This book briefly presents the life and creative activity of the famous Armenian medieval architect, sculptor, miniaturist. This book is being published for Momik's 750th anniversary and is provided for a wide circle of readers.
As a gifted artist, architect, sculptor, scribe, and miniaturist Momik is one of the most renowned personalities in Armenian art. His art, including churches, ingenious sculptures and khachkars (cross-stones), miniatures of copied manuscripts are unique creations of Armenian medieval art. In its integrity Momik's creative heritage presents a completely new artistic value, created by the combination of traditional principles and innovative tendencies of Armenian art. Momik himself is comparable to the Renaissance masterminds not only as an architect and a gifted master in different spheres of fine arts but also as an aesthete, curious and emotional creative individual.

The first mention about Momik can be found in a manuscript record written at Gladzor University in 1283-1284 A.D. Thereafter he is often mentioned in inherited lapidaries and manuscripts scribed in Noravank which was the holy center of powerful Orbelyan noble dynasty and also the residence of Syunik metropolitans. According to recently revealed details, Momik was born in Vayots Dzor. He served as the Orbelyan family architect and artist, which greatly contributed to his extensive activity and celebrity.

We have inherited not only a number of Momik's artworks, but also a few manuscripts and lapidary records, as well as citations of other sources and authors about him.
Near the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries Syunik and its western large region (gavar) of Vayots Dzor was under the rule of Orbelyan and Proshyan potentates, who, under the hegemony of the Mongols, had autonomy in the internal affairs of the region. Moreover, starting from Stepanos Orbelyan’s reign (1285-1303), the Orbelyans also possessed the spiritual authority of the region, the eparchy of Syunik with its two main centers Tatev and Noravank.

Stepanos Orbelyan, the son of potentate Tarsayi Orbelyan, studied at Tatev, after which in 1280 was ordained as friar-priest in Noravank. In 1282 the famous metropolitan Nerses Mshetsi (died in 1284) made a lodge with his students in Vayots Dzor Aghberd Monastery. Thus, one of the most significant educational institutions in medieval Armenia, Gladzor University, was founded. Here Stepanos Orbelyan continued his studies and received an archimandrite staff from Nerses Mshetsi. The fact that Momik drew an altar for Nerses Mshetsi in a copied manu-
script and put a small memorial in it allows us to assume that he was the junior schoolmate of Stepanos Orbelyan, the prospective metropolitan of Syunik. Herein started the collaboration between the Maecenas client and the favorite artist. This relationship was transferred from Stepanos Orbelyan to his successors and clan-related metropolitans Hovhannes Orbelyan and Stepanos Tarsayj. It is by the order of these individuals and other potentates and princesses of the Orbelyan clan that Momik wrote manuscripts, created majestic churches and brilliantly-sculpted khachkars.

The above mentioned manuscript is now kept in the Mkhitaryan Matenadaran (total of 571 manuscripts) in Vienna. Momik’s memoir is placed in the rectangular space inside the floral-flourished tiara: “I beg you to remember Momik as the artist of altar”. It is interesting that in the circle of the memorial’s first “Z” letter Momik made a small sketch of a human face and a signature-like figure at the end of the writing (Vienna, manuscript num. 571, sheet 24a).

Another one of Momik’s manuscripts is noted in a record, made at Teghenyats Monastery in 1287, where scribe Davit mentions that the gorgeous journal started by the artist was stolen.²

In 1285 Stepanos Orbelyan was elected as Syunik vicar and left for Cilicia for ordination, where he received a warm reception from the Armenian king Levon the 3rd (1269-1289). The newly elected Catholico B Katuketsin (1286-1289) ordained Stepanos Orbelyan as the “... Metropolitan of Syunik Great See over other bishops that reside here and there in Vayots Dzor and Tatev”.³

After around a year in Cilicia Stepanos Orbelyan returns to Syunik which at the time also had a bishop, residing in Tatev. The
bishop tries to interfere with Stepanos Orbelyan’s plan to unite Tatev and Noravank See. However, with his father potentate Tarsayj’s help and by the agreement of Mongols, who had the general rule over the country, metropolitan Stepanos Orbelyan succeeded in uniting the Syunik See. Later in the history of Syunik Stepanos Orbelyan refers to the principle of brotherhood, established by him, between Tatev and Noravank.\(^4\) Even though the metropolitan residence was in Noravank, Stepanos Orbelyan attached great importance to Tatev as well where he built St. Grigor the Enlightener Church in 1295.\(^5\) As we will see further in the text, Momik was most likely the architect of the church.

