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ISLAM IN ARMENIAN LITERARY CULTURE
TEXTS, CONTEXTS, DYNAMICS

SETA B. DADOYAN

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IN AEDIBUS PEETERS
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This book is dedicated to the memory of Catholicos Papgēn I Gulēsērian (r. 1930-1936), one of the most genuinely intellectual figures of the Armenians of Cilicia and the Catholicosate. During the early 1900s, he had the courage and the integrity to launch a project to publish a complete series of texts on Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature, as he called it. The extreme circumstances of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the catastrophic events disrupted his work. In 1930 at Vienna, he finally published only two texts in a single volume. In perspectives, methodology and peripheries, this opus is quite different from his philological initiative. But it is still a resumption of his legacy, and a humble contribution to the long overdue task to study the Armenian experience in the Near/Middle East and eventually to initiate a discipline of Islamic-Armenian studies.

I also dedicate this work to all those for whom scholarship, despite the odds, is a form of persistence and true humanism.

PROLOGUE

My intellectual career started as a hermeneutical activity and continues to be so. Coming from a training, also a teaching career in philosophy, fine arts and cultural studies, understanding the Armenian historical experience in the Near/Middle East, and the Worlds of Islam in particular, was a constant construing. It meant perceiving different — than granted and assumed — and more dynamic peripheries of things Armenian. More importantly, construing also implied searching appropriate paradigms beyond national narratives and mainstream historiography.

On the existential level and as a native of the modern Middle East in perpetual unrest, doing historical research also meant engaging in an ongoing discourse with my Armenianness in that world. It meant interacting with the traditions and cultures of the region, including mine, and being historical in a personal and interactive manner.

The most significant concept in philosophical hermeneutics, as far as my work is concerned, is “relevant information.” This is the kind of knowledge that becomes a new tool for a specific task or problem. From an ontological perspective, given this new knowledge, neither the knower nor the objects of knowledge will be the same, because relationships with the self and everything else will not be seen in the same light anymore.

The “relevant information”, which smashed my horizon of things Armenian was a casual encounter with an article. In the spring of 1969, I was working on my Master’s thesis on the *Definitions of Philosophy* by David Invictus (Dawit’ Anghat’, late 5th - early 6th century author) at the American University of Beirut and was asked to submit the names of two Armenian studies professors to be on the jury. Karekin Vardapet Sarkissian (later on, Catholicos Karekin II/I, of blessed memory, d. 1999) was appointed co-advisor with Professor Majid Fakhry. Vahē Oshagan (lecturer at AUB at the time) agreed to be part of the jury for the very first dissertation in Armenian philosophy at AUB. For the second member I went to Haigazian College (then) to see Professor Gēworg Khṛlobyan (visiting professor at the time). In his office, while leafing through an issue of *Banber Matenadarani* (1958), I was struck by a title: “Views Gathered from the Writings of Tajik Philosophers” (*I Tachkats’ Imastasirats’ Grots’ Kagheal Bank’*) by Yovhannēs Erznkats’i (d. 1293). The publisher (Sen Arewshatyan) had no clue about the identity of these “Tajik” or Muslim philosophers. As a

student of philosophy, it was not hard to see immediately that the text was a beginner's summary of the esoteric compendium of sciences, the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* or *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* of the 10th century. The paper I wrote for a seminar became an article. At the time I wrote on other themes, published two books and raised a family. In 1987, after seeing my resumé, the committee for my doctoral dissertation asked that I focus on Islamic-Armenian relations, and I went along rather apprehensively. *Yovhannēs Erznkats'i and his Islamic Sources* became my dissertation and a book in 1991.

The paradigm of heterodoxy/heresy was my first discovery in this initial study. It was in fact a clue, yet a controversial path to a more holistic understanding of the total Armenian experience in the Islamic World. This implied, as I soon found out, crossing the "Pillars of Hercules", or mainstream Armenian historiography into the open ocean on the pirate ship of Yovhannēs and his Tajik philosophers. It meant abandoning the Mediterranean, or the closed pond of Armenian historical thinking into the ocean of Near Eastern and specifically Islamic-Armenian interactions. It was through the paradigm of heterodoxy and extra-establishment careers in the region that I could trace the path of the paramilitary and heterodox Armenian factions in al-Shām, then into Fāṭimid Egypt. A paper in 1994 became a book, *The Fatimid Armenians*, in 1997. Other papers followed.

In 1998 the peripheries and orientation of my subsequent research were clear to me. I read a paper titled "Islam and the Armenian Universe: Historicity and Historic Models" (19th Congress of UEAI, Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, 1998). The preliminary organization of thousands of pages of notes, published papers and books began in 2005, when I moved to New York. My trilogy on *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World — Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth centuries* was published in 2011-2013.

