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**ARMENIAN-IRANIAN COOPERATION IN PRESERVATION AND  
RESTORATION ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF BOTH COUNTRIES**

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**Abstract**

By the will of fate and various historical circumstances, many architectural monuments are located not only within the current borders of their own country, but also in the territories of other countries. And the problem of each country is to preserve, protect and popularize not only the monuments of their people, but also the cultural and historical objects of another country. Naturally, over time, monuments deteriorate and need conservation or restoration, which should also be among the priority tasks of a given state.

**Keywords:** architectural composition, monastery complexes, restoration of architectural monuments, cultural cooperation, ornament, decoration.

**Introduction**

In this article we will turn to two cases of restoration of monuments of Iranian and Armenian architecture - respectively on the territory of Armenia and Iran, which are a very good examples of cooperation between our two countries in the field of restoration of monuments. The first example of cooperation in the field of architectural restoration is the Blue Mosque in Yerevan, one of the few but valuable monuments of Muslim architecture preserved on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. This monument can easily be called one of the pearls of Persian architecture. It has been preserved since the times of the Persian Khanate, when in 1747, as a result of the Turkish-Persian wars, a khanate was formed on the territory of Armenia, and Yerevan became its administrative center. Having played a significant role in the cultural life of Yerevan throughout its history, the ensemble of the Blue Mosque fell into poor condition over the years, and its revival to its former splendor was facilitated by the invitation of Iranian specialists and their cooperation with their Armenian colleagues.

Another example of fruitful cooperation between Armenian and Iranian specialists in the restoration of monuments is the monastery of Surb Stepanos Nakhavka (St. Stephen the

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First Martyr or Baptist) of Darashamb (in the historical region of Vaspurakan - now in the north of Iran). This monument, extremely interesting both in its history, planned and volumetric-spatial compositions and decorative details, suffered many shocks and needed restoration, therefore the good will, shown by the Iranian authorities to restore the monument in collaboration with Armenian specialists was extremely important.

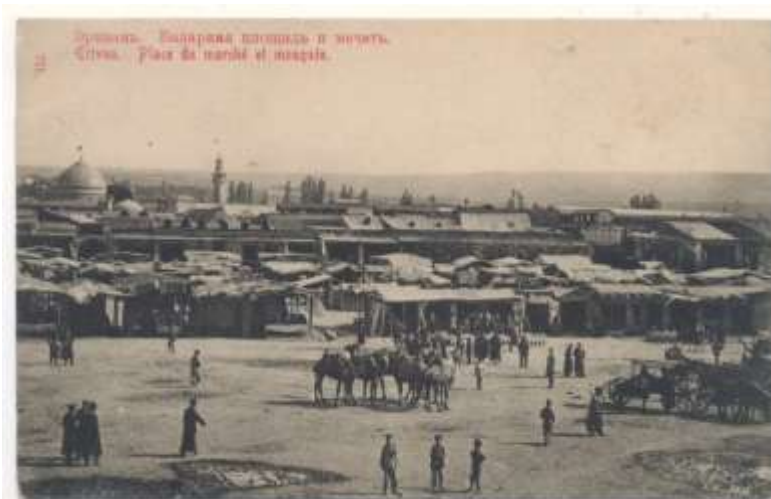
**Conflict Setting**

Presenting these examples of Armenian-Iranian cooperation in the field of monument restoration is extremely important for understanding the attitude towards the cultural heritage of another people on the territory of their own country, which must be preserved and protected as a universal value. This is especially important now - in a conflicting world, when the achievements of world civilization are under threat.

**Research Results**

The Blue Mosque, in terms of the size of the territory occupied by its ensemble, was the largest of the seven mosques that existed in Yerevan, and in terms of its architectural characteristics it was remarkable from the time of its construction. European travelers who were in Yerevan at that time wrote about the Blue Mosque: for example, the famous French botanist and traveler of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries Joseph Piton de Tournefort, referring to the history of Yerevan, in particular to the history of its conquest by the Turks and Persians, and describing city, mentions a square, where various products were sold, and near which there were «a beautiful mosque and two coffee houses [1].

The mentioned mosque was most likely built in Yerevan during the period of Persian rule - in 1765-1766, by the Sardar of Yerevan Huseyn-ali-Qajar. Regarding the historical events of this period, Tournefort refers to his compatriot, the traveler Jean Chardin, who visited Yerevan at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: «According to Chardin, in 1582 Yerevan was taken by the Turks, who built a fortress, then – in 1604, The Persians took the city again...and still own it» [2].