Besides being a distinguished religious leader, Stepanos Orbelyan was also a gifted author, theologian, historian and poet. Naturally, people devoted to writing, knowledge, scribing and art enjoyed his patronage. Among those Momik was the most prominent whose God-given talent and endowments were highly acclaimed by his contemporaries. Stepanos Orbelyan ordered Momik specifically to illustrate his personal small size Gospel.

Brothers Hovhannes and Tadevos ordered Momik to write and illustrate a new gospel in 1292 after the master made lodgment in Noravank (the Matenadaran, manuscript number 2848), and they call the artist “a significant and genius inimitable scribe and illustrator...”\(^6\) It is also interesting to observe the admiration Momik expresses when presenting his inhabitation in Noravank and its leader, Metropolitan of Syunik, Stepanos Orbelyan. “I protracted... for the State of Syunik the province of Vayots Dzor, for the glorious, great and celebrated cloister called Noravank, to the high court patriarchate...”
Luke the Evangelist
The Gospel, 1292

throne, effulgent and honored, fantastic and wise as thousand philosophers, the adept master and archbishop and the fiduciary of the Home of Syunik, Father Ter Stepanos, the leader of the sacred pledge, the benefactor of my celestial and divine purgatory, with the resources of Senior Saint Nshan and godly St. Khach and other prosperous saints who with the unmatched warmth of the sun illuminate as enlighteners of the Armenian land."
The Gospel, 1292
Mark the Evangelist and the Apostle Peter
The title-page of the Gospel of John
The memorial of Momik
One of the decorations is an image of a church, which M. Hasratyan believes to be the imaginary archetype of Noravank’s Burtelashen St. Astvatsatsin three-floor church entombment. In general, the images of evangelists in this manuscript stand out with solid composition, dimensional solutions of details (in particular the big pillows laid on chairs) and with general magnificence which provide evidence of the artist’s flexible figurative inteduction. Adding the ornamental luxury of title-pages, the precision of drawings and the application of delicate chromatic tints, it is evident that we encounter with not only a master of miniature art, but also an artist with an aesthetic approach to his work. This perception of Momik is also proven by the marvelous pictorial memorial made in red ink on 149b sheet of the manuscript which confirms Momik’s writing excellence, the ability to work with letterforms confidently, freely and creatively.

In a pictographic-thematic sense the portrayal of Mark the Evangelist and the Apostle Paul are of great interest. According to the legend, it was Paul who forwarded Mark to the right path by telling him about Christ and his deeds. In this particular miniature he is presented as dictating Mark the text of the Gospel and witnessing its truth.

In the manuscript memorial Momik writes about himself, “...the deacon” which shows that he was a deacon at that time. He does not mention his religious status thereafter which lets us assume that he was not ordained as a priest. From associated facts we may conclude that Momik was engaged in artistic work with a deacon’s status and as the Orbelyan’s family artist and architect. He was married and had a son.

In the record of the same manuscript Mo-
The Gospel, 1302
Transfiguration, Entry to Jerusalem

The Gospel, 1302
Lamentation, Resurrection

mik also mentioned his teacher: “I beg you to remember the condign teacher of mine, Hovasap, a celibate priest as well”. It is noteworthy that Hovasap copied a manuscript for Yesayi Nshetsi, the new senior professor of Gladzor University. There is the gravestone of Hovasap on which is carved the date 1324.

In 1302 Momik illustrated an unusually small Gospel (the Matenadaran, manuscript N6792, scribe Hovhannes Orbel), ordered by Stepanos Orbelyan. It was most likely made for keeping inside the pocket of a shirt. The dimensions of the manuscript sheets are 12x8.5 cm. Momik skillfully pictured the main scenes of the Lord’s Gospel on smaller parts of the sheets provided for illustrations. The miniatures are placed on the first pages of the manuscript as follows: Annunciation, Birth (1b-2a opening), Presentation (Tiar’ndaraj), Baptism (3b-4a), Transfiguration, Entering Jerusalem (5b-6a), Foot-washing, Crucifix (7b-8a), Lamentation, Resurrection (9b-10a), Ascension, and Pentecost (11b-12a); There are also images of John the Evangelist, Prokhoron, and the Apostle Paul.
on the corresponding title-pages that have survived.

