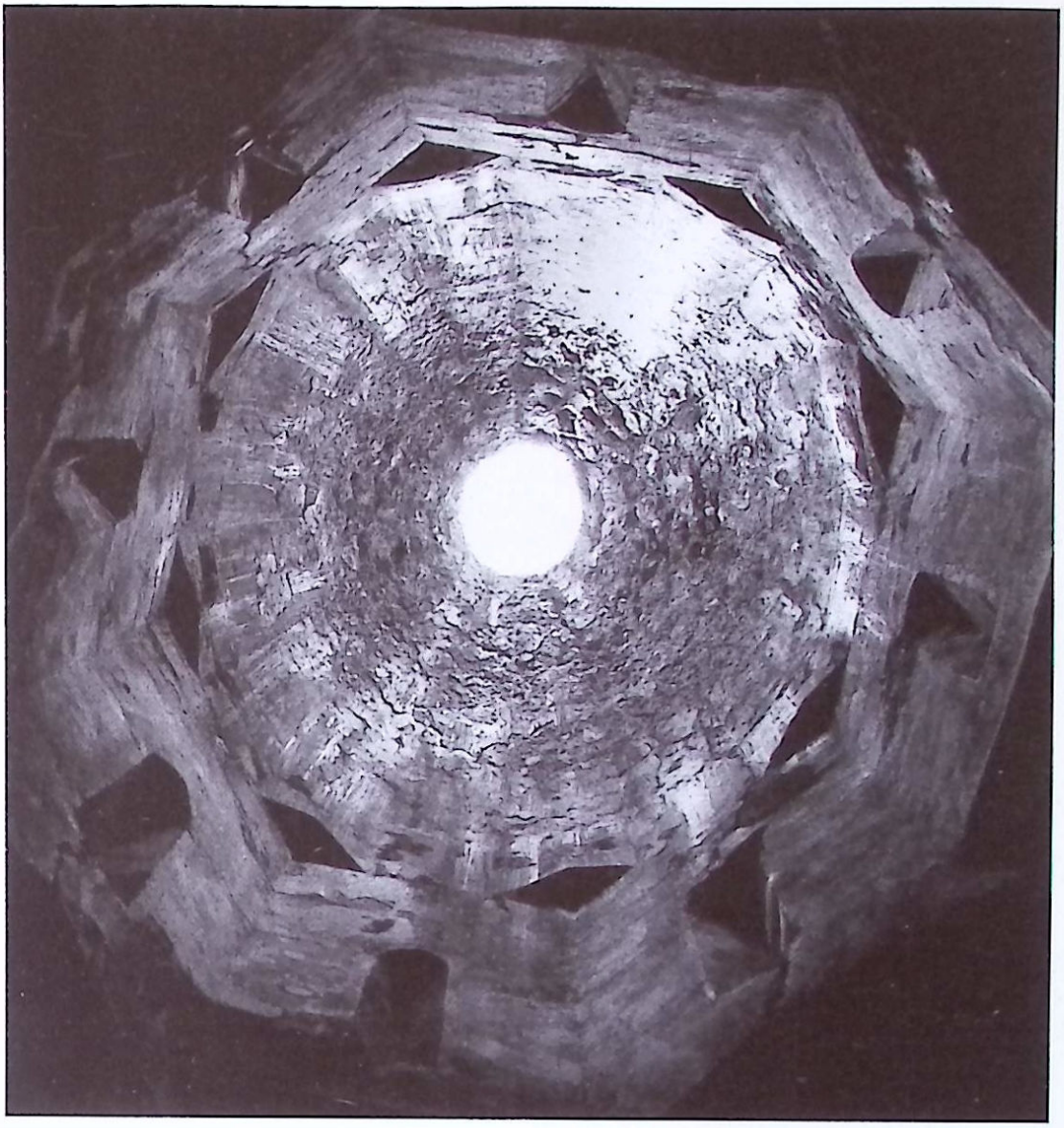
Frescoes on the northern wall of Katokhike Church



