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## Evangelization of the Apostles Yeghisha and Dad in Artsakh and Utik according to the Armenian tradition

### Abstract

According to the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church tradition, three of the 72 Disciples of Christ, Dad, Yeghisha and Khad, visited Artsakh and Utik provinces in Greater Armenia and evangelized. Apostle Dad came to Armenia with Apostle Thaddeus to preach Christianity. And, when he heard about king Abgar's death, he went back to Artsakh, where he lived an ascetic life and died. A monastery was built on his relics, which was named after him. In 2007–2008, during the excavations of Dad's church, two tombs were discovered, but they probably date back to the later centuries and have no connection with Apostle Dad. At the same time, we do not deny the historical figure of Apostle Dad and the tradition that the Dad Monastery was founded on his relics. Apostle Yeghisha accompanied St. Thaddeus during his missionary path and was present at his martyrdom in Artaz. Only then, after the ordination in Jerusalem, Apostle Yeghisha began preaching from Chor and then came to the right bank of the Kura River: he went to the city of Sahar in Utik, from there he went to Gis and established a church there, and later he was martyred in Zerguni. The relics of Apostle Yeghisha were buried in a place called Jrvstik and later a monastery was founded on his relics. However, there is also a version according to which the figure of Yeghisha Apostle was created. After St. Yeghisha, in the 4th century, Gregoris Partev visited Chor.

The tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church states that three of the 72 Disciples of Jesus Christ, namely Dad, Yeghisha and Khad, visited the provinces of Artsakh and Utik<sup>1</sup> in Greater Armenia and evangelized there. We tried to collect and highlight their lives and missionary paths from the Armenian medieval literature. However, it should be noted that in academic research circles there is an opinion according to which the figures of these Apostles were

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1 According to Movses Khorenatsi's Geography (arm. Ashkharatsuyts or Ašxarhac'oyc'), Artsakh and Utik are the 10th and 12th provinces of Greater Armenia, Cf. Movses Khorenatsi, Ashkharatsuyts. Matenagirq Hayots, Vol. II. Antelias-Lebanon, 2003 (arm.), 2151.



**Fig. 1:** Gandzasar monastery. Photo by Tigran Apikyan (2009). All rights reserved.

created not earlier than the sixth century. Before their vitas are presented, the relic (head) of John the Baptist kept in Gandzasar in Artsakh should be referred to.

## 1. The Relic of John the Baptist in Gandzasar

St. Hovhannes Monastery in Gandzasar, which is the heart and spiritual center of Artsakh, is located in the region of Khachen, on a mountain situated in front of Vank village. Before the construction of St. Hovhannes church, there was the cemetery of Jalalyan dynasty. In 1216, Prince Hasan Jalal Dola and his mother Khorishah began to build St. Hovhannes church on the basis of an ancient church, the construction of which was finished in 1238 and the church was consecrated in 1240 on the day of Vardavar (Feast of the Transfiguration).<sup>2</sup> The foundation of this Monastery is connected with the head of John the Baptist.

According to the Holy Church tradition, the head of John the Baptist was kept in Constantinople for a long time, and during the reign of Emperor Constantine Monomach (1042–1055) it was divided into several parts (two or seven). Hence, according to various traditions, the

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<sup>2</sup> Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum. Liber V, Artsakh, compiled by S. Barkhudaryan. Yerevan, 1982 (arm.), 36.

relics of the head of John the Baptist are kept in the church of St. John the Baptist in Jerusalem, in the church of the city of Amiens in France, in the Residenz Museum in Munich, in monasteries of Mount Athos, in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