The Lord’s images present pictographic creations with both traditional and innovative elements. In the pictographic, constructive and stylistic sense the Birth (with Joseph’s unusually accented pose), Transfiguration (with Christ’s early pictography and the Heaven’s symbolic interpretation), the Resurrection (with Maria Magdalena’s figure, simultaneously looking back and forth) are original. Despite the book’s small size, the artist succeeded in reproducing the Lord’s scenes with canonical entirety. He expertly illustrated accordingly 17 and 16 human figures with expressive features in the miniatures of Ascension and Entering Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that besides providing a solid composition for each miniature the miniaturist also meant the parallel position of the images on the page openings and managed to find balance, giving harmony to the creations. Even though gold occupies a large part on the miniatures (it is used particularly as image coloring), it becomes a harmonic component of the coloring thanks to the general bright coloring.

This manuscript, written for Stepanos Orbelyan by Momik, had an interesting fate thereafter. Almost a century after its creation, in 1406, the manuscript, which was in a very poor condition (with only 158 parchment sheets left), was found by the prominent Archimandrite Grigor Khlatetsi, who highly valued the famous scribe and miniaturist, willingly repaired the manuscript, adding 144 paper sheets. A few years later, in 1411, the manuscript was received by an elder named Hovhannes from Artske region, who calls himself a “servant and attendant of King Vasil in a monastery called War at St. Nshan”. He named the manuscript “St. Gospel of War” in the memorial.
In 1307 Momik started writing a Gospel, ordered by Hovhannes-Orbeli, which he did not finish because of eyesight deterioration (the manuscript is currently in the USA). However, after decades, in 1331 he made a valuable record in this manuscript by the order of Syunik Metropolitan Stepanos-Tarsayi (1314-1331) which we will return to shortly afterwards.

It was by the order and sponsorship of Stepanos Orbelya that Momik created his first architectural composition, St. Grigor the Enlightener Church in Tatev, but the architect’s name is not mentioned in its record. We should note that in his architectural and sculptural works Momik always wrote “archimandrite” after his name (Momik vardpet), which shows that he was an architect. Only one of Momik’s compositions has a record containing the architect’s name: the Areni Church built in 1321, which has “MOMIK VARDPET” carved on the last part of the architect’s record next to the relief, decorating the main entrance. However, in the record of a khachkar, created in 1304, the artist calls himself “VARDPET”, so he was supposed to be an architect before that. That could have been in Tatev where Momik’s protector Stepanos Orbelya undertook the construction of St. Grigor the Enlightener Church on the southern side of the large cathedral. There is an inscription on the facade stone of the church saying: “As of the year 1295 Ter Stepanos Orbelyan, Metropolitan of Syunik, and the builder of this saint church, remember Christ”. It is clear that this kind of official writing could not have extra details, like the name of the architect. However, this church has an architectural detail repeated only in another example of Armenian architecture in a church built by Momik in Areni.
in 1321. That originality is thanks to the two internally and externally crossed parallel windows and one round window on top of those, which open on the main altar. This and other architectural elements let architect Stepanos Mnatsakanyan assume that Momik is the creator of St. Grigor the Enlightener Church in Tatev. The relations between Stepanos Orbelian and Momik provide a solid base for the above mentioned information.

In 1303, after the death of Stepanos Orbelian, his uncle’s grandson Hovhannes Orbelian (1300-1324) succeeded him. He also studied at Gladzor University and still during Stepanos Orbelian’s life was recognized as the prospective Syunik Metropolitan. The first action of Hovhannes Orbelian was ordering Momik to make a luxurious khachkar in memory of Stepanos Orbelian. On the upper part of the subtly weaved khachkar there is an image of Christ, sitting on a four-appearance throne. On the lower part is the consecration record, made in 1304, at the end of which it is written “MOMIK VARDPET”.

In 1308 by the order of Dame Tamta, the wife of Tarsayjian’s son, potente Elkum Orbelian, Momik creates a magnificent khachkar in Noravank. On the upper part there is the Pleading note, with Christ in the three-arched alcove in the center, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist in the right and left alcoves. The record of the khachkar ends with the words “REMEMBER MOMIK VARDPET”.

The client of Momik’s third khachkar (cross stone) was also princess Tamta. Here, on the left and right sides of the khachkar, in separate frames, Momik carved the busts of 12 apostles near two of which are written their names: “Petros” and “Andreas”.

In 1321, by the order of Syunik’s Metropolitan Hovhannes Orbelian, Momik built the beau-
The general appearance and the altar of St. Grigor the Enlightener Church in Tatev.
1308 թ. Տերենիկ եկեղեցու Օբրելյանի հիշատակի հիման վրա ստեղծվել է պատմական Սանտամոնիկի տաճարի հուշարձանը։ Հայերեն համար իր նշանակությունը արժանացել է տաճարի պատվին։ Այնուհետև, Սանտամոնիկի հուշարձանը վերանվանված է Սանտամոնիկի վերջին նախագահ։ Սանտամոնիկի հուշարձանը տեղադրվել է 1308 թ. Սանտամոնիկի հուշարձանը վերջին նախագահ։

The upper part of Stepanos Orbelian’s memorial Khachkar, 1304
Dame Tamta’s Khachkar, 1308
tractive is the ornament on the front stone of the entrance to the church. Here on the flowery background is depicted the Holy Virgin holding the Child. The child seems to have leaned forward. This same posture can be seen on the “Holy Virgin with the Child” sculpture at the entrance to Noravank’s parvis.