This study, *Islam in Armenian Literary Culture — Texts, Contexts, Dynamics*, is a maiden voyage into uncharted territory and an overdue task in Armenian, Near Eastern, as well as Interfaith scholarship. With respect to the latter, I owe a great deal to two centers for Interfaith Studies. My gratitude goes to two of their most dedicated figures, Professor Kamal Salibi (d. 2011, AUB, founder and first director of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, Amman, Jordan) and Professor David Thomas (University of Birmingham, chief editor of Brill's *Christian-Muslim Relations — A Bibliographical History*). The entries I wrote for the *CMR*

introduced me to the discipline and methodology of Interfaith Studies. I am also grateful to Father Professor Samir Khalil (then, at the University of St. Joseph, Beirut). Back in mid-1990s, Father Khalil and Professor Salibi gave me the much-needed assurance that my approach to and research in Islamic-Armenian scholarship was novel, essential, relevant and overdue. I am immensely indebted especially to Professor Salibi, whom I consider my mentor.

Finally, I fully realize that even though my paradigms of Islamic-Armenian interactions are essentially conceptualizations, they are also bold de-conceptualizations. They question long established concepts of the “Armenian psyche.” In this study, and in previous ones, they are formulated as arguments for a different understanding of the Armenian experience in the Worlds of Islam. I would not consider myself the “gadfly” of Armenian intellectual culture, but if my work so far proved to be unsettling for some, it was also protection against insularity and dogmatism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This mammoth research, in which many of the primary sources were manuscripts, rare books, ancient publications, and online resources, would not be possible without the genuine, generous and unconditional assistance I was very fortunate to have from exceptional people over the past five years. This book is also theirs. I am deeply grateful to:

Dr. Vahan Tēr Ghewondyan, Director of the Mesrop Mashtots' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, or Matenadaran, Yerevan; Dr. Tigran Zargaryan, Director of the National Library of Armenia, Yerevan; Dr. Ara Sanjian, Director of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn; Mr. Gerald Ottenbreit Jr., Research Assistant at the University of Michigan-Dearborn; Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS), Columbia University, New York; Ms. Anahit Tarkhanian, the secretary of the Library of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon.

ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

In view of the novel nature of the material in this work, there are not many abbreviations, and they are usually mentioned in full in the text. In the case of manuscripts, and they are numerous, the most abundant are the Matenadaran manuscripts, they appear as M next to the Ms number, as in M934, for all others, the location appears before the number, e.g., Venice Ms number. In the case of continuous dates, I have not abbreviated the second number, but stated it full as well, as in 1950-1955. In the case of proper names, the Eastern Armenian names end by “-yan” (Manandyan), and the Western Armenian names by “-ian” (Mardirosian), except when the suffix is preceded by a vowel (Saroyan). Otherwise, the Library of Congress system of transliteration is generally applied on proper names, with some compromises in the case of Western Armenian authors, in order to maintain the pronunciation and maintain some balance with the spelling. Thus, Papgēn Gulēsērian is a compromise between Papken Guleserian, as pronounced, and Babgēn Kulēsērean (Գլխկէսէրեան) as spelled, or Hagop Kurbēt’ian, as pronounced, and Yakob Gurbet’ean, as spelled. In other cases, like Karekin I Sarkissian, I have followed the author’s signature. In the case of book titles with transliterated terms, I have kept and used the author’s form, without applying the correct transliteration, as in “Ibn al-Asir” while it should be Ibn al-Athīr. The word Ishmaelite appears as Ismaelite. This is a compromise between Ishmaelite and the Armenian *Ismayelats’i*, which is a very frequently used reference to the Muslims.

TRANSLITERATION TABLES — ARMENIAN AND ARABIC

<i>Armenian</i>		<i>Arabic</i>	
Ա, ա	A, a	ا	ā
Բ, բ	B, b	ب	b
Գ, գ	G, g	ت	t
Դ, դ	D, d	ث	th
Ե, ե	E, e	ج	j
Զ, զ	Z, z	ح	ḥ
Է, է	Ē, ē	خ	kh
Ը, ը	Ė, ė	د	d
Թ, ք	T’, t’	ذ	dh
Ժ, ժ	ZH, zh	ر	r
Ի, ի	I, i	ز	z
Լ, լ	L, l	س	s
Խ, ք	KH, kh	ش	sh
Մ, մ	TS, ts	ص	ṣ