The mosque was located in the southern part of the space of 7000 m<sup>2</sup>, where other buildings of the ensemble were built - 28 cells, a madrasah and a library. They were all located around the perimeter of the courtyard measuring 72x46 m. The mosque building is a square volume topped with a wide-span dome, the massiveness of which is contrasted with a 24 m high minaret on the south-eastern

corner of the mosque. This is the only surviving minaret of the four that once existed. Inside

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the minaret there were spiral steps tapering upward leading to the upper platform. There are three entrances to the mosque building - the main ones from the south and west, and an additional one from the east. The internal composition of the mosque consists of three domed prayer halls arranged in an enfilading order, of which the middle one is the largest in size (12x12 m).

The portals of the main hall and the minaret, as well as the main facades of the structure, are covered with colored glazed ceramic tiles with floral and geometric patterns. The colors of the tiles are divided into three colors - blue, green and yellow, but predominantly blue (hence the name of the mosque). Blue color predominated because it symbolized the heavenly abode.

The issue of the construction material of the structure was interestingly resolved - it is mainly built of brick, and the foundations and cornices are made of tuff. That is, the masonry used here is both the stone accepted in Armenia and the brick common in Iran.

In the northern part of the ensemble, a small prayer hall (9x9 m) was built, on the eastern and western sides of which there are 12 rooms each with an open vaulted narthex for housing students of the theological school - madrasah, confessors and temporary shelter for pilgrims.

If we compare the Blue Mosque in Yerevan with the corresponding religious buildings in Iran in a purely architectural sense, we can see that there is a clear similarity in the volumetric-spatial compositions of buildings made up of square, rectangular, round volumes, extensive courtyards, along the perimeter of which others are built structures with a clear and functionally logical scheme for constructing the ensemble.

In the ensemble of the Yerevan mosque one can see other features characteristic of Iranian architecture: for example, the deep location of the main entrances, its size and height, giving it a dominant role on the facade. And, of course, the similarity in decorations of the mosques, creating their bright, memorable image.

Of course, over the centuries monuments lose their original appearance, are partially destroyed and need restoration. The same thing happened with the Blue Mosque, which by the mid-20th century was already in pretty bad shape. And only towards the end of the 20th century the idea of its restoration arose with the involvement of Iranian specialists. Restoration of monuments located on the territory of other countries is an extremely important, but also difficult process. And not only because it requires large material costs and high professional skills, but also because it depends on the good will of a given state and must be under the auspices of its authorities. With the Islamic Republic of Iran we have created a good tradition in this matter. In establishing connections for the restoration of architectural monuments enormous is the role of Doctor of Architecture and Technical Sciences Armen Hakhnazaryan, who in 1982 in the city of Aachen (Germany) created the public organization «Research on Armenian Architecture». The activities of the organization have always been associated with the name of its founder and leader, and then with the famous devotee of Armenian architecture Samvel Karapetyan, who replaced him in this post.

The cooperation of this organization with relevant organizations in Iran has been very successful. In the 1970-80 through the efforts of the head of the organization Armen

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Hakhnazaryan, some monuments of Artaz region of historical Armenia, now located in the province of Iran Western Atrpatakan, were successfully restored. Some of the first restored Armenian monuments in Iran were the monastery of St. Thaddeus the Apostle, the Church of the Virgin Mother in Tsor-Tsor, the chapel of St. Sandukht and other Armenian monuments. In Tehran, the churches of St. Gevorg, St. Sargis and St. Gregory were restored.

Accordingly, in the Republic of Armenia, on the basis of an interstate agreement between the ministries of culture of both countries on 1995, the process of restoring the Blue Mosque in Yerevan was begun in 1996, which, both in its size, architectural composition and artistic value, was practically unparalleled in the Caucasus.

Research, scientific design and restoration works was carried out, as a result of which the Blue Mosque appeared in its former splendor. Both Iranian and Armenian specialists took part in the work. On the Armenian side, the leading specialist was the architect-restorer, head of the construction programs of the Mother See of Holy Ejmiadzin, now the head of the international organization ICOM Grigor Nalbandyan.

The Iranian side provided the main work on the restoration of the monument, and subsequently took over its use for cultural purposes. In the field of preservation and restoration of foreign architectural heritage on the territory of Armenia such experience at a high international level was the first, and this first step became very successful and important.

According to Grigor Nalbandyan, the work on the immediate restoration of the ensemble was preceded by the study of the entire territory, measuring work, excavations, research and reading of inscriptions, as well as scientific design and other work [3].