The parallels of these two creations, as well as some other facts, show that the parvis of Noravank’s main church St. Stepanos, built in 1261, was reconstructed and decorated with sculptures of the front slab of the entrance and windows in the first decades of the 14th century, with a design considered to be M. Hasratyan writes: “There is an incontestable hereditary connection between these two works. The low relief of Areni’s church had preceded and had been an example for a more refined low relief of Noravank’s parvis with the same theme.”

In particular, the sculpture, surrounding the western window, is very meaningful and expressive. The central part is decorated with a unique representation of the big image of the Father blessing the Crucifix with his right hand and holding in his left hand the head of Adam, with a dove – the Holy the Spirit – above it. In the center is depicted large portrait of the Father which is a rare occurrence in Armenian medieval architecture because the Father was always represented in a symbolic way. On the left hand is carved the crucifixion. So, when viewed as a whole, the Holy Trinity is presented. Also seen is that Jesus Christ appears as a ‘new Adam’. This work is a vivid example that the creator of these sculptures is not only a master of arts, but also has deep theocratic and pictographic knowledge. The sculptures of Noravank’s parvis are invaluable not only for Armenian, but for Christian architecture in general.
The Church of Areni from the North
A two-storey church mausoleum, known as Burtelashen ("Burtel-built") after the name of its founder, is situated to the south of Noravank. With its harmonious rotunda this church is the birth of Momik’s brave architectural cogitation. The dimensional solution of this composition was also a novelty in Armenian architecture. As it was mentioned above, in one of the miniatures of the Gospel, made in 1292, Momik depicted such a composition; actually he had had an idea which was later realized in Noravank.

St. Astvatsatsin Church is decorated with special splendor and unique expressiveness. The triangle-shaped stairs, leading to the vestibule of the second floor with decorative frontal stones and other ornamental details, create an imitable architectural form.

From the margin-decorated Gospel of 1292 with a picture of a church
The sculptures on the front stones of Areni Church and Noravank's parvis's entrance

Burtelashen
St. Astvatsatseen Church in the middle of the XX century and during the reconstruction in 1997-98
Հայրենիք է, բայց նույն Առաքելու հատուկ պատկերում է հայրենիքի սարքը՝ Առաքելու ծանր այգին, որը փոքրիք է, որտեղ ծածկված է, ապագայացած Սուրբ Սարգիսի ծանր կողմը։ Այս կողմը կարճ՝ հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված է։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Սուրբ Սարգիսի ծանր կողմը կարճ՝ հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված է։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբեరակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հայրենիքի սարքին հագեցված։ Տարբերակվում է, որպեսզի հայրենիքին իրականացնել է հայրենիքի տարբերակը, որը ծածկված է հա hay
St. Astvatsatsin Church of Burtelashen
On Burtelashen St. Astvatsatsin Church has remained the year of construction 1339, and on the inscription of the khachkar in Noravank, made in Momik’s memory, is carved the death date of the great artist, 1333: “Remember, Jesus God, Momik’s soul and show mercy (1333)” 32. According to this, different examiners have suggested different opinions about the architect of Burtelashen, but, in our opinion, it is closer to reality to suggest that the construction started with Momik’s project and was continued by his students because of the artist’s death. This is the most accepted viewpoint. Near Burtelashen’s north-western corner stood a khachkar on a pedestal made at the construction. Burtel dedicated this khachkar to the memory of his brother Bugha who was killed in 1318 32. In our opinion, this can mean that the construction of Burtelashen had already been started by that time, approximately in 1319-1320. It is known that Momik finished the church of Areni in 1321 and his death in 1333 could slow down the construction for some years. Considering all these facts we can say with more confidence that the construction of Burtelashen St. Astvatsatsin Church started when Momik was alive.
Այսօր Աստվածաշնչային ասույծները փոխարինվել են թերադարձության ընթացքում ստեղծված նոր աշխատանքների միջոցով։ Այսօր աղեղնաձև կամարների և ճակատների աշխատանքները ճաշակավորվում են Ստեփանաց եկեղեցին։ Միջագիտական ճակատների և կամարների աշխատանքները ավարտվել և համարվում են ավելի շատ պարզ են։