<i>Armenian</i>		<i>Arabic</i>	
Կ կ	K, k	ض	ḍ
Հ հ	H, h	ط	ṭ
Ջ ձ	DZ, dz	ظ	ẓ
Ղ ղ	GH, gh	ع	‘
Ճ ճ	CH, ch	غ	gh
Մ մ	M, m	ف	f
ԅ Ե	Y, y	ق	q
Ն ն	N, n	ك	k
Շ շ	SH, sh	ل	l
Ո ո	O, o	م	m
Չ չ	CH [‘] , ch [‘]	ن	n
Պ պ	P, p	ه	h
Ձ ղ	J, j	و	u
Ր ր	R, r	ي	ī
Ս ս	U, u	ع	‘
Վ վ	V, v		
Տ տ	T, t		
Ր ր	R, r		
Յ չ	TS [‘] , ts [‘]		
Խ ւ	W, w		
Փ փ	P [‘] , p [‘]		
Ք ք	K [‘] , k [‘]		
Լ	ew		
Օ օ	Ō, ō		
Ֆ ֆ	F, f		

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- Ghuran*. Copy of Lehats’i’s *Ghuran* (M934), M3019, 1680/1, fols 1a-230b. Scribe: Amir Sargis, Isfahan.
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- Ghuran - Girk’ or Koch’i Ghuran* [Book Called *Ghuran*]. M8056, 18th century. Copy of M6984. Anonymous, no other details.
- Ghuran - Girk’ or Koch’i Ghuran* [Book Called *Ghuran*]. M2826, late 18th - early 19th centuries. Copy of M6984. Anonymous, no other details.
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- [Additional Canons and Advices by Yovhannēs Vardapet Eznkayets'i to Secular Youth (*Manuks*) who Conduct Physical and Worldly Lives and whom we Intend to Instruct in accordance with the Divine Laws and the Holy Scriptures and Reorient them toward Spiritual Virtues]. Published in Paghtasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erznkats'i*, 220-228.
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INTRODUCTION

Even though contacts and relations between the Christians and the Muslims go back to the early decades of the 7th century, Interfaith Studies appeared around 1960s. As a growing discipline with fluid peripheries, it included studies of a variety of perspectives and concerns. A library bibliographer will probably place this book under the title of “Christian-Muslim relations,” even though it is much wider and complicated for this general heading.

Most scholars, including myself, accept and use the term “relations” reluctantly. It is too general and ambiguous to apply to any specific aspect or theme in an area that is thematically, geographically and periodically diverse and vast. Depending on discipline, methodology and hermeneutics, radical differences — at least in ideology and method — distinguish the studies crowded in a seemingly coherent field of study. “The phrase ‘Christian-Muslim relations’ is open to a multitude of interpretations”, says D. Thomas, one of the major figures in this area, and “the term ‘relations’ must be used with care. May be ‘encounters’, ‘interactions’ or something similar would be more appropriate.”¹ Experience, response, reaction, disposition, and similar terms come into the discussions and analysis.

The term “interaction” appears in the titles of two of my books.² In this particular study of Islam in Armenian literary culture, even “interaction” seems to miss the point, because the primary texts constitute the matter. “In the Middle Ages, as today”, says J. Tolan, “Christians’ and Muslims’ mutual perceptions depended on a wide variety of factors ... we must rely almost entirely on written sources to apprehend them. The nature of these sources, their diverse textual traditions, their projected audiences, all of these factors determine, at least to a certain extent, how adherents of rival faiths are presented.”³

In recent studies of non-Muslims’ perspectives on the Prophet and the Muslims, the Armenian side is indirectly referred to and rarely present as a major and ancient part of the Christian world in the Near East. Inevitably, most of what is written on the Christians of the Near/Middle East is bound to be incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate, because of missing or very

¹ Thomas, “Introduction, *Routledge Handbook*”, 2.

² Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*; Dadoyan, *The Armenians*.

³ Tolan, “Introduction (CMR 2)”, 12.

general information on the Armenian experience. No doubt, translations and studies of mostly medieval Armenian texts by distinguished western scholars are very valuable but they are insufficient. Studies made by Armenian scholars — mainly in the Republic — in what is called “Arab-Armenian relations” (*arabagitut’iwn*) focus on the various periods and episodes of Muslim rule in Armenia and few on what they call Armenian “colonies” (*gaghut’*) in Muslim countries. Most of these studies are indirect sources. Within, perhaps, along Interfaith Studies, Islamic-Armenian interactive history is a distinct area, and the primary texts are the only paths to this novel field of scholarly investigation.

Making everything that is written in Armenian literature about Islam and the Prophet — in any form, period and location — available in a single yet historically dynamic context, is one of the main tasks of this study.

The Armenians persisted by shaping their cultural and political identity through interactions within their Near Eastern, and after the 7th century, in the Islamic environment. The record exists in a large body of Armenian and regional literatures. The scholarship, however, both Armenian and other, barely reflects the interactive processes. There are lags or gaps on the one hand between the experiences and their written record, and the scholarship on the other.

