

= Surb Karapet Monastery =

Surb Karapet Monastery (Armenian : Սուրբ Կարապետ վանք , M^oo Surb Karapet vank ' , also known by other names) was an Armenian monastery in the historic province of Taron , about 30 km (19 mi) northwest of Mush (Mu^o) , in present @-@ day eastern Turkey .

Surb Karapet translates to " Holy Precursor " and refers to John the Baptist , whose remains are believed to have been stored at the site by Gregory the Illuminator in the early fourth century . The monastery subsequently served as a stronghold of the Mamikonians ? the princely house of Taron , who claimed to be the holy warriors of John the Baptist , their patron saint . It was expanded and renovated many times in later centuries . By the 20th century it was a large fort @-@ like enclosure with four chapels .

Historically , the monastery was the religious center of Taron and was a prominent pilgrimage site . It was considered the most important monastery in Turkish (Western) Armenia and the second most important of all Armenian monasteries after Etchmiadzin . From the 12th century the monastery was the seat of the diocese of Taron , which had an Armenian population of 90 @,@ 000 in the early 20th century . It attracted pilgrims on several occasions annually and host large celebrations . The monastery was burned and robbed during the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and later abandoned . Its stones have since been used by the local Kurds for building purposes .

= = Names = =

Throughout history the monastery has been known by several names . One of the common names was Glakavank (?????????) , meaning " Monastery of Glak " after its first father superior , Zenob Glak . It is also spelled Glaka vank (classical spelling : ?????? ???? ; reformed spelling : ????? ????) or Kлага vank (from Western Armenian) . Due to its location it was also called Innaknian vank (?????????? ???? in classical spelling , and ?????????? ???? in reformed) , translating to " Monastery of the Nine Springs " .

Turkish sources refer to it as Çanlı Kilise (Turkish : " Church with Bell Towers ") , or Çengelli Kilise (meaning " Church with Bells " in Kurdish , also the name of the village in which it is located) . They sometimes provide a version of its Armenian name : Surpgarabet Manast^{er}? . Turkish sources and travel guides generally omit the fact that it was an Armenian monastery .

= = History = =

= = Foundation to the Middle Ages = =

According to tradition , the site was founded in the early fourth century by Gregory the Illuminator , who went to Taron to spread Christianity , following the conversion of King Tiridates III of Armenia . At the time , there were two Hindu temples and brass statues established by two Indian princes dedicated to the gods Gisané and Demeter on the site of the cloister . They were razed to the ground by Gregory the Illuminator , who erected a martyrion to house the remains of Saints Athenogenes and John the Baptist which he had brought from Caesarea . According to other sources the pagan temples were dedicated to Vahagn and Astghik . James R. Russell suggests that in Armenia some of the qualities of the pagan god Vahagn were passed down to John the Baptist . Folk belief held that devs (demons) were kept underneath the monastery ; they would be released during the Second Coming by John the Baptist (Surb Karapet) . Christina Maranci suggested that the foundation of the monastery is " most probably connected with the rise of the monastic movement " in Bagratuni Armenia in the 940s .

Zenob Glak , a Syriac archbishop , became its first father superior . He is sometimes mentioned as the author of History of Taron (Patmutiun Taroni , ?????????? ???????) , although the work is generally attributed to the otherwise unknown John Mamikonean and " scholars are convinced that the work is an original composition of a later period (post @-@ eighth century) , written as a

deliberate forgery . " Its main purpose seems to be asserting the monastery 's preeminence . A relatively short " historical " romance , it tells the story of the five members of the Mamikonians , Taron 's princely house : Mushegh , Vahan , Smbat , his son Vahan Kamsarakan , and the latter 's son Tiran , who were known as the Holy Warriors of John the Baptist , their patron saint . They defended the monastery and other churches in the district .

The sixth century chronicler Atanas Taronatsi (Athanas of Taron) served as its father superior . He is best remembered for collocation of the Armenian calendar . The monastery 's possessions were expanded in the seventh century , but the building was reduced to ruins by an earthquake in the same century . It was subsequently rebuilt and the chapel of Surb Stepanos (St. Stephen) was founded .

In the late ninth century , following the establishment of Bagratid Armenia , a school was founded at the monastery . In the 11th century Grigor Magistros built a palace within the monastery , but it was destroyed by fire in 1058 along with St. Gregory (Grigor) Church which had a wooden roof . Following the death of the Sökmen II Shah Armen in 1185 the monastery was attacked by Muslims . Archbishop Stepanos was killed and the monks abandoned the monastery for a year .