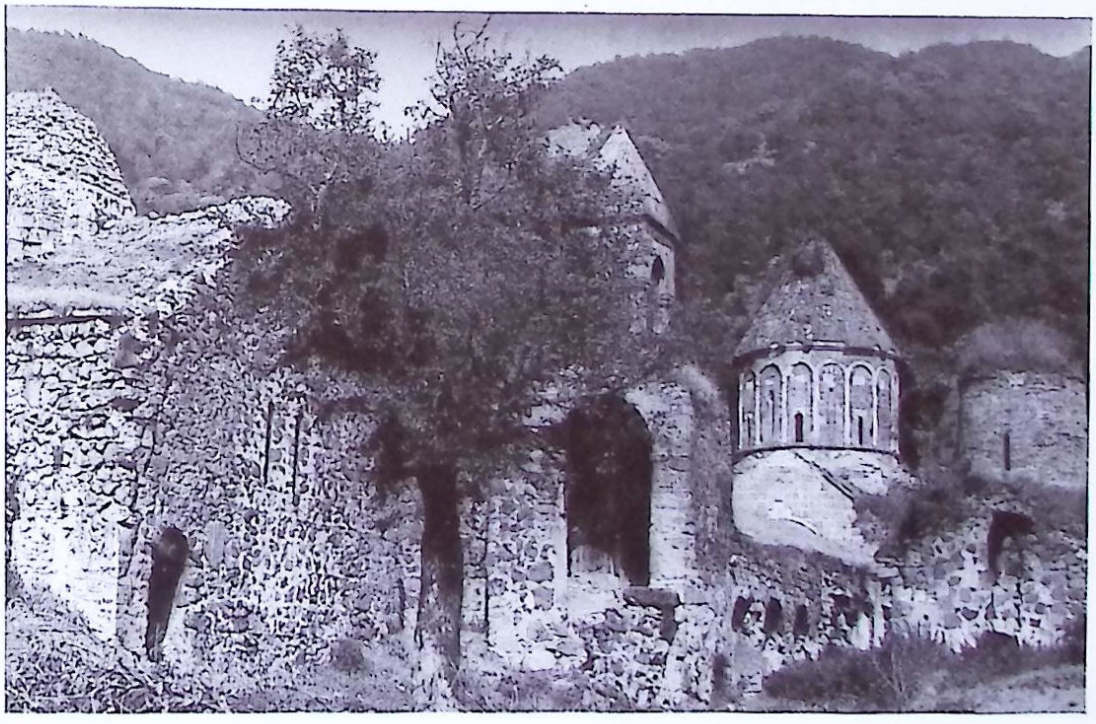
Frescoes on the southern wall of Katokhike Church



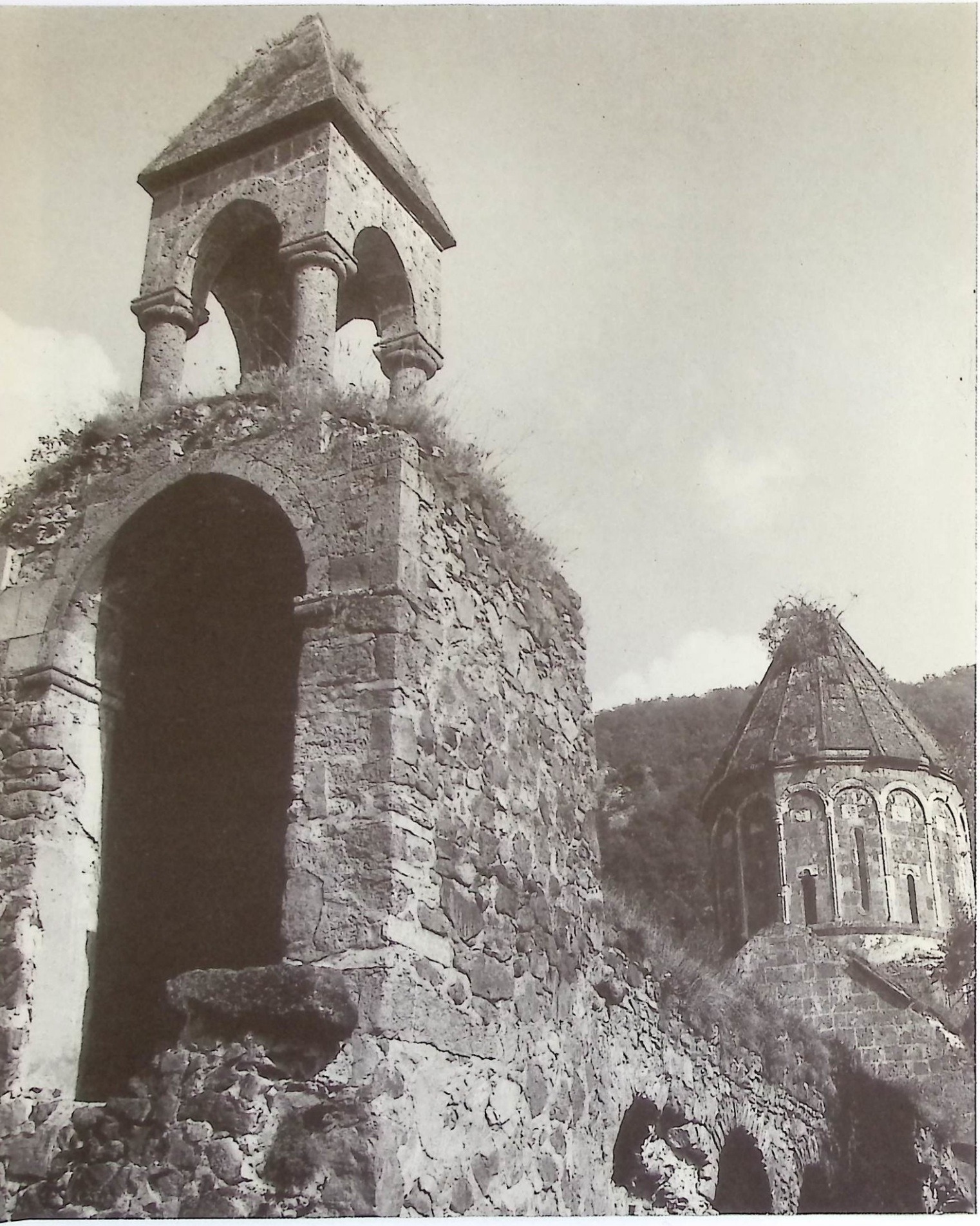
Dome of 'zhamatun' of Grigoris. Interior