The front sections of Burtelashen
St. Astvatsatsin Church
We will present some facts about Momik’s family, some of which have been discovered recently. These newly discovered details leave no doubt that Momik was originally from Vayots Dzor.24

In 1955 near the village Rind, in the cemetery of Verin Ulgyur’s wrecked church, S. Barkhudaryan found an inscription on a khachkar where Momik’s son Askendar is mentioned (I am Askendar, the son of Momik) and grandson Shatonic is also mentioned here.25 S. Barkhudaryan, considering the fact that Momik’s son mentioned in the inscription that he had donated a part of his own land, assumed that it was Momik’s birthplace.

In 2004, to the east of the mentioned place near St. Astvatsatsin Church of Nercin Ulgyur (about 5 km north-west to Aghavnavor) some gravestones of Momik’s relatives were found. Especially valuable among them is the gravestone of Momik’s parents, and the inscription on it says: “Momik’s fa-
ther Grigor and mother Zavtayn, remember them (1298)". It is proved by this that Momik was either from Verin Ulgjur or Nerqin.

In another gravestone’s inscription Momik’s brother Gohartash and his daughter Khlat, who died in 1333, are remembered: “This is Gohartash, the brother of Momik and his daughter Khlat (1333)”. Near this grave another one was found which belonged to Momik’s nephew: “Khazi, son of Gohartash, near each other and died on the same date”. The publishers of inscriptions justly assumed that Khazi died at the same time as his father and sister (on the same day of the year). On one of the gravestones the name of Gohartash’s wife, Kheriki, was also mentioned, but the date of death is unreadable.

As it was mentioned above, the date of Momik’s death was written in the inscription of the khachkar placed in Momik’s memory in Noravank (1333). The inscriptions on his brother’s and the latter’s two children’s gravestones bring the conclusion that in 1333 a fatal tragedy happened to this family; maybe they became victims of an epidemic or a hostile attack. In any case, it is difficult to find another explanation for why both father and son died on the same date. It is not excluded that Momik could also have been with them on that day.

The inscriptions found in Verin and Nerqin Ulgjur gave an opportunity to examiners to make Momik’s genealogical tree. Only some facts about another Armenian medieval architect Siranes’s family from Noravank are known. Of other benefactors only names have remained such as Trdhat, the architect of Ani, and Manvel, the architect of Aghtamar. Thanks to the gravestones found in 2004, the richest genealogical tree is Momik’s with his four generations’ sequence.
այո հայրապետականության, որ 1333 թվականին այս բնակավայրի հետ էր համապատասխանության զերմարմանը է պատմություն, հաստատություն է ու համապատասխանություն կան հայրապետական համակարգում: Համապատասխան տեսքն, ու երբ գործարարվեց այս օրգանիզմը փոխարինվեց փոստային համակարգի հետ, այն բացատրվում է որ այս հայրապետական տեսքը երբևէ չէր այս տեսքով հատուկ է։

Ստեփանեց (1298) - երկու Սարք (1298)
Սարք (1333) Սարքարա (1333) - երկու Սարք
Սարքարա Սարք (1333) Սարք (1333)

Սարքարա
The arches of the dome of St. Astvatsatsin Church in Areni.
Արդյո՞ք Սուրբ Բժիշկին տարբեր անձանց ուսումնասիրական գծակերպություններ ստացել են, որսում ժամանակակից ժամանակաշրջանի պատմական և մշակութային պատմությունը նկարագրել է, երբեք չի կարելի դիմակիր նույնս։ Սուրբ Բժիշկին պատմական և մշակութային բնագավառի պատմության մեջ համարվում է առաջին նշանակալի դիրք։ Իր պատմական և մշակութային նվիրված հավաքածուն նա ստեղծել է ճարտարապետական և ճարտարապետական արձանագրություններով։

«Սուրբ Բժիշկ»

բաց հիշատակում
The good memory of “The master of masters”

As we saw above, it was mentioned in the inscription of Momik’s parents’ grave-stone (1298) that they were his father and mother, which shows that at that time Momik was a man with great authority.

Both at that time and later a legend existed about Momik which shows his reputation and popularity. It tells that the gifted architect was in love with the daughter of Syunik Prince. The prince promised to marry his daughter to Momik if he built a beautiful monastery. But after the condition was implemented and the monastery was built, the prince broke his promise and by his order Momik was pushed off the dome and fell down to his death. This small tale with its special style of folklore, although being far from reality, probably has its roots in facts, particularly the fact that Momik died before the end of the construction if we consider the case of Burtelashen Church.