The research carried out was important for revealing some important aspects of the history of architecture of the entire region. The approach of Iranian and Armenian masters to the work produced was extremely important, thanks to which the ensemble received its

original appearance.



And the restored structures, and the used building material, and details of decoration - glazed ceramic tiles on the portals, dome of the mosque, minaret and other places (the missing tiles were ordered in Iran - Isfahan or Tabriz, and transported to Yerevan), and frescoes (during cleaning the walls under a layer of plaster new frescoes and

inscriptions were discovered, the restoration of which was carried out with special materials) were authentic and scientifically substantiated.

The restoration works of the ensemble of a wonderful example of Iranian architecture - the ensemble of the Blue Mosque, was of great importance in many aspects: an objective

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assessment of the cultural and historical heritage of the two countries on each other's territory, detailed research, joint efforts to preserve, restore and use them in the modern cultural life of both countries.

Another striking example of the fruitful cooperation of Armenian and Iranian specialists in the restoration of monuments is the monastery of Surb Stepanos Nakhavka (St. Stephen the First Martyr or Baptist) of Darashamb (in the historical region of Vaspurakan - now in the north of Iran). This monastery is one of the monuments of Armenian architecture in Iran, the restoration work of which was organized by the above-mentioned organization "Research on Armenian Architecture" under the direct leadership of Armen Hakhnazaryan and on the initiative of the Iranian authorities.

The monastery complex is located approximately 15 km from the city of Jugha (Julfa), on the right bank of the Araks River, on the slope of Mount Magard (therefore sometimes also called Magardavank), 1 km east of the Armenian settlement of Darashamb (almost on the border of Iran with Nakhichevan).

The monastery, which have been reconstructed in different centuries, has a very interesting compositional design. A rectangular space surrounded by fortress walls with semicircular towers is divided into two parts by two rows of additional rooms, in the northern part of which is the Church of St. Stepanos. As some sources say, the monastery was built in the 10th century. According to the legend recorded by the author of the medieval chronicle Michael the Syrian, the Armenian translation of which is referred to by Alishan [4], it was founded by St. Bartholomew.

The further fate of the monastery is associated with the name of King Ashot III Vogormats (the Merciful, 953 - 977) and Catholicos Khachik II (1058 -1065), and dates back to the year 976. According to the text of Arakel Davrizhetsi, the construction of the monastery of Holy Protomartyr Stepanos in the Darashamb gorge was resumed under the Catholicos Movses III (1629–1632) and Philippos I (1633–1655).

In 1633 Hakob Dzhugaetsi (from 1655 - Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church) began the reconstruction of the complex, the construction of which was completed in 1662. The main church of the monastery was built by Dzhugaetsi in 1643 on the site of the demolished church of St. Stepanos.

By plan, the church is a cross-domed structure - a triconch with seven-sided from the inside three apses on the eastern, northern and southern sides. Among other features, the originality of the composition lies in the fact that in the classical scheme of the early medieval triconch (churches in Dvin, Talin), the apses are protruding from the outside, and not inscribed in the rectangular contour of the external walls, as here. On both sides of the main apse, which is deeper than the other two, there are two-story aisles with spiral staircases built into the thickness of the walls. One of the chapels on the north side apparently served as a baptismal chapel, as evidenced by the font preserved there [5].

The sacrarium rooms on the western side are much smaller in size, and the stairs opposite them lead to the second floor-loggia, resting on a square space formed by two pairs of columns. Thus, in front of the prayer hall, a kind of special entrance space is formed, on the first level similar to an arched gallery - another unique solution to the composition of the

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Church of St. Stepanos, distinguishing it from both late medieval and earlier churches. On the south side there is another entrance to the prayer hall, above which there is a bell tower. The wall of the main apse is decorated with niches, rectangular in plan and two-story, covered with pointed arches. Niches of different depths are made from the inside and in the dome drum. The flat ones are blind, and the deep ones have open window openings. The western branch of the cross is rectangular, and the entire composition is inscribed in the outer rectangle.

The entrance to the monastery territory is on the western side, where the distribution room is located, connecting the entire space of the monastery with three entrances. The level of the southern courtyard is two meters higher due to the slope of the mountain slope.

In the northern part of the courtyard there is a vaulted hall of the Church of St. Peter and Paul, closely adjacent to the Church of St. Stepanos and stretching along its entire length (6.0 meters), and on the other - to the fortress wall. Two pairs of wall pylons support its stone vault.