One of the reasons for the near absence of the Armenian side in ongoing debates and research in Near Eastern and Interfaith Studies, is the scarcity of translations of all the Armenian sources and related studies. The other reason is found in Armenian Studies itself. In addition to deliberate marginalization of and avoidance from the subject of Islamic-Armenian themes in the literary culture, the focus on “primarily Armenian” themes and a “national” history generated a closed circuit. Many key episodes, such as the Fāṭimid Armenians, are in twilight and sometimes in obscurity. Important texts, like the translations of the Qur’ān, are still dormant in manuscripts, others in print are not visited or considered in critical perspectives. Recently made interdisciplinary studies may only have indirect relevance to the core subject of fourteen centuries of Armenian experience in the Worlds of Islam. Several so-called interdisciplinary studies were made recently, but “interdisciplinary” does not necessarily imply having grasped the distinct nature, peripheries and methodology of Islamic-Armenian interactive history.

As mentioned, the primary task of this study is to trace and make available — often in my translation — all the documented accounts of the known, less known and hitherto unknown authors and texts about Islam and the Muslims from the 7th century to the present.

The next task is to trace the sequence, interrelation and dynamics of perceptions of Islam and responses to it, in order to discover the basic patterns of their development on the entire habitat of the Armenians under Muslim rules.

The maintenance of a thematic format on a chronological grid was essential. Because as the written record, the texts reflected not only perceptions of Islam but also Armenian political and social circumstances under Muslim rule. Broader arguments came forth in the process of organizing a massive amount of material. Essentially, what I tried to do was to compose a coherent whole and for the first time, a closely textual, comprehensive and sequential structure, which contained the basic material as well as circumstances, patterns, factors and their dynamics.

Even though previously in my other studies, and inevitably, I referred to Armenians' perceptions of Islam and the Prophet, this study was very different. It required mapping a dynamic and geoglyphic panorama with its own peripheries, a great variety of sources, specific tools, and unique vantage points. The arrangement of the themes and sub-themes stands as a fundamental argument that there exists a dynamic and a coherent expanse of things that are Islamic-Armenian. Just like geoglyphs, or large earth-drawings, which were virtually unknown prior to aerial photography and satellites, the narratives and subsequent literary traditions of a people take definite forms in progress and through long periods. However, like geoglyphs too, these patterns and their movements remain undetected when looked at horizontally, and in small and isolated scales. The total picture can only be seen "from above", so to speak, at a phenomenological or critical distance and by a different philosophy of history.

The traditional paradigms of interfaith relations in Armenian historiography bypassed, and often missed actual processes on the ground, and more importantly, they failed to see and draw the total panorama of the Armenian historical experience in the Worlds of Islam. A more critical, holistic and interdisciplinary philosophy of things Armenian is a precondition.

PART ONE. THE MEDIEVAL "ARMENIAN MAHMET" AND HIS "LAWS" — THE ARAB PERIOD

From the 7th century to the end of the Middle Ages and some of the Modern Period, Islam in Armenian literature was perceived and defined as the "laws of Mahmet" or Muḥammad. The name was spelled differently depending on period and location, as *Mahmet*, *Mahmēt*, *Mehmēt*, *Mahmat*,

Mahomat, Mehemēt, Mahamat, Mohammed, Muḥammad. In order to distinguish the figure in the literature from the Prophet Muḥammad, I have used the most common form of Mahmet, always using the variants in the given text.

During the Arab Period from the 7th to the 11th century, Mahmet was universally depicted as a powerful world-conqueror, a *t'ankangar* or merchant (by his early career), a lawmaker, a prophet — sometimes also a “false” one — of the Hagarians, or the Ismaelites or the Tajiks. As the “laws of Mahmet”, Islam became secondary to, but closely tied to the person and the biography of the Prophet.

My main argument in Part One is that the medieval accounts of the Prophet's life generated a composite figure that I call the “Armenian Mahmet.” Even though only loosely and often inaccurately related to the historical person, with no reference to the classic Arab texts on the Prophet, also the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, this Mahmet was considered a true and sufficient account of Islam as well. Therefore, the objective in this Part is to identify and make available all the accounts and narratives of the Armenian Mahmet in the histories and chronicles from the 7th century to the 11th.

During the Arab Period, the Armenian Mahmet developed through two phases. The first was from the 7th to the 9th centuries. The most significant historians of the period were Sebēos, Ghewond and T'ovma Artsruni. Their accounts and references are cited in full. The second phase was from the 10th to the 11th centuries, or what is labeled as the “Age of Kingdoms” (in reference to the Bagratuni, Artsruni, Siwni and lesser dynasties). The accounts, again in full, are from the histories of Yovhan V Draskhanakertts'i, Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i-Movsēs Daskhurants'i, Shapuh Bagratuni the Anonymous Storyteller, and Step'anos Taronets'i Asoghik. The last two authors of the period are Aristakēs Lastivertt'si and Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros.