As far as the tradition of the Armenian Church is concerned, an appendix is attached to the history book of Movses Kaghankatvatsi: »About the honorable head of John the Baptist, how it was brought to Artsakh province and then was put in St. Gandzasar«. According to this story, John the Baptist's followers took his beheaded body and buried it. However, Herod had the head of the Baptist, and when he began to mock it, a large stone fell and destroyed the house they were in. After a while, two monks, who spent the night in a ruined house while travelling, dreamed about John the Baptist, who showed them the place of his head. The monks woke up, took the holy relic and continued their journey. On the way, a poor man joined them, and when the monks stopped somewhere to spend the night, that man took the holy relic and left. When he took it home, he sacredly kept it and many people came to the relic to be healed of various diseases. Then a potter got the head of John the Baptist and afterwards the brother of the prince of Artsakh, Hasan Jalal Dola, took it. In 1211, Jalal Dola asked his brother to give him the holy relic. However, his brother refused to give it to him, so he took it by force and brought it to his estate in Artsakh. Then he buried the relic there and built an amazing church in Gandzasar called St. Hovhannes (John the Baptist).<sup>4</sup>

There is another version of this story in the Armenian manuscript heritage. A manuscript called *Vitas of Saints*, copied in Crimea in 1695 and now kept in the Monastery of St. Hakopyants in Jerusalem, reads:

»Then the prince received the holy head and took it to Constantinople. The French people wanted to pick it up and take it to France. So, the prince took it and fled to Georgia. Recently, in 700 [= 1251], Jalaldovlan took it from his brother and brought it to the Gandzak region of Khachen, called Gandzasar. Then built a famous Monastery and called it Gandzasar«.<sup>5</sup>

This information was popularized by Tamara Minasyan, a senior researcher at the Matenadaran after Mashtots, in her valuable work *Scriptoria of Artsakh*.<sup>6</sup>

3 Head of John the Baptist. Orthodox Encyclopedia, Vol. XXIV, 528–577.

4 Movses Kaghankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, Yerevan, arm. original compiled by V. Arakelyan. 1983 (arm.), 348–350. There is an opinion that the first and second parts of the book *History of the Country of Aghuank*, which contain the events up to the middle of the 7th century, were written by the 7th century historian Movses Kagankatvatsi. Later it was continued by the 10th century historian Movses Dashkhurantsi, to whom the third book belongs in its entirety; see Hovhannisyan P., *Movses Kagankatvatsi and his History of the Country of Aghuank*, 27–28. According to Aleksan Hakobyan, *History of the Country of Aghuank* has one author: Movses Daskhurantsi in X century, who also included in his book material written in VI and VII centuries; A. Hakobyan *Albania-Aluank in the Greek-Latin and Old-Armenian Sources*, 159–190.

5 Grand Catalogue of St. James manuscripts, ms. 811. Vol. III, 281–282.

6 Minasyan T., *Scriptoria of Artsakh*, 10.

## 2. Apostle Dad<sup>7</sup>

The name of the world-famous Dad Monastery in Artsakh is connected with an Apostle named Dad. The Monastery is located in the eastern part of Verin Khachen or Tsar region of Artsakh, in the north of the left bank of the Tartar River. Today, the Monastery consists of the following structures: Dad's church, a church with a small dome, Katoghike church, a building called temple, a chapel, a bell tower, a small vestibule, a colonnade, a refectory, a lord palace, a guest house, a wine press, a cellar, etc.<sup>8</sup>

Dad was one of the 72 Disciples of Christ who came to Armenia with Apostle Thaddeus to preach Christianity. Speaking about the Apostles who came to Armenia, Vanakan Vardapet also mentioned the name of St. Dad and clearly stated that Thaddeus was one of the 12 Apostles of Christ, and Dad was one of the 72 Disciples:

»Our Apostle Thaddeus, as it is said in the Life-Giving Holy Gospel, was one of the twelve Apostles: Ghebeos, whose name was Thaddeus,»<sup>9</sup>

»One of the seventy-two Disciples was Dad, who went to the northern parts of Greater Armenia by the order of Thaddeus. And when he heard about Abgar's death, he went back to Small Syunik,<sup>10</sup> where he secretly lived an ascetic life and died. And a Monastery was built there, which was named after him«<sup>11</sup> (according to a local tradition, St. Dad was martyred).