But, in general, it should be noted that although medieval memorials don’t give an opportunity to know the individuality and personal feelings of miniaturists (because they mainly present general formulations) some talented architects were able to create an impression with some typical words. Momik’s memorials are also like that. They not only represent medieval human’s “culpability”, but have some kind of inexplicable grief. In the memorial of 1292 Momik asks forgiveness from readers for supposed mistakes (this was a common form) and then explains the reasons in his own way: “He wrote it with sadness and melancholy”. And in the memorial of 1302 he explains the same thing in this way: “Although I didn’t have experience, but the reason was the winter and my house was gloomy”.

In 1331 Momik wrote a memorial to a manuscript where he talks about the prehistory
of the journal's creation. According to him, in 1307 he started the manuscript of that manuscript by the order of Hovhannes Orbeli, dedicated to Prince Burtel, but was unable to continue the work because of the loss of vision: "I, miniaturist Momik, unfortunately couldn’t finish my painting because my eyesight got worse and because of my weakness which wasn’t my fault..." The memorial’s flowering and the miniature were finished by Momik's partners, the miniaturist Hovhannes and artist Toros. After some time Momik, who had relied on God’s mercy, had his vision recovered and he wrote a memorial to the manuscript: “My only hope was Jesus Christ, and with his help my vision is recovered (1331) and I am writing my memorial...”

Indeed, a real magic worthy of a great artist's biography...

Our knowledge about Momik is limited to this, although it can be assumed from his unique name that he was a skinny man with a small body. It is not discarded that Momik’s nickname was given to him during his gladzoric studies, and he accepted it with respect because momik (candle) is lit in prayer for God’s brightness. His creations, both on parchments and on hard rock, were made with great faith, mastery and jewelry skills, and where master's inside and outside, name and work became harmonious.

Momik’s art heritage with its excellence of mastery, uniqueness, artistic quality, ideological-theological depth and with its historical response can be fairly considered a part of Armenian cultural splendor.
The cross-shaped windows of the altar (sanctuary) of St. Astvatsatsin Church in Areni.
1 In manuscript memorials there are two dates noted: first 1283, and afterwards in a poetical memorial in 1284 (13th Century Armenian Manuscript Memorials, compiled by A. Matevosyan, Yerevan, 1984, p. 531, 533).

2 "First letter gorgeous,
Featured by Momik the scribe,
Fine and helpful,
The vicious robber was captured"

3 With this ordination Stepanos Orbelian not only becomes the Metropolitan of Syunik, but also "...to be the first and head of all Bishops of Armenians" (Stepanos Orbelian, History of Sisakian State, Tbilisi, 1910, p. 331, 351).

4 "But for these two there must be one episcopate with one leader and governor. And whoever the bishop is, he will not dare to approach with two different attitudes and two different thoughts to either one of these, caring more for one than the other" (Stepanos Orbelian, History of Syunik, translation, introduction and commentary by A. Abrahamyan, Yerevan, 1986, p. 375).

5 Stepanos Orbelian also ordered huge bells for Tatev Monastery, which have survived to our days. His prominent historical piece, "The History of Sisakian State" which according to the memorial was written in Noravank ("...after collecting the necessary material the book was discarded... in Noravank's dignified and glorious vow"), and then granted to Tatev Monastery ("We took this book ... and granted to God's house as a cherished gift to Tatev Catholic and Apostolic Church..." (Stepanos Orbelian, History of Syunik, p. 391-392).


7 13th century Armenian Manuscript Memorials, p. 677-678. Besides the main memorials, Momik scribed small references with red, calligraphic letters. In one place (sheet 147a) he wrote his name in Greek.


9 Same place, p. 679.

10 Same place.


12 A. Matevosyan, S. Marabyan, Grigor Terents Khlatets, Yerevan, 2000, p. 49.


14 The Harid Seminary Foundation, The Case Memorial Library, Arm. 3

5 In the past it was thought that “ vardpet” (architect) was the abbreviation of “vardapat” (archimandrite), and thus
Monik was confusingly regarded as an archimandrite. However, it was later proven that this "vardpat" means architect.

The Archives of Armenian Lithography, pr. 2, composed by S. Barkhudaryan, Yerevan, 1960, p. 25.


In Noravank parvis it is written on Stepanos Orbelian's gravestone: "From the year 1303 this is the grave of peace of the Great Metropolitan of Syunik Stepanos." (The Archives of Armenian Lithography, pr. 3, composed by S. Barkhudaryan, Yerevan, 1967, p. 233).