By the end of the Arab Period, symbolically at the fall of Manzikert in 1071, the Armenian Mahmet was a rather sketchy figure based on circulating legends. It contained some references to his “laws” or Islam, and images of his followers the Muslims as well.

I argue that since Islam was always regarded as the “laws” of the “leader of the Ismaelites”, or the Hagarians, or simply the Tajiks, the Armenian Mahmet became a shortcut, a convenient vehicle and a tool to understand, present and most importantly, to refute Islam. As a consequence, in the literature at least, it remained confined to this framework. As an alternative

faith and moral system, it was dismissed as “unprophetic”, “heretical” and unworthy of consideration. There is no indication that anyone of the medieval and later authors, had read the Qur’ān, or parts of it, in any language. I also suggest that the complete marginalization and negligence of the Qur’ān in the literature for over a millennium, from the 7th to the 17th centuries, can only be explained in this perspective.

PART TWO. THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET”, COMPLETION OF
THE NARRATIVE — THE SELJUK AND EARLY MONGOL PERIODS

One of the main arguments in Part Two is that the two centuries from the last decades of the 10th century to the end of the 12th, constituted a distinct phase in Armenian as well as Near Eastern history. It was what I call an “Armenian Intermezzo”, which came about after the gradual loss of all the dynasties and the rise of Cilicia. The Byzantine annexation of the dynastic territories and Seljuk invasions, also massive migrations into the west and south, expanded the Armenian habitat or *oikumenē* into the Islamic world. There were Apostolic, Chalcedonian, heterodox, and Muslim Armenians everywhere. In the Near Eastern towns and cities, they lived with the Muslims. The urban environments were mixed and cosmopolitan. Interactions, also conversions and intermarriages were common.

I also argue that the loss of sovereign states (that in fact were only partially autonomous), did not halt political activity. On the contrary, it proliferated and took intriguing patterns at the hands of novel factions and individuals from outside the aristocratic classes. This was a new development. Wandering militant and often heterodox factions at large in the entire area eventually found lands of their own within the vast Byzantine-Seljuk chaotic world, often in alliance with the Muslim powers. There happened a fragmentation and a breakdown of Armenian political-cultural energy into more dynamic and flexible patterns and institutions. New and shifting alliances were made with all sorts of Christians and Muslims. Transitions into other religious-political cultures were inevitable and often beneficial. The question of Armenian identity at this time, awaits study and debate.

I discovered that during the two decades between 1060 and 1080, and almost simultaneously, there appeared at least five Muslim-Armenian powers from Cappadocia to the Euphrates, Syria and Egypt. The Fāṭimid Armenian Period is a prominent case. Rubenid Cilicia is just another

phenomenon of the “Armenian Intermezzo”, and not an isolated and “purely” Armenian achievement.

Another major development during this Intermezzo is what I call the “Medieval Armenian Diaspora.” It was a new condition that evolved into the permanent social-political-cultural condition of most Armenians. What may be called the Armenian “East” and the Armenian “West” with mobile borders, took shape during these times. As it is discussed, responses to Islam in the literature were very much conditioned by the given location and the ruling factions in the East and the West.

In the East, during the 12th century the cosmopolitan city of Ani was going through consecutive and alternating occupations by the Georgians, the Seljuks and the Kurds. Two historians, both natives of the city, and from the clergy, Samuēl Anets‘i and Mkhit‘ar Anets‘i added massive amounts of new information to the Armenian Mahmet and created a much larger figure. While the Mahmet in the *Chronicle* of Samuēl became a more extravagant yet benevolent figure — as a giver of a covenant to the Armenians —, Mkhit‘ar’s Mahmet was borrowed directly from an earlier Syriac polemical *karshuni* (Syriac text in Arabic script) transliterated as *k’ashun*. Only recently I came across another *Anets‘i*, in fact, an *Anāwī* (in Arabic). He is Qāḏī Burhān al-Dīn Abū Naṣr Ibn Manṣūr al-Anawī (b. 1128), a native of Ani. He is the author of a radical anti-Armenian polemic in rhyme entitled *Anīs al-Qulūb* (Hearts’ Companion) dedicated to Seljuk Sultan Kaykāwus I. His career at the Seljuks and the book give the literary scene at Ani of the 12th century a dramatic chiaroscuro, an intriguing contrast.

The next three authors of the 13th century in the East, Mkhit‘ar Gōsh, Vardan Arewelts‘i and Kirakos Gandzakets‘i (all from Gandzak, in the region of Karabagh) simply adopted this completed Armenian Mahmet. By the end of the 13th century the third phase in the evolution of the medieval “Armenian Mahmet” ended. It was at this time that Mkhit‘ar Gōsh (d. 1213) prepared an Armenian *Book of Judgment* (*Datastanagirk’*) motivated by and having the Sunnī Law, judicial traditions and practices as his references, in addition to the canon laws of the Armenian Church.