Basic group of Dadivank monuments. View from the southwest (in the foreground — 'zhamatun' of Grigoris and belfry)



Dadivank belfry from the west



Rotunda of belfry



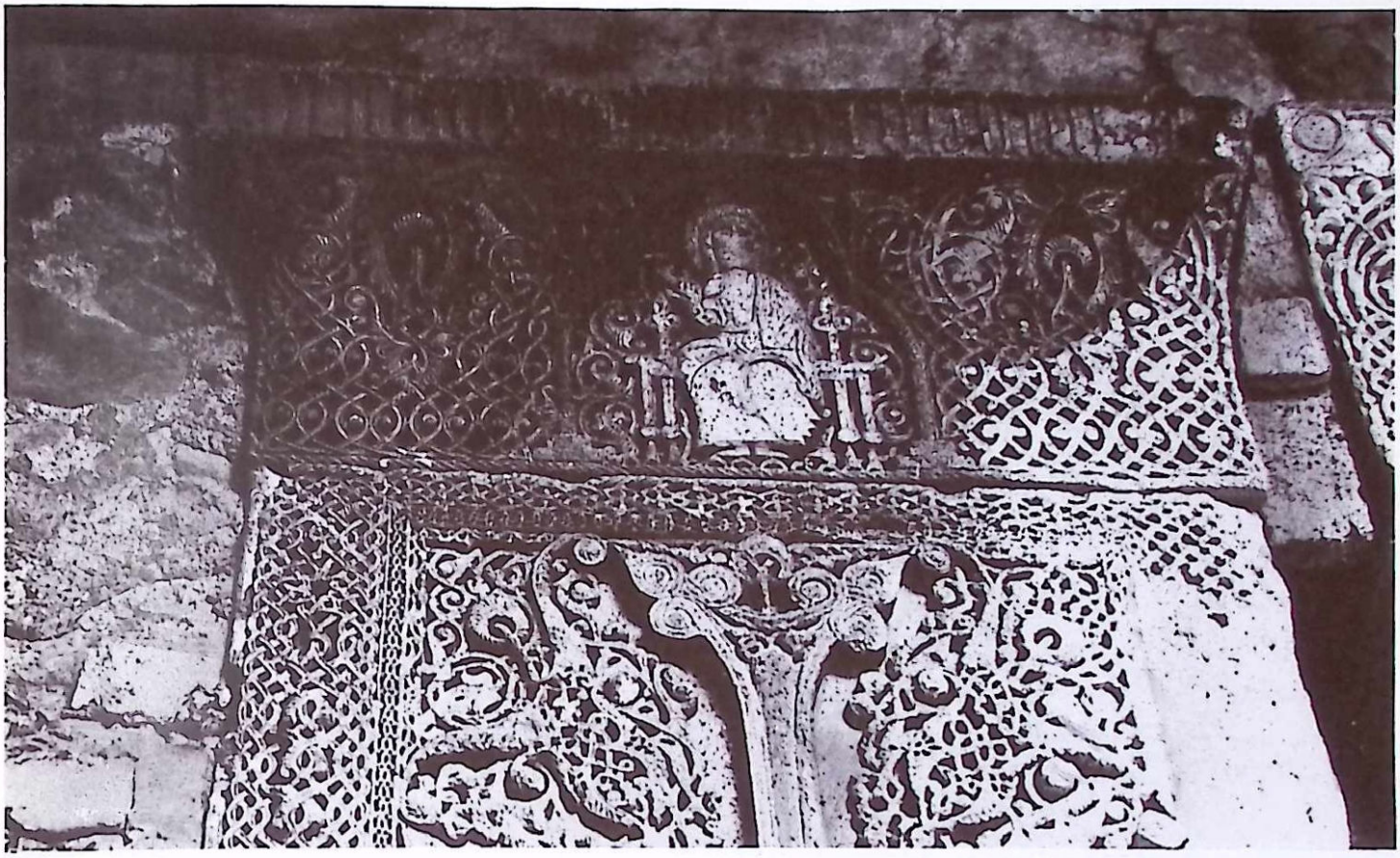