= = = Modern period = = =

In the mid @-@ 16th century the Surb Karapet chapel was built . According to the 17th @-@ century traveler Evliya Çelebi the leadership of the monastery made large gifts to Turkish pashas in order to secure the monastic properties . From the 16th to the 18th centuries the monastery often sheltered Armenians fleeing the Ottoman ? Persian Wars . In the 1750s , the Surb Karapet church was destroyed by Persian troops . In the 18th century , several earthquakes hit the monastery . The one in 1784 being especially devastating ; destroyed the main church , the refectory , part of the bell tower and the southern wall . In 1788 the monastic complex underwent complete reconstruction ? its gavit (a square or quadrangular chamber placed in front of the church and on the same axis , destined for both civil and religious use) was enlarged , and renovation was carried out in its belfry , the monks ' cells , scriptorium , ramparts and other sections .

= = = 19th century = = =

In 1827 Kurdish gangs seized and robbed the monastery , destroying the furniture and manuscripts . However , the monastery prospered at the beginning in 1862 when Mkrtich Khrimian became its father superior and , simultaneously , prelate of Taron . Khrimian sought to reform the way donations were handled by establishing a council which would finance community projects . Before him , most of the money went to the monks and affluent Armenians of the region who offered fierce opposition to him , including two attempts on his life . In his first year he founded a largely secular school at the monastery , called Zharangavorats . Among others , the fedayi Kevork Chavush and Hrayr Dzhoghk , the singer Armenak Shahmuradyan , and the writer Gegham Ter @-@ Karapetian (Msho Gegham) studied there . From April 1 , 1863 until June 1 , 1865 Khrimian published the journal The Eaglet of Taron (Artzvik Tarono , « ?????? ?????? ») at the monastery . It was written in modern Armenian , rendered to be easily readable for the ordinary people . The journal sought to raise the national consciousness of the Armenians . Edited by Garegin Srvandztiants , a total of 43 issues were published . Khrimian left the monastery in 1868 when he became the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople .

The monastery , according to two French travelers in 1890 , possessed large areas of land and it took several hours to get from one end to another . The estate was covered by forests , arable fields and had three farms with around a thousand goats and sheep , a hundred oxen and cattle , sixty horses , twenty donkeys and four mules , which were taken care of by 156 servants . In 1896 an orphanage was founded next to the monastery . It housed a school for 45 children and a library .

According to British traveler H. F. B. Lynch , who visited the monastery in 1893 , with the presence of the Kurdish threat and the suspicions of the Turkish government " this once flourishing monastery has been stripped of much of its glamour ; indeed the monks are little better than prisoners of State .

" The monastery was robbed in 1895 during the Hamidian massacres . By the early 20th century the monastery 's structure was deteriorating . The decline continued until the start of World War I.

= = = Destruction and current state = = =

During the Armenian Genocide of 1915 the monastery housed a large number of Armenians escaping the deportations and massacres . Turkish forces and Kurdish irregulars sieged it , but the Armenians within resisted for more than two months . According to contemporary reports , around five thousand Armenians were massacred " near the wall of the monastery " , while the monastery itself was " sacked and robbed " . According to the American missionaries Clarence Ussher and Grace Knapp , the Turks slaughtered " three thousand men , women , and children " gathered at the courtyard of the monastery on command of a German officer .

In 1916 the Russian troops and Armenian volunteers temporarily took control of the area and transferred around 1 @, @ 750 manuscripts to Etchmiadzin . Among them is an 18th @-@ century reliquary of the right hand of John the Baptist made of silver repoussé . The area was recaptured by the Turks in 1918 and , subsequently , ceased to exist not only as a spiritual center , but also as an architectural monument . It remained abandoned until the 1960s when Kurdish families settled on the site .

Many buildings in the village include stones from the monastery and khachkars (cross stones) , which are embedded in the walls . The remaining stones are " being systematically carried off by the local Kurds for their own building purposes . " According to historian Robert H. Hewsen , as of 2001 , only traces of two chambers of the chapel of Surb Stepanos remain , while the rest of the monastery 's remains consist of " foundations and ruined walls " , which are used as barns .

Reconstruction efforts

In May 2015 Aziz Dagc? , the President of the NGO " Union of Social Solidarity and Culture for Bitlis , Batman , Van , Mush and Sasun Armenians " , made a formal appeal to the Turkish Ministries of Culture and Interior requesting the reconstruction of the monastery and the removal of all 48 houses and 6 barns on its former location . Dagc? stated that according to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne the Turkish government obliged to preserve the religious institutions and structures of ethno @-@ religious minorities , including those of the Armenian community . He added that he first forwarded a letter to government agencies in 2012 who promised to clean the site within six months .