The third phase in the evolution of the Armenian Mahmet in the West and Cilicia — a pro-Latin Armenian state in the Worlds of Islam — is the subject of Chapter II in Part Two. Circumstances in that region did not seem to allow a margin for polemical responses to Islam. In the *Chronicle* of Matt‘ēos Uṙhayets‘i, and the histories of Cilician nobles Smbat Sparapet and Het‘um Patmich‘, Mahmet remained in the wings, a bare presence but

a perceivable figure on the regional stage. Two diverging cases break the monotony of the literature. The first was the appearance of Mahmet and his “laws” in a national epic poem by Vahram Rabuni, royal secretary of Cilician King Lewon III. The second was the case of Yovhannēs Erznkats’i, a vardapet from Erzinjān/Erznka, who not only admired the “Tajik sages” and summarized the esoteric compendium of 10th century Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (*Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*), but also borrowed ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir’s *futuwwa* reform project and literature.

PART THREE. THE “ARMENIAN *PAX ISLAMICA*” AS
PER THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY RECORDS OF ALLEGED EDICTS/
COVENANTS/OATHS/DECREES/PACTS — 7th-20th CENTURIES

With the exception of Armenian Cilicia (1080-1375), from the middle of the 7th century to the rise of the First Republic in 1918, most Armenians were subjects in Muslim states, hence the great historical significance of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*.

During the formative period of Islam at Medīnah (622-632) and as the early campaigns took the Muslims into non-Muslim communities and lands, the first problem was the regulation of relations between them and their non-Muslim subjects, who were the majority for few more centuries as well. As the early *Ummah* developed, the terms of the *Pax Islamica*, or the terms of accord and peace between the ruling Muslim authorities and their non-Muslim subjects emanated from and were defined by the Qur’ān. In a large body of texts, both authenticated and alleged, and labeled as edicts, decrees, covenants, pacts, epistles and protocols — extant in all the non-Muslim communities everywhere — the core issue was the definition of the status of non-Muslims in the Islamic state. They stated specific stipulations, restrictions and taxes imposed upon the non-Muslims in return to protection and rights of worship granted by the Muslim state.

The study of the status of the non-Muslims in Muslim states is relatively new in Near Eastern studies. The first two brief chapters in Part Three provide a background and a context for the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*.” The first chapter is on the Muslim perceptions of Christianity, the status of the *dhimmīs*, and the Qur’ānic bases for the social order in the Islamic state, rectitude, taxation and food in particular. The second chapter traces the process of canonization from the “Edict of the Prophet”, to surrender, peace agreements, decrees and various stipulations. There are brief references to the surrender agreements made following the capture

of Jerusalem in 637 by Caliph ‘Umar I, the project of Islamization by Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, the first comprehensive initiative of canonization by Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar II, the canonization of *Shurūt* ‘Umar in early 9th century, and the “Edict” of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 850.

The Armenian *Pax Islamica* is a two-tiered subject. On the one hand there is the historical record of agreements, oaths, pacts and arrangements made from the middle of the 7th century, during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān, to Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II in 1811. On the other hand, there is the literary record, which in addition to authenticated pacts, includes a significant number of alleged documents and copies of edicts, pacts, covenants, wills, and oaths, labeled differently.

I argue that while the accounts and the texts on these two levels vary, together they reflect Armenians’ perceptions of the Islamic state and their status, rights, obligations also expectations as *dhimmīs*. They sum up what may be called the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*”, alongside the “Armenian Mahmet” and the “Armenian *Ghurans*” (the subject of Part Four).

One of the most intriguing peculiarities of the literature about pacts with the Muslim authorities, is that with the exception of few ascribed to Caliph ‘Alī” (in Shī‘ī milieus), all texts were allegedly considered versions of the so-called “Edict of Mahmet to the Christians-Armenians.” Pacts and “oaths” made by other Muslim rulers were considered “reconfirmations” or “renewals” of the initial “Edict of Mahmet.”

Chapter III is a survey of the literary record of the major Armenian versions of the “Edict of Mahmet”, from the first version in the *Chronicle* of Samuēl Anets‘i (around 1160) to a version (allegedly issued in 626) attached to the first translation of the Qur’ān from Arabic in Safavid Iran during the early 18th century. The last text in this tradition, again composed in Iran, is an edict ascribed to ‘Alī, allegedly issued in 661. All these texts are fully cited in my translation.

The historical record of the Armenian *Pax Islamica* is the subject of Chapter IV, the longest chapter in Part Three. The first part deals with the relations and pacts under Sunnī Law. Two pacts were made under Caliph ‘Uthmān, by Mu‘āwiyah in 652 and Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah in 654. Three pacts were made by (now) Umayyads Caliph Mu‘āwiyah, in 661; a pact by Muḥammad Ibn Marwān (the governor of *Armīnyah*) under Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, with Catholicos Sahak III in 703 (posthumously); a pact by Caliph ‘Umar II with Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i in 719 at Damascus.