Belfry. View from the southwest



Dadivank. View from the southwest (ruins of refectory in the foreground)



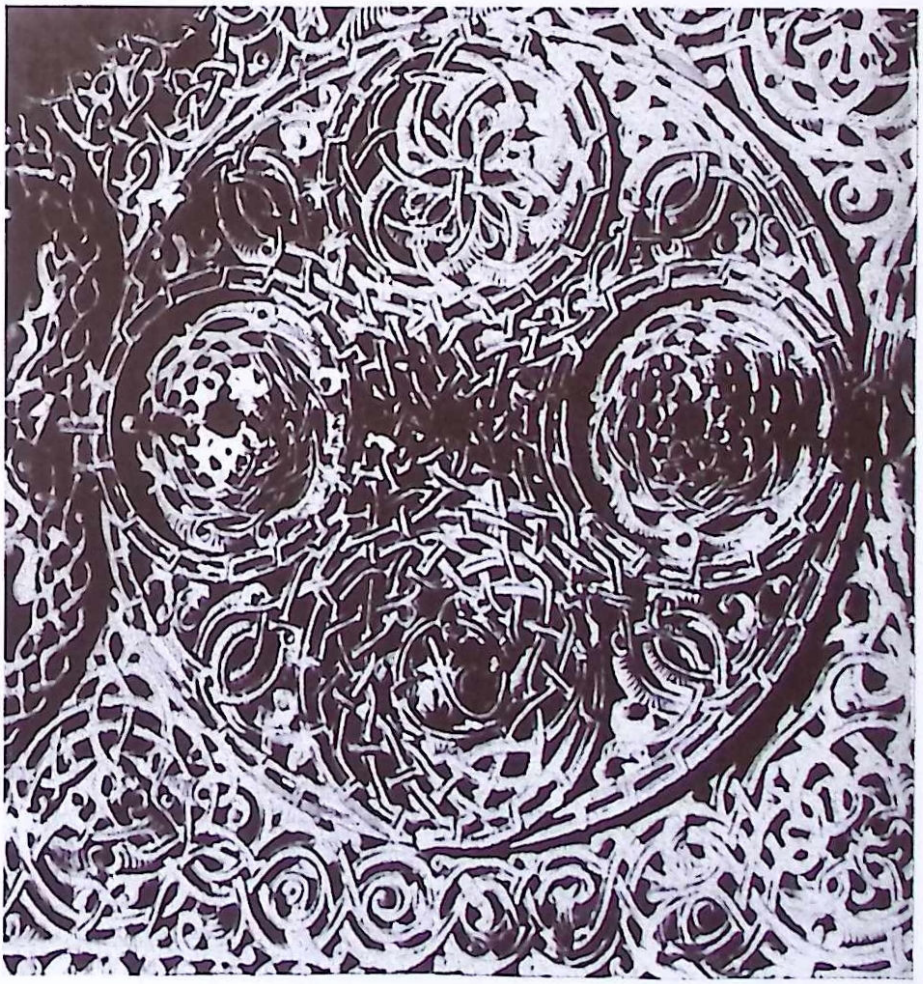
Khachkar of Ter-Atanas (1283)