The decoration of the Church of St. Stepanos is also worthy of mention for its richness and diversity. Both the walls and the drum of the dome are decorated with many reliefs on biblical themes. The capitals of the bell tower and other details are also decorated with reliefs. Some similarities with Persian art are evident on the western façade of the church. Both the profiled platband of the entrance, the lancet lintel, and the double columns on the sides of the portal are united by a woven Seljuk chain, which in the form of a horizontal belt runs along all the facades, uniting their decorative design into a single composition. The interior of the church is also richly decorated: two-story niches on the sides of the main apse are crowned with wicker pointed arches; during the renovation work of 1826 (with the financial assistance of Shirmazan from Jugha, who lived in Tiflis), the walls were

plastered from the inside, and the apse concha, drum, and pendentives and the dome itself was decorated with frescoes depicting seraphim and floral ornaments by an artists of the Hovnatanyan school [6].

Such rich decoration, along with the use of polychrome - stones of different colors in a certain arrangement, make the Church of St. Stepanos one of the most decorated buildings of the late Middle Ages. The church, with its original design and rich means of artistic expression, can be considered one of the pearls of late medieval Armenian architecture.

Over the years the monastery was repeatedly damaged: it suffered from an earthquake in 1759 and 1840, was raided by the Turks several times, etc. In 1983 the complex was

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restored by the Iranian state enterprise “Cultural Heritage” with financial support from Iranian Armenians and the organization «Yerkir ev Mshakuyt» (Paris).

Like all significant architectural monuments, the glory of the monastery attracted the attention of not only the local population, but also everyone who visited these parts. It is extremely interesting to “see” the monastery through the eyes of the 17th century French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. From the very beginning of the mention of the monastery, the traveler notes its significance: according to Tavernier, the Armenians, heading from Nakhichevan to Julfa, usually deviated from the route to visit the monastery of St. Stepanos located to the south (Couvent de saint Etienne). He himself visited this monastery twice: the first time when returning from his fourth trip to Persia (the first to Nakhichevan), and the

second time on February 12, 1668, during his last trip to India [5].



In the Nakhchivan region there were several churches and monasteries named after St. Stepanos. The monastery that Tavernier visited was Magardavank of the First Martyr St. Stepanos or the Darashamb Monastery (Darashamb is a village in Persarmenia, part of the Nakhchavan gavar of Great Armenia, in modern times - the

Darashamb gavar of the Maku Khanate).

Tavernier himself also deliberately deviated from the route to see this especially revered church. Among other descriptions, the traveler also touches on the structure of the church, which, “like all Armenian churches, is built in the shape of a cross; in the middle [of the church] there is a dome, around which the figures of the twelve apostles are located”. Tavernier notes that this church is deeply revered by the Armenians, and that «many women secretly sell their jewelry, even their clothes, in secret from their husbands, in order to finance the construction costs» [6].

In its planned composition and clear functional solution, the monumental monastery of Surb Stepanos Nakhavka Darashamba was similar to an impregnable fortress, but it also had a particularly solemn and magnificent decorative decoration. The monastery at one time had great religious and cultural significance and, as we see, attracted the attention not only of its flock or people living in its vicinity, but also of European travelers who saw a lot on their way. However, it has not lost its significance even now, representing an important stage in the history of the development of Armenian architecture. Therefore, its restoration was important for representatives of not only the Armenian, but also the Iranian side. As representatives of the relevant organizations in Iran say, if the monastery, which has always been an important cultural and historical point of its region, was in a dilapidated state, and was visited by

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approximately two hundred thousand people a year, then after its restoration it became much more visited - the number of tourists there is 3 million people.

Due to its artistic and historical value, the monastery was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008 under the name “Armenian Churches of Iran” - along with other Armenian monuments - the Monastery of St. Thaddeus and the Tsor-Tsor Church (Tzor-Tsor Church, built in 9 -10th centuries and restored in the 14th, in 1987-1988 it was moved about 600 m, because as part of the improvement of this area, it was decided to build a reservoir on the Makuchay River, on the initiative and with the help of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization. The transfer of this architectural monument was carried out by the famous Iranian architect Varuzhan Arakelyan). The restoration of Surb Stepanos Nakhavka Darashamba is another very successful example of cultural cooperation between our countries in the field of preserving foreign architectural heritage on their territories.