After Stepanos Orbelian Syunik region metropolitans and bishops did not turn to the Catholics to be ordained, neither did they go to Cilicia. But rather every metropolitan ordained his successor. For more details about the history of the See of Syunik during this period see Bishop Abraham Mkhitarzian, Noravank and the Syunik See during the Orbelian's rule, "Noravank 2009" collection, Yerevan, 2009, p. 4-12.

Many researchers find interesting the fact of Christ's features reminding of mongoloid anthropological type in that sculpture (S. Der Nersessian, L'Art Armenien, Paris, 1977, p. 196-197). It is worth mentioning that during this era Armenian potentates, particularly the Orbelians, under the dominance of the Mongols built relations with Mongol nobles, taking their daughters for marriage. Such was Tarayi's wife (Stepanos Orbelian's mother). From some other survived sculptures of Orbelian potentates we see that they also have like features. We think that Stepanos Orbelian also had such features because of which Monik portrayed Christ on the khachkar to his memory according to his image. It is interesting that Armenian historians, under the impression of the cruelties of the Mongols, gave very negative characteristics of their appearance. As K. Melik-Ohanjanyan notes: "... on the whole Stepanos Orbelian is an exception". He thinks that they have "very beautiful images..." (Krikos Gandzaketsi, History of Armenia, op. K. Melik-Ohanjanyan, Yerevan, 1961, p. 89).

"I, Ayrpat Hovhannes... erected this cross in 1304 for the salvation of my spiritual father Ter Stepanos, Monik architra" (The Archives of Armenian Lithography, pr. 3, p. 228, S. Saghumean, Noravank Lithography, "Noravank 99" yearbook, Holy Etchmiadzin-Montréal, 1999, p. 54). The khachkar was made of solid kind of fesselt stone. It was placed in Noravank parvis, but currently it is in the treasury of St. Etchmiadzin.

Tatman Khachkar was erected for the salvation of potentate Tarayi's sole (The Archives of Armenian Lithography, pr. 3, p. 234). Khachkar was placed on the left of the entrance of Noravank parvis. Currently it is being kept in the Pontifical Residence in Echmiadzin.
The exact date of the khachkar is unknown, but it was created before 1312 because Tamata died in that year. The khachkar is now being kept in the geological museum of Eghigianaz.  

About the khachkar see more detailed K. Avetisyan, “Holy Virgin’s Sculptures in Areni and Noravank”, “Noravank” annual, Montreal-Yerevan, 2001, p. 110-120.  

Here, on two sides of the Holy Virgin Church, Prophei Yesayi and Hovhannes Mirich are also depicted. and separate words are woven with floral decor with which, in fact, this figure becomes the first example of “arapeski” in Armenian architecture.  

The main church of Noravank, St. Stepanos Protomartyr, was built by Prince Lipart Orbelian and Archishop Sargs in 1216-1221 (another construction place is found in 1223). Both in various records and St. Orbelian’s mentions this church of the monastery is called Stepanos Protomartyr, but isori it is sometimes called St. Karapet by mistake. Actually, St. Karapet is the oldest church of Noravank with rough hacked big stones. It is one-nave construction (approximately 9-10 centuries) the ruins of which were found in 1982-1983 during the excavations to the south of St. Stepanos.


See M. Hasratyan for details about the sculptures, mentioned work, p. 32-41. V. Ghazaryan’s opinion about sculptures of the parvis is also remarkable (see A. Aghasyan, H. Hakobyan, M. Hasratyan, V. Ghazaryan, History of Armenian Art, Yerevan, 2009, p. 144-146). In time M. Barkhudiyan ascribed the building of Spitalakor St. Astvatsatsin Monastery’s Church (1321) to Momik (Archives of Armenian Lithography, p. 3, p. 95): Recently it was discovered that inside the dome of the church it was not Jesus Christ depicted in the sculpture (as many investigators believed), but the Father holding in his hand the head of Adam with a dove above it. It is definitely an imitation of Noravank’s sculptural structure (The photo of the sculpture was provided to us by Noravank’s priest Sanah Martirosyan to whom we express our gratitude). It must be noted that, although Spitalakor St. Astvatsatsin Church was built by the Proshyans, in this period they were related by marriage with the Orbelians. And the builder of the mentioned church each Proshyan and Syunik’s Metropolitan Hovhannes Orbeli were cousins (accordingly sons of two sisters, Tajar and Nana, see Memoirs of the 13th Century Armenian Manuscript’s memorials, p. 859).
Burul was the grandson of Tarsajj Orbelian and the son of Elikum. In literature he is mentioned as Burul the Great (refers to 1304-1344). In 1307 Momik started the Gospel's miniature by the order of Hovhannes Orbeli. “For the salvation of great and brave Burul’s soul and body, the prince of princes, for his well-being and protection.” (A Catalogue of Medieval Armenian Manuscripts in the United States, By Avedis K. Sanjian, Los Angeles-London, 1976, p. 85-87). See more detailed about the Prince L. Khachikyan “Burutyan Branch of Syunik’s Orbelians”, “The Barber of the Matenadaran”, 9, Yerevan, 1969, p. 174-175, 188.