= = Architecture = =

The monastery was surrounded by strong walls and was similar to a fortress . Historian Dickran Kouymjian called it " a vast walled hermitage " . Lynch , who visited it in 1893 , described the monastery as follows : " A walled enclosure , like that of a fortress , a massive door on grating hinges ? such is your first impression of this lonely fane . [...] You enter a spacious court , and face a handsome belfry and porch , the façade inlaid with slabs of white marble with bas @-@ reliefs . " A decade earlier , English traveler Henry Fanshawe Tozer wrote of the monastery : " The buildings ... are of stone , very massive and very irregular , rising one above another at various angles . There was hardly any pretence of architecture , and none of the picturesque appearance which is so characteristic of Greek monasteries . "

= = = Structure = = =

The monastery complex was composed of the main church , dedicated to the Holy Cross (Surb Khach) and four chapels to the east : Surb Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God) , Surb Stepanos (Saint Stephen) , Surb Karapet (Holy Precursor) and Surb Gevorg (Saint George) . The main church was not a typical Armenian church but was a large hall and is believed to have originally functioned as a zhamatun (chamber) . It was built of mostly gray stones and was supported by 16 columns . The chapels of Surb Karapet and Surb Stepanos had domes , with " high cylindrical

drums and conical roofs " . The chapel of Surb Astvatsatsin was provided to Syriac (Assyrian) monks on the feast of St. John .

The three @-@ storey bell tower was built in the 18th century . There were also monk cells , a refectory , accommodations for pilgrims , the 19th @-@ century prelacy building and a monastic school .

= = Cultural significance = =

The monastery was historically the religious center of Taron . From the 12th century the monastery was the seat of the diocese of Taron , which had an Armenian population of 90 @, @ 000 (circa 1911) . It was considered the largest and most eminent shrine in Western (Turkish) Armenia . It was the second most important Armenian monastery after Etchmiadzin . It remained a prominent pilgrimage site until the First World War . People from every corner of Armenia made pilgrimages to the monastery . They usually held festivities at the monastery 's yard . It was considered by believers to be " almighty " and was renowned for its perceived ability to heal the physically and mentally ill .

The monastery was popularly known as ??? ?????? ?????? ???????? Msho sultan Surb Karapet , literally translating to " Sultan Surb Karapet of Mush " . The epithet " Sultan " was bestowed as a reference to its high status as the " lord and master " of Taron .

The monastery housed tombs of several Mamikonian princes , " for whom the shrine served as a sepulchral abbey . " According to Lynch , the tombs of Mushegh , Vahan the Wolf , Smbat and Vahan Kamsarakan could have been found near the southern wall of the monastery .

= = Annual events = =

The monastery was a center of large annual celebrations . Various secular events took place in the surroundings , such as horse races , tightrope walking and gusan competitions during the festivals of Vardavar and Assumption of Mary . Horse racing competitions were held on Vardavar and involved a large number of people . Tightrope walking , widely practiced by the Armenians of Taron , was historically related to the worship of the monastery .

= = Ashugh tradition = =

The monastery was a traditional pilgrimage site for Armenian ashughs (folk musicians) . It has been compared to Mount Parnassus in Greece , which was the home of the Muses . The prominent 18th @-@ century ashugh Sayat @-@ Nova is recorded to have made a trip to the monastery to seek divine grace .

= = Cultural references = =

Numerous songs were dedicated to the monastery .

In the 1866 novel Salbi (?????) Raffi mentions the monastery and describes its perceived almightiness .

Hovhannes Tumanyan describes the monastery in the 1890 poem " The morning of Taron " (?????? ????????) as " magnificently ornamented " .

In the seven @-@ thousand @-@ line long poem " Ever @-@ Tolling Bell Tower " (« ???????? ????????????? ») Paruyr Sevak mentions the monastery and its well @-@ known bells . The poem , published in 1959 , is dedicated to Komitas , who was among those intellectuals who were deported on April 24 , 1915 during the genocide . It is recognized as " one of the most powerful literary responses to the Armenian Genocide . "

In the historical novel The Call of Plowmen (« ?????????????? ?????? » , published in 1979) , Khachik Dashtents describes a winter scene at the monastery .

In October 2010 during the discussion of a bill in the Armenian Parliament that would formally

recognize the Nagorno @-@ Karabakh Republic , opposition MP Raffi Hovannisian ended his speech saying " Let us be guided by Msho Sultan Surb Karapet " (??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????) .

= = Silver cross = =

In August 2013 an Armenian @-@ style silver cross attributed by the seller to the Surb Karapet Monastery appeared on the Russian auction website Bay.ru and was valued at \$ 70 @, @ 000 . The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin said that they were trying " to verify the details regarding the news reports about the auction . " Art historian Levon Chookaszian noted the seller did not provide much information . He added that " All we can see is that it is delicate silver work and nothing else is known [about it] . "