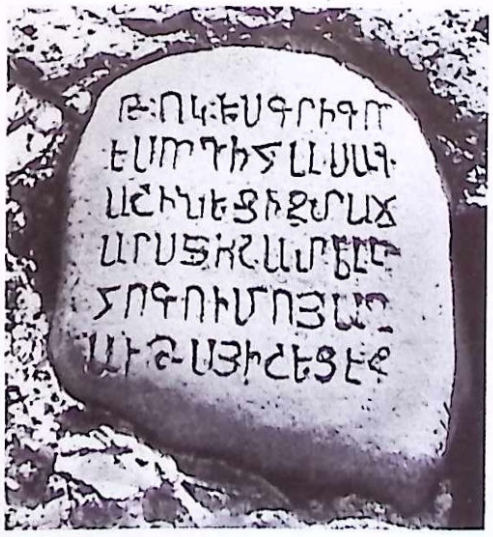


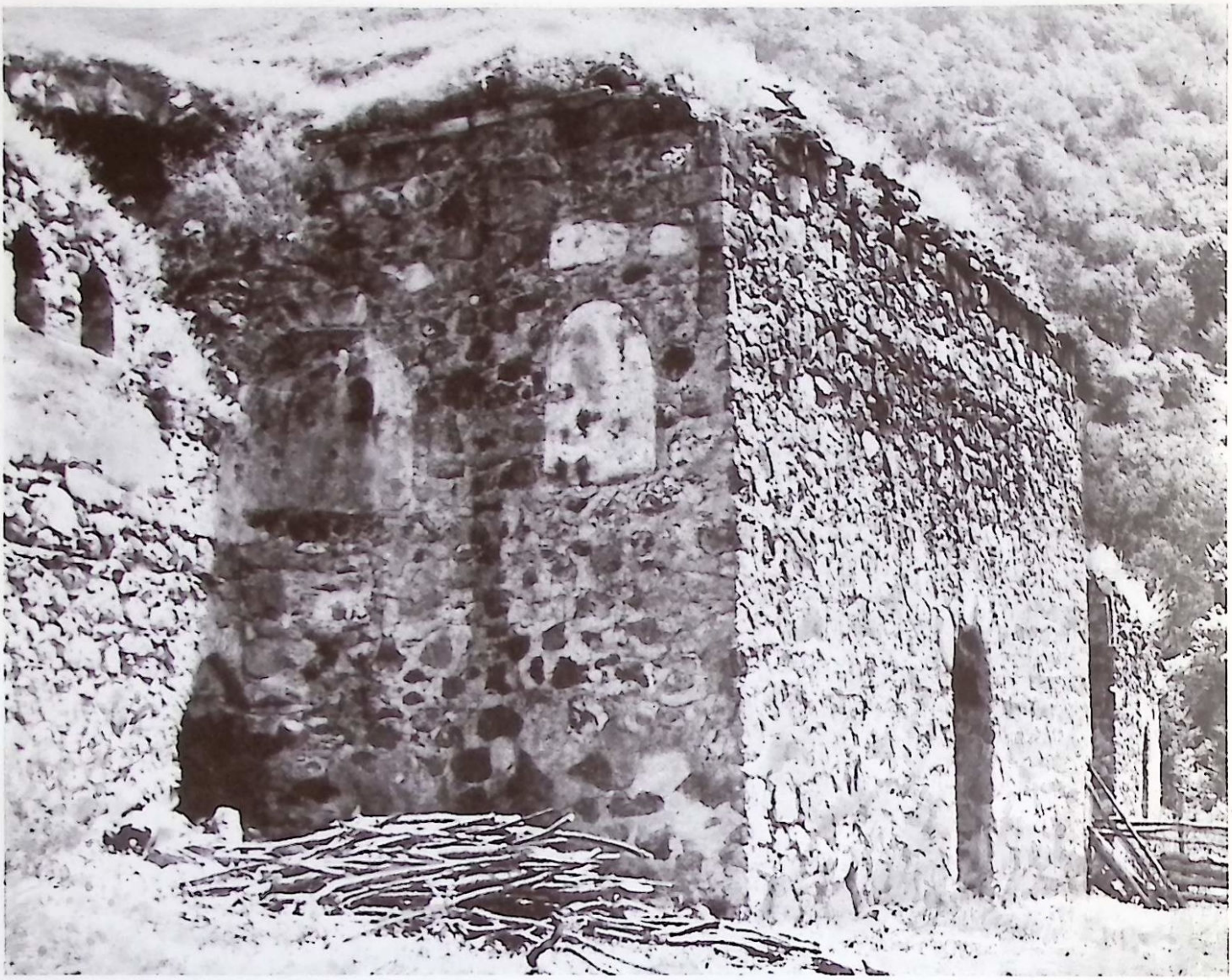
Upper part of northern khachkar

Lower part of northern khachkar

Builders' inscription on palatial hall







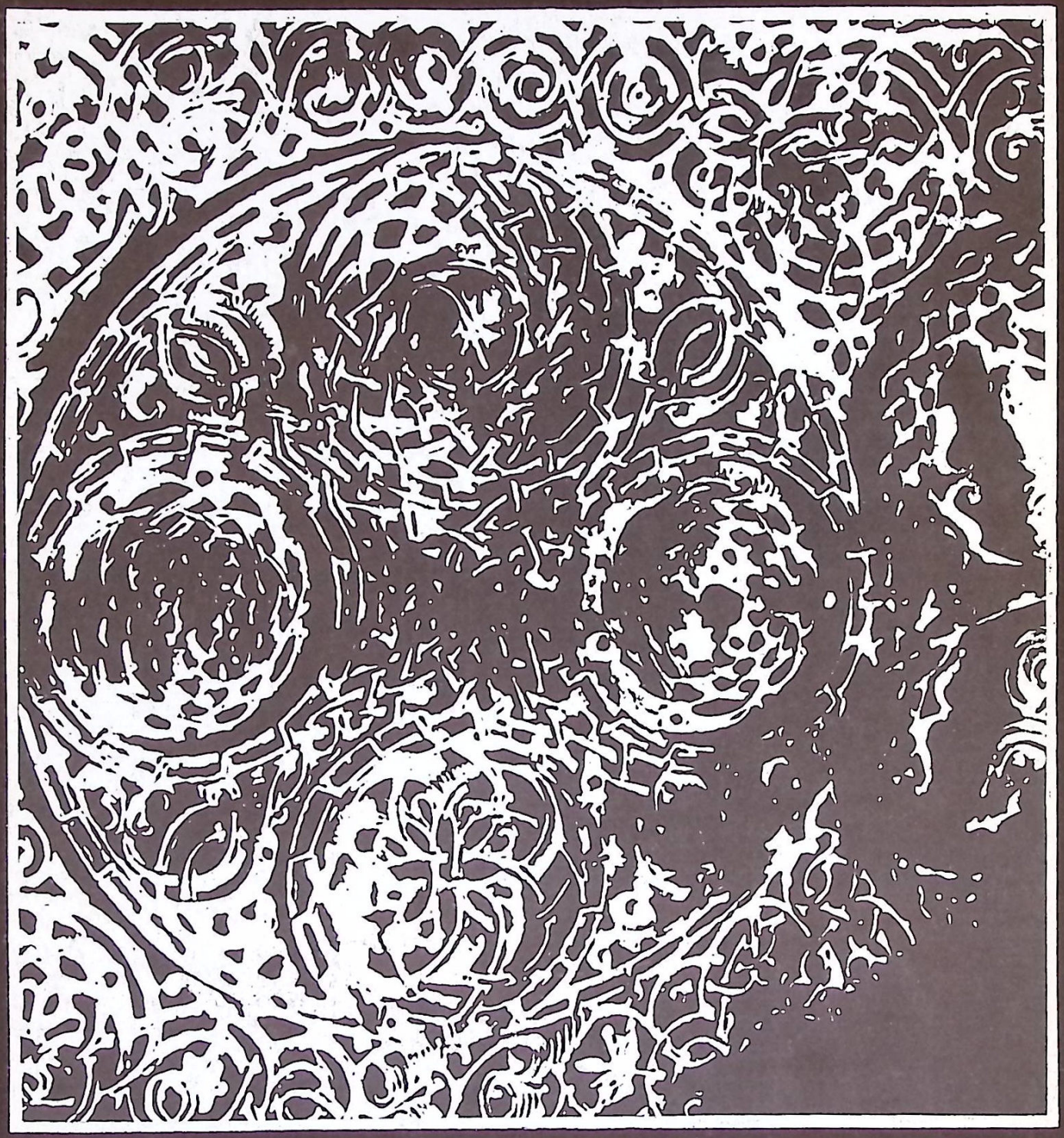
Palatial Hall. View from the southwest



Dadivank hotel. View from the south



Western group of .Dadivank's secular buildings



ВТИ

© Внешторгиздат, 1990

Внешторгиздат. Изд. № 31ПП. ВТИ. Зак. 179