30 A.N. Avetisyan in his book, dedicated to the miniature of Gladzor, ascribed a manuscript to Momik, which was written by the order of Keran, Princess of Cilicia (The Matenadaran, Am. #764), proceeding from which he writes: “It is difficult to say if Momik was originally from Cilicia, or he went to Cilician Armenia to improve himself” (Avetisyan, Gladzor School of Armenian Miniature, Yerevan, 1971, p. 50-51). “Cilician hypothesis” of Momik’s origin is met in other publications too. But a lot of facts show that they aren’t serious basis for this view (K. Matevosyan, The Gospel of Princess Keran and Prince Hetum, “Science and technology”, 1991, #5, p. 46-50, A. Gevorgyan, Armenian Miniaturists’ Bibliography, IX-XIX centuries, Guhure, 1998, p. 446) and the gravestones of Momik’s parents and some of other
members of his family, which have been found lately by archaeologists A. Qalantaryan, G. Sargsyan and H. Melkonyan, don't leave a doubt that he was originally from Vayots Dzor region.

36 About the research of the excavation place and the complete texts of records see A. Qalantaryan, G. Sargsyan, H. Melkonyan, Momikyan Newly Found memorials, "Armenian Art", 2005, p. 28-30.
37 A. Qalantaryan, G. Sargsyan, H. Melkonyan, the same work, p. 30. Here the examiners consider 1339 as the year of Momik's death.
38 S. Barkhudaryan, Armenian Medieval Architects and Stone Carver Masters, p. 62-75.
39 In the past a khachkar was placed in front of the parvis south to the entrance. In the central part of khachkar's top on a "choreqkerpyan" chair is carved Holy Virgin's and Jesus's sculpture, like the ones in Areni and Noravank, below which is written: "Holy Virgin, intercessor of Jesus Christ". Especially unique is the Holy Virgin's portrait on a "choreqkerpyan" chair. The ornament of dates starting from below the cross, ends up with crossing hands, which rise from two parts of the main cross. Right near the base of the cross, on two sides of the ornaments of roses, Grigor and Hasanpasha brothers are carved, with praying hands, for whose well-being the khachkar is ordered. In the second circle of the main rose Adam and Eva are presented in the paradise which is a unique sculpture for photography.
40 A. Ghanalanyan, Avalakapetum, Yerevan, 1969, p. 228.
41 Memorials of Armenian 13th Century Manuscripts, p. 679.
42 Memorials of Armenian 14th Century Manuscripts, composed by L. Khachikyan, Yerevan, 1950, p. 9.
43 The memorial has other interesting historic information except these parts. See A Catalogue of Medieval Armenian Manuscripts in the United States, p. 85-87.
44 Momik is a unique nickname. Such a name is not mentioned in H. Acharian's "Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names", in other bibliographical dictionaries and encyclopedias. We see the limited use of that name in the second part of the 20th century among clergymen and laic who were named after the master of masters Momik.
բանաձևների և բանաձևի պատմություն, Ե. Հայկազյան, 1969, էջ 228:
42 Գործակաց ծառայություն հին արձանագրություններ, Ա. Թորոյան, Երևան, 1950, էջ 9:
43 Մեծամարտի հարցերը հին արձանագրությունների համար, առաջին հանրային հրատարակություն, էջ 85-87.
44 Մայրենի ծառայություն, Ս. Մարտիրոսյան, 1981, էջ 74. Առաջին հանրային հրատարակություն, էջ 161-165.
45 Մայրենի ծառայություն, Ս. Մարտիրոսյան, 1981, էջ 74. Առաջին հանրային հրատարակություն, էջ 161-165.

Առաջին հանրային հրատարակություն, Ս. Մարտիրոսյան, 1981, էջ 74.

Մարտիրոսյան մազին (Գնիճի պուրակ), 1331

Mr. Sargs's gravestone (Monik's school), 1331
St. Astvatsatsin Church
The Bas-reliefs with the symbols of Luke and Mark the Evangelists
MOMIK

photographs
Zaven Sargsyan,
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