### Conclusion

The fruitful cultural cooperation between Armenia and Iran in the field of restoration of architectural monuments in the territories of our two countries has good traditions and contributes not only to better recognition of each other and attraction of interest in the various monuments of both countries, their preservation, but also to the enrichment of the history of world architecture. And these two important monuments of Iranian and Armenian architecture, being in other countries, enrich each country with their artistic value and are examples of care for architectural monuments regardless of their location.

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ՀԱՅ-ԻՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԳՈՐԾԱԿՑՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԵՐԿՈՒ ԵՐԿՐՆԵՐԻ ՃԱՐՏԱՐԱՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ԺԱՌԱՆԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՊԱՀՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԵՎ ՎԵՐԱԿԱՆԳՆՄԱՆ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՄ

Ա.Ա. Տեր-Մինասյան

Ալեքսանդր Թամանյանի անվան ճարտարապետության ազգային թանգարան-ինստիտուտ

Ճակատագրի և տարբեր պատմական հանգամանքների բերումով բազմաթիվ ճարտարապետական հուշարձաններ այսօր գտնվում են ոչ միայն իրենց երկրի սահմաններում, այլև այլ պետությունների տարածքներում: Եվ ամեն երկրի խնդիրն է ոչ միայն իր ժողովրդի, այլև այլ երկրի մշակույթի և պատմության հուշարձանների պահպանությունը, պաշտպանությունը և հանրահռակումը:

Բնականաբար, ժամանակի հետ հուշարձանները խարխվում են և պահանջում են ամրակայման և վերանորոգման աշխատանքի իրականացում, ինչը նույնպես պետք է լինի սովյալ երկրի առաջնային խնդիրների թվում:

Անդրադարձ է կատարվում իրանական և հայկական ճարտարապետության վերանորոգման երկու դեպքերին՝ համապատասխանորեն Հայաստանի և Իրանի տարածներում, որոնք շատ լավ օրինակներ են հուշարձանների վերանորոգման ոլորտում մեր երկու երկրների համագործակցության: Առաջին օրինակը՝ դա Հայաստանի հանրապետության տարածքում՝ Երևանում պահպանված սակավաթիվ մուսուլմանական հուշարձաններից շատ արժեքավոր Կապույտ մզկիթն է, երկրորդը՝ Դարաշամբի Սուրբ Ստեփանոս Նախավկա վանքը Իրանի հյուսիսում:

Հայկական և իրանական ճարտարապետությունների այս երկու կարևոր հուշարձանները՝ գտնվելով հարակից երկրներում, իրենց գեղարվեստական արժանիքներով հարստացնում են յուրաքանչյուրը այս երկրներից և օրինակ ծառայում ճարտարապետության հուշարձանների նկատմամբ հոգատար վերաբերմունքի՝ անկախ դրանց գտնվելու վայրից:

**Բանալի բառեր.** ճարտարապետական հորինվածք, վանքային համակիրներ, զարդանախշ, ճարտարապետական հուշարձանների վերականգնում, մշակութային համագործակցություն, դեկորատիվ հարդարանք

АРМЯНО-ИРАНСКОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО В ДЕЛЕ СОХРАНЕНИЯ И РЕСТАВРАЦИИ АРХИТЕКТУРНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ ОБЕИХ СТРАН

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Волею судьбы и разных исторических обстоятельств множество памятников архитектуры находятся не только в нынешних границах своей страны, но и на территориях других стран. И задачей каждой страны является сохранение, охрана и

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**ARMENIAN-IRANIAN COOPERATION IN PRESERVATION AND  
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популяризация не только памятников своего народа, но и объектов культуры и истории другой страны. Естественно, со временем памятники ветшают и нуждаются в консервации или реставрации, что также должно быть среди приоритетных задач данного государства.

В данной статье мы обратимся к двум случаям реставрации памятников иранской и армянской архитектуры – соответственно на территории Армении и Ирана, которые являются очень хорошим примером сотрудничества наших двух стран в области реставрации памятников.

Первый пример сотрудничества в области архитектурной реставрации – сохранившаяся на территории Республики Армения в числе немногих, но ценных памятников мусульманской архитектуры Голубая мечеть в Ереване, второй - монастырь Сурб Степанос Нахавка (Св. Стефана Первомученика или Предтечи) Дарашамба на севере Ирана.

Эти два важных памятника иранской и армянской архитектуры, находясь в других странах, своими художественными достоинствами обогащают каждую из стран и являются примерами заботы о памятниках архитектуры независимо от места их нахождения.

**Ключевые слова:** архитектурная композиция, монастырские комплексы, восстановление архитектурных памятников, культурное сотрудничество, орнамент, декоративное убранство.

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