Vanakan's information, as an official note, is included in the collection called *Book of Papers*. The same information is written in the Armenian translation of Michael the Syrian's work called *About the Priesthood*.<sup>12</sup>

In Armenian medieval literature we find various references about Dad Monastery. The historian Movses Kaghankatvatsi wrote: »It is called Dado Monastery«,<sup>13</sup> and archimandrite Mkhitar Gosh wrote in his Chronicle that in 1145 the Persian general Chol destroyed a number of settlements, including Dad Monastery. »He could not conquer the fortresses, but completely destroyed all the provinces, also burned the apostolic holy Monastery, which is called Dadu Monastery«. <sup>14</sup>

7 The name of the apostle in Armenian is pronounced as ›Dad‹, but it is customary to write Dad, not Dud.

8 About the architecture and structure of the monastery see Karapetian S., Monuments of Armenian Culture in the Occupied Territories of Soviet Azerbaijan, 81–107.

9 Book of Letters, 533.

10 Artsakh is often called Little Syunik in Armenian medieval literature.

11 Book of Letters, 536.

12 Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, On the Priesthood, 33.

13 Movses Kaghankatvatsi, History of the Country of Aghuank, 1969, 266.

14 Mkhitar Gosh, Chronology, 608.





**Fig. 2:** Dad Monastery. Photo by Tigran Apikyan (2020). All rights reserved.

St. Dad and his tomb are mentioned both in the colophons of manuscripts and in epigraphs of the Monastery. Moreover, Dad is sometimes mentioned as Tade. For example, Hovhannes Tsaretsi received a manuscript in 1594 (Jerusalem, ms. 2208) and wrote the following note: »The last recipient of the holy manuscript – archimandrite Hovhannes from Tsar, from the Monastery of St. Apostle Dad«. <sup>15</sup> In 1708, archimandrite Thomas wrote the following memoir in a manuscript that belonged to him: »It was written in the divine Monastery of St. Tade« (MM, ms. 1301). <sup>16</sup> The name Dad is written in the 1224 epigraph of the western wall of the Katoghike church. »For God’s sake, I – Gregor, Hasan’s son, donated four houses to Dad’s grave with great hope«. Dad’s name is also written in the epigraph in 1241. »By God’s will, I – Prince Sevada, Smbat’s son, and my wife Tacher donated to Dad Monastery«. <sup>17</sup> The people presumably believed that the tomb of St. Dad was located in the north-eastern structure of the Monastery, and called this structure Dad’s Church. There is a stony monument in the eastern part of the building, which was supposed to be Dad’s grave stone.

In 1997, the Research on Armenian Architecture foundation began restoring the Dad Monastery, which was finished in 2011. During this period, an attempt was made to find the

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15 Minasyan T., *Scriptoria of Artsakh*, 34–35.

16 *Main Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of Mashtots Matenadaran*. Vol. III, 854. Minasyan T., *Scriptoria of Artsakh*, 35.

17 *Corpus inscriptionum Armenicarum*. Liber V, Artsakh, 201–202.

relics of Apostle Dad. These works are presented in the book of architect Samvel Ayvazyan called *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad (1997 to 2011)*.<sup>18</sup> According to Ayvazyan, the building called Dad's church was built in the 13th century on the basis of an ancient building and it did not serve as a church.<sup>19</sup> The excavations on July 1-6, 2007, suggest that the monument was erected in the mid of the 13th century before Dad's church was built. During the excavations a tomb was found on the east side of the monument (archaeologist H. Petrosyan). The study showed that it was done after the construction of the Dad's church, in the second half of the 13th century, which had no connection with St. Dad.<sup>20</sup>

During the same construction works, in 2007, another tomb was found near the monument, pieces of a wooden chair were excavated, and human bones were found inside the tomb. In 2008, the excavations continued inside the building of Dad's church, and human bones, an onyx head of a scepter, and the remaining pieces of a wooden chair with ornaments were removed from this tomb. The person there was obviously a prominent church figure. As a result of the laboratory examination, the time was clarified: AD 1260 +/- 55 years. It was assumed that it could be the remains of Atanas abbot of the Dad Monastery (1261–1291). At the same time, there was an assumption that the burial was done earlier than Dad's church and the structure preceding it were built.<sup>21</sup>

During the excavations of Dad's church two tombs were discovered, but they date back to later centuries. At the same time, we do not deny the historical figure of Apostle Dad and the tradition that the Dad Monastery was founded on his relics.