Persecutions and taxes accelerated around the time of the “Edict” of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 850, but there is no specific reference to this particular document in Armenian sources. From the Seljuk and Ayyūbid periods, two pacts are recorded, the first was granted by Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh I to Bishop Barsegh of Ani in 1090. The next is the famous and authenticated “Decree” of Ayyūbid Sultan Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn to the Christians and Armenians of Jerusalem in 1187, following his capture of the city from the Crusaders.

The next section in this chapter is a novelty both in Armenian scholarship and in general. It focuses on the circumstances of the Armenians during the Turkmen Period and the first ever appearance of polemical literature — by Matt’ēos Jughayets’i and Grigor Tat’ewats’i — in response to “accusations” of “blasphemy” and “impurity” under Shī‘ī Law in the Armenian East.

During the 17th century, the legacy of the so-called “Edict of Mahmet” was renewed by Safavid Shāh ‘Abbās I, upon his forced deportation and relocation of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in 1605-6 in New Julfa, a suburb of his capital Isfahan. A text is preserved at the bishopric of the city.

Prior to the 19th century, I have not found any references to *Shurūt ‘Umar*, canonized in the early 9th century. Two contradictory references were made, the first by Avedis Bērbērian at Istanbul, in his *History of the Armenians* (1860). Obviously, the context is a praise of Sultan Mahmud II for his renewal of an alleged “Oath of Ēōmer” (or Caliph ‘Umar I to the Armenians of Jerusalem in 637), in 1811. The second reference, this time to the *Shurūt ‘Umar*, or “Oath of Ēōmer” with a list of 20 very harsh stipulations, was by Erwand T’op’chyan of Tbilisi in his *Islam, Illustrated Review* (Tbilisi, 1899). It was written in response to the Turkish massacres of Christians and Armenians during the last decades of the 19th century.

PART FOUR. THE “ARMENIAN GHURANS” WITH SIDE-SCRIPTS AND APPENDICES — OTTOMAN AND SAFAVID WORLDS 16th - 18th CENTURIES

I strongly suggest that Armenian Studies cannot avoid seeing the Islamic context of all things Armenian after the 7th century, and increasingly more so in the Modern Period. By the end of the 16th century the Armenians everywhere lived in new Worlds of Islam from India to Eastern Europe including the entire Near East, under three Muslim empires, Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal. Everywhere, large Christian communities, including the

Armenians, lived as *dhimmi*s. They persisted and indeed prospered through interactions with these vast Worlds of Islam. Caught in perpetual rivalries and conflict between them, they were also victims, yet survived. Despite these circumstances, commercial enterprises generated an extra-political universe of networks from the Far East to Western Europe. Everywhere the Armenians made the most of the possibilities. The Awakening, of Armenian national consciousness, began in the 17th century, partly as a reaction to this condition, as reflected in the literature of the Modern Period. The initial argument in this chapter is that the intellectual culture of the Awakening began at an anti-Muslim bias.

Perpetual wars between the Persians and the Turks, also the Jelālī revolts and subsequent violence, scattered the Armenian communities into new areas such as Istanbul and further into Rodosto-Tekirdagh, Theodosia-Kafa in Crimea and elsewhere. When by the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639 peace was signed, the Armenian habitat, that also included the historical land, spread from the Caspian Sea to Istanbul and the Black Sea to Cilicia. It was divided between the Ottomans and the Safavids, the former had what came to be known as “Western” or “Turkish Armenia”, and the latter “Eastern” or “Persian Armenia.” Each side had its urban centers, such as New Julfa-Isfahan, Tbilisi (later on) in the East, and Izmir and Istanbul in the West. In these cities the Awakening found favorable social, cultural and political environments. During the 18th century and the next, the massive and direct involvement of Tsarist Russia in the entire region caused radical changes in all respects. This is the geographic-political context of the themes and discussions in Part Four.

In view of the making and the status of New Julfa, also its being the locale for almost all the Armenian *Ghurans* of the period, a section is dedicated to this “Armenian city.” The Armenian condition in the 17th century, as reflected in the literature of four major authors is the theme of the next section in Chapter I. They are: Grigor Kamakhets‘i-Daranaghts‘i, Aṛak‘el Dawrizhets‘i, Zak‘aria K‘anak‘erts‘i, Eremia Ch‘ēlēbi. These figures shared the same type of nationalism and disposition toward Muslim rule everywhere. Their interest in Islam as an alternative faith was minimal so were their knowledge and accounts of it. In support of their comments on the predicament of the Armenians at the time, I have included a brief section on a New Julfan convert to Islam, Abgar ‘Alī Akbar Armanī and his *Book of Confession* (*I‘tirāf Nāma*), as a paradigm case of in the 17th century.