### 3. Apostle Yeghisha (or Elisha)<sup>22</sup>

The historians Movses Kaghankatvatsi, Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Bishop Ukhtanes wrote about St. Yeghisha in their history books, the great archimandrites Mkhitar Gosh and Vanakan Vardapet also referred to him in their writings.

The life and martyrdom of St. Yeghisha is connected with the Armenian provinces of Artsakh and Utik. According to the Armenian historians Movses Kaghankatvatsi (7th century),<sup>23</sup>

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18 Ayvazyan S., *The Restoration of the Monastery of Dad (1997 to 2011)*.

19 Ayvazyan S., *The Restoration*, 52–56.

20 Ayvazyan S., *The Restoration*, 63–64.

21 Ayvazyan S., *The Restoration*, 68–72.

22 The name of the apostle is found in the following versions in various publications and studies: Elisha, Eghisha, Eliseus, Yelisha.

23 Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 7–8. Movses Daskhurantsi, *History of the Aghuans*. Book one, Capter 6.





**Fig. 3:** Yeghisha Monastery. Photo by Arevik Tsatryan (2020). All rights reserved.

Bishop Ukhtanes (10th century)<sup>24</sup> and Kirakos Gandzaketsi (13th century),<sup>25</sup> St. Yeghisha was a Disciple of St. Thaddeus and was in Armenia with him. In addition to this information, Vanakan Vardapet clearly stated in his writing that Apostle Thaddeus was one of the 12 Apostles of Christ, and that Yeghisha was one of the 72 Disciples of Christ, and that Khad, another Disciple of the 72, came with Yeghisha: »Yeghisha and Khad were two out of seventy-two and went to Aghuank<sup>26</sup> by the order of Thaddeus and were martyred there«. <sup>27</sup>

Movses Kagankatvatsi, as well as Bishop Ukhtanes, told about the martyrdom of St. Yeghisha as follows: St. Apostle Thaddeus came to Armenia to evangelize, and in the district of Artaz he was martyred by Sanatruk, the king of the Armenians. St. Yeghisha returned to Jerusalem and told about the martyrdom of Thaddeus. In Jerusalem, Yeghisha was ordained by the hands of St. James, the Lord's brother.<sup>28</sup> Movses Kagankatvatsi wrote:

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24 Bishop Ukhtanes, *History of Armenia*, 2006, 197–199. Bishop Ukhtanes of Sebastia, *History*, 1985, 123–124.

25 Kirakos Gandzaketsi, *History of Armenia*, 1982, 141–142. Kirakos Ganjaketsi, *History of the Armenians*, trans. by R. Bedrosian. Chapter 10.

26 The name of the country is found in the following versions in various publications and studies: Aluank, Aghuank, Caucasian Albania.

27 *Book of Letters*, 536.

28 Movses Daskhurantsi, *History of the Aghuans*. Book one, Chapter 6. Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 6–7. Bishop Ukhtanes, *History of Armenia*, 197–199. Bishop Ukhtanes of Sebastia, *History*, 123–124.

»The holy apostle Thaddaeus was given to us Easterners. [Thaddaeus] came to the Armenians, to the district of Artaz, where he died a martyr's death at the hands of Sanatruk, the king of the Armenians. His student, the blessed Elisha (Eghisha), returned to Jerusalem and related the enviable martyrdom of his fellow apostle. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, Elisha was ordained at the hands of the blessed James, the Lord's brother, who was the first patriarch of Jerusalem. He took the east[ern regions] as his diocese«. <sup>29</sup>

Movses Kagankatvatsi did not mention to what he was ordained, but in the history book of Kirakos Gandzaketsi and in Haysmavurk (Synaxarium) we read: »Bishop«. <sup>30</sup>

According to the above-mentioned historical books, St. Yeghisha traveled from Jerusalem to Maskut (Massagetae) via Persia. He began his preaching in Chor (Caspian Gates, Armenians say Aghuan's Gates, Hun's Gates, now: Derbent) and he introduced Christianity in various places and to many people. Then, he, alongside with his three followers, came to the city of Sahar in Utik province. Nevertheless, the unbelievers pursued them, and one of his followers was martyred. The other two left St. Yeghisha and followed the unbelievers. Then, St. Yeghisha came to Gis (Utik), <sup>31</sup> established a church (Christian community) there and offered a bloodless sacrifice (celebrate a Liturgy). As Kaghankatvatsi wrote: »This place was the first of the eastern churches and capitals, and the [initial] place of enlightenment«. <sup>32</sup> Thence St. Yeghisha went to the plain of Zerguni, where the pagans had their place of sacrifice, and was martyred there. It is unknown by whom Yeghisha was martyred, but his body was placed in a pit in a place called Homenk <sup>33</sup> and was left there for a long time. <sup>34</sup>

There has been a debate about the location of the field called Zerguni. E. Kozubsky located Zerguni in Nukha province in historical Aghuank. <sup>35</sup> Indeed, Udian villages Nizh and Vardashen in the Gabala region of Nukha province have a famous sanctuary church called Nizh's St. Yeghisha Armenian church, built at the site of the Apostle's martyrdom. The present-day church was built on the basis of an ancient church in 1823, the latter was destroyed in the 18th century. The four Armenian epigraphs of the church were decoded and published by Samvel Karapetyan. Two of them are about the construction, where in particular it is said that St. Yeghisha Church was built by the Astvatsatur priest Yengibaryan and his brother

29 Movses Daskhurantsi, History of the Aghuans. Book one, Chapter 6.

30 Haysmavurk, 82 (arm.). Kirakos Ganjaketsi, History of the Armenians. Chapter 10.

31 Gis is located in Utik province of Greater Armenia, between the Kura and Tartar rivers. See Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and Adjacent Regions, Vol. I, 899. According to Bishop Ukhtanes Gis located near Amaras (in Artsakh) and Partav (in Utik): »Gis, located on the skirts of Amaras, in the district called Gorozu, near the plain of the city of Partaw, called Paytakaran«, Bishop Ukhtanes of Sebastia, History, 124.

32 Movses Daskhurantsi, History, Book one, Chapter 6. Movses Kagankatvatsi, History of the Country of Aghuank, 1969, 7.

33 Homenk in Artsakh province of Greater Armenia. Movses Kagankatvatsi, History of the Country of Aghuank, 1969, 278, footnote 72, by V. Arakelyan.

34 Movses Daskhurantsi, History, Book one, Chapter 6. Movses Kagankatvatsi, History of the Country of Aghuank, 1969, 7.

35 Kozubsky E., History of Derbent city, 34–35.



Hovhan in 1823.<sup>36</sup> There are also other versions. V. Arakelyan thought, it is in the eastern part of Martuni region of Artsakh.<sup>37</sup> We agree with Arakelyan's assumption, because Sahar, Gis, which St. Yeghisha visited, as well as Urekan, where his relics were moved, are located on the right bank of the Kura, in Artsakh and Utik provinces.

According to Movses Kaghankatvatsi, later the place of St. Yeghisha's relics appeared to the believers in a vision: »Truth should not be concealed, nor should the light be covered up«. After a long period of time, certain pious men had a vision and came together in Homenk. They prayed all night long and found the relics of St. Yeghisha. Priest Stepanos from the village of Urekan took the Apostle's skull from the bones and carried it to the village of Urekan (or Horek, near Talish). The other relics of St. Yeghisha were buried there, too. Then, relics were transferred from Urekan to »holy Monastery at Nersmih, which is today called Jrvshtik«. <sup>38</sup>

Kirakos Gandzaketsi linked the discovery of St. Yeghisha's relics with the name of king Vachagan:

»They say that the initial cause of the illumination of the eastern areas was the blessed Eghishe (pupil of the great Thaddeus the Apostle) who, after the death of the holy Apostle went to Jerusalem to James, the brother of the Lord, received ordination as bishop from him, and then went to the land of Iran eventually reaching the land of the Aghbanians/Aghuans. He came to a place called Gis and built a church there, and he himself was martyred there, although it is not known by whom. His body was thrown into a well with other corpses and it remained there until the time of pious King Vach'agan the last«. <sup>39</sup>

Thus, the relics of St. Yeghisha were buried in a place called Jrvshtik after the name of the waterfall flowing there, and where there was a Monastery known as Nersmih or Mihnerseh. <sup>40</sup> The historian Stepanos Orbelyan (14th century) also called this Monastery Jrvshtik or Mihnerseh Monastery (the same name Nersmih). <sup>41</sup> In the 5th century, the pious Armenian Vachagan built a monument on the place of Yeghisha's martyrdom and also built a chapel on the relics. <sup>42</sup> The king himself was buried near the chapel. Later, gradually the monastery was formed there. The early medieval structures of the monastery were not preserved; today only the main church and seven chapels built in the 12-13th centuries are standing there.

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36 Karapetian S., *Armenian Lapidary Inscriptions of Boon-Aghvank*, 41–42.

37 Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 277, footnote 71, by V. Arakelyan.

38 Movses Daskhurantsi, *History*, Book one, Chapter 7. Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 7–8.

39 Kirakos Ganjaketsi, *History of the Armenians*. Chapter 10. Kirakos Gandzaketsi, *History of Armenia*, 1982, 141–142.

40 Voskean H., *The Monasteries of Artsakh*, 119–120.

41 Orbelyan Stepanos, *History of Syunik*, 166.

42 Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 8. Hasratyan M., *Artsakh School of Armenian Architecture*, 78–80.

St. Yeghisha is considered to be the founder of the Aghuanian Holy Church. Mkhitar Gosh wrote in his *Chronology*: »The line of patriarchs from Aghuank after St. Yeghisha, who had come from Jerusalem«. <sup>43</sup>

There is a version in scientific research, according to which the figure of St. Yeghisha was made up later<sup>44</sup> and its goal was to remove the Church of Aghuank from the influence of the Armenian Church. Vahe Torosyan wrote:

»Based on this information referring to Yelisha, some scholars believe that Christianity entered Aluank' through Yelisha's preaching as early as in the first century or on the border of the first and second centuries. Although the sources provide information about the legend of Yelisha, scholars generally agree he is the founder of the Church of Aluank'. According to other scholars, the information found in the History of the Land of Aluank' about the preaching, martyrdom of Yelisha and founding of the Church of Aluank' is a seventh-century legend, created under the influence of certain religious and political events, and apparently in pursuit of the goal of removing the Church of Aluank' from the influence of the Armenian Church«. <sup>45</sup>

My belief is that St. Yeghisha really was a historical figure, as it is described in the History Book of Movses Kaghankatvatsi. Another problem is that in the 10th century, Movses Daskhurantsi, who presented St. Yeghisha merely as the founder of the Aghuanian Church, did not mention the name of the Apostle Thaddeus, and generally had an anti-Armenian attitude.<sup>46</sup> My assumption is that it wasn't by chance that St. Yeghisha began his missionary path precisely from Chor or the Caspian Gates. That was the place connecting the northern part of the Caucasus with the southern part and had thus a strategic importance. Then, St. Yeghisha moved to the right bank of the Kura River (Sahar in Utik, from there to Gis and to Zerguni). After St. Yeghisha, in the 4th century the Armenian Catholicos Gregor Lusavorich's grandson Gregoris Partev visited Chor.

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43 Mkhitar Gosh, *Chronology*, 605.

44 Hakobyan A., *Albania-Aluank in the Greec-Latin and Old-Armenian Sources*, 165. Kharatyan H., *Touching upon issues of Yeghishe the Apostle, Grigoris and the Christianization of the Caucasian Aghvank*, էջ 19-74. Petrosyan H., *Sepulcher-Reliquaries with Eastern Entrance in Arts'akh and the Issues of the Political, Ideological and Ritual Separation of the Albanian Church in the 5th-6th centuries*, 231-232.

45 Torosyan V., *A Brief Review of the History of Arts'akh and Utik*, see Hakobyan H., Minasyan T., Torosyan V., *Manuscript Heritage of Arts'akh and Utik*, 22-23.

46 Movses Daskhurantsi, *History*, Book two, Capter 48. Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 213.



Fig. 4: Amaras Monastery. Photo by Hayk Melqonyan (2017). All rights reserved.

## 4. Gregoris Partev

According to the historian Movses Kaghanakatvatsi, Gregoris was ordained a bishop of Georgia and Aghuank at the age of fifteen and went to preach Christianity, to establish churches and to ordain priests.<sup>47</sup> The historian Tovma Artsruni mentioned that Gregoris also preached in Zhanark<sup>48</sup> which is located on the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus mountain range, on the source of the Terek River, near Alan's Gates or Darial: »Zhanark, where Alan's Gates are«, Movses Khorenatsi wrote in his famous *Ashkharatsuyts*.<sup>49</sup>

Then, Gregoris went to Maskut (Massagetae). Pavstos Buzand (5th century) and Movses Kaghanakatvatsi (7th century) presented young Gregory's evangelization and his martyrdom in detail. Gregory reached Maskut, where King Sanesan Arsacid (Arshakuni) ruled. Having visited the king of Maskut's and the prince of Hun's army, St. Gregory began to preach Christianity to them. At first, they accepted young Gregory. However, later, they began to study the rules of Christianity and learned that God despised greed, looting, killing, depriving people of their possessions. The Maskuts grew angry and thought that the Armenian

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47 Movses Kaghanakatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 27–28.

48 Tovma Artsruni, *History of the House of Artsrunik*, 189.

49 Yeremyan S., *Attempt to restore the Original of Ashkharatsuyts*, 269.

king sent Gregoris to them to deprive them of power. They decided to kill the young man and to invade Armenia. By the order of King Sanesan, St. Gregory was tied to the tail of a wild horse and the horse ran free in the Vanyan plain, on the shores of the Caspian Sea.<sup>50</sup> According to Movses Khorenatsi and Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Gregoris was martyred by the order of King Sanatruk.<sup>51</sup> The Christians took St. Gregoris's body and buried it in Amaras.

As we have seen, St. Gregoris visited Zhanark at Alan's Gates or Darial, then visited Maskuts at the Caspian Gates. In my opinion, the missionary path of Gregoris Partev is not accidental. The mountains of the Greater Caucasus are almost impassable, therefore, from north to south and vice versa, it was possible to pass through the mountainous canyons, the most important of which were Alan's Gates and Caspian Gates. Since ancient times, military fortresses have been built in these places, which served as guard posts. The Christianization of these fortresses had two important implications. Firstly, the gates should be closed if the northern non-Christian people decided to attack the south, where Christian countries Armenia, Georgia and Aghuank were located. Secondly, one of the best ways to spread Christianity in the North Caucasus would be the Christianization of the fortresses of these Gates. Gregoris managed to preach Christianity at Alan's Gates, but the Maskuts did not accept him at the Caspian Gates.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, we have tried to present the data in the Armenian medieval literature about two of the 72 Disciples of Jesus Christ, St. Yeghisha and St. Dad and about their missionary paths in Artsakh and Utik. However, we don't separate the evangelization in Artsakh and Utik provinces from the evangelization in other provinces of Armenia. According to the holy tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church, St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew, the two Apostles of Jesus Christ, preached Christianity in Armenia (Greater and Lesser Armenia). St. Dad came to Armenia with Apostle Thaddeus to preach Christianity and before visiting Artsakh province, he had been to other provinces of Greater Armenia. St. Yeghisha accompanied St. Thaddeus during his missionary path and was present at his martyrdom in Artaz. Only then, after his ordination in Jerusalem, St. Yeghisha began preaching from Chor and then came to the right bank of the Kura.

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50 Pawstos Buzand, *History of Armenia*, 73–75. Pawstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*. Book three, Chapter 6. Movses Kagankatvatsi, *History of the Country of Aghuank*, 1969, 28–29.

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