The early Awakening produced a long overdue and surprising new genre. It was the appearance of five “Armenian *Ghurans*,” that are still

in manuscripts. Together they made the first group of *Ghurans*. They all have appendices and side-scripts (or elaborate comments on the margins). The first was made in 1680. It was a literal translation of the Latin *Alcoran* of Robert of Ketton of the 12th century. This unprecedented initiative, in my view, was most probably by Catholicos Yakob IV Jughayets'i (d. 1680), known for his flexibility and the respect he enjoyed at the Safavid court. Within the same year, in 1680-1681, a copy was made. I discovered that it had a hitherto unknown Sequel, as I call it, of equal length. It consists of four long treatises on and against Islam and the Prophet. The contents of these texts in outline form are cited in my translation.

In 1706 a copy was made of a so far unknown and lost translation from Arabic with an appendix. Recently I found out that at least two copies of this initial copy were made during the 18th century, again with the same appendix copied verbatim. In Eastern-Armenian vernacular, the appendix is a version of an alleged "Will of Mahmet", "written by the hand of Mawia" (Mu'āwiyah) in 626.

The next and more direct argument of this chapter is that the Armenian *Ghurans* of the 17th and 18th centuries had two objectives. The first was obtaining information about the faith of their Muslim rulers/oppressors of all ethnicities. Direct knowledge of the Qur'ān was to be used as part of the arsenal for the liberation struggles. They were also and especially occasions and platforms for polemical texts. Therefore, for the scholar these elaborate side-scripts and appendices are as important and relevant as the *Ghurans* themselves. The strategy in all these side-scripts and appendices was to offer the *Ghuran* with the polemical text.

The literature of five major authors provides the historical context of the 18th century. These are Yovhannēs Jughayets'i Mrk'uz, his contemporary and a recently discovered figure of Makirdj (Mkrtich') al-Kassīḥ al-Armanī of Aleppo, Abraham Kretats'i, Abraham Erewants'i and Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants'.

PART FIVE. ISLAM, THE PROPHET AND THE QUR'ĀN IN LATE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

The parallel and simultaneous recession of Iran and the massive advance of Tsarist Russia into the southern Caucasus and Asia Minor caused radical shifts in the circumstances and the fate of the Armenians. In 1828, the Treaty of Turkmenchay (in north west Iran, between the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia) concluded the war between Russia and Iran. It also established the rights of the Russian Empire to encourage the settling

of Christian Armenians from Iran in the newly acquired Russian territories. A year later, in 1829, the Treaty of *Adrianopolis* with Turkey, granted Russia more rights for mass settlings in its newly incorporated territories. Many Armenians chose to migrate. As large numbers moved to the other side, so to speak, under Christian rule and “protection”, with the demographic changes there were changes in their dispositions toward Islam and the Muslims.

Chapter I, “The Dawn of Islamological scholarship, from polemics to apology” deals with the circumstances that were reflected in most unexpected manners in the literary culture. During the last two decades of the 19th century, from 1879 to 1899, five Armenian texts appeared related to Islam, in Moscow, Tbilisi, Armenia and Istanbul. K’. Patkanyan published six accounts of Mahmet and Islam, as appendices to his edition of the History of Mkhit’ar Anets’i (Moscow, 1879); P’. Vardanyan published a translation of W. Irving’s *Life of Mahomet* (Tbilisi, 1894); a pioneering study and modern polemics was published by E. T’op’ch’yan, entitled *Islam* (Tbilisi, 1899); a critical analysis of the *Shari’ah*, was the first ever study of Islamic Law, by Atrpet (1899); a most unexpected genuine praise of Muḥammad and an apology of Islam was written by D. Rostomyants’, entitled *Mohammēt and the Birth of Islam* (Baku, 1880s).

Chapter II deals with the second group of Armenian *Ghurans* published from 1909 to 1912. The phenomenon was prompted by the dramatic acceleration in Ottoman policies toward the Armenian population of the Empire, in particular the sporadic episodes of persecutions and massacres. They followed the Russian-Turkish war in 1878 and continued with force through 1890s, leading to the Great Massacre of 1915 and the final evacuations in early 1920s, this time by the secular nationalist Ittihadists. It was in the midst of these events, and paradoxically, that the period became the “golden decade” of Armenian *Ghurans* with attached biographies of Mahmet, the first at Varna, the second Istanbul, and the third Varna too. A. Amirkhanyants’ wrote what may be called an Islamic “trilogy”: a biography of Muḥammad, the *Ghuran* (translated from the Arabic original), and a polemical treatise (Varna, 1904-1910); L. Larents’ made a translation entitled *K’uran* from a French version with an attached biography of Muḥammad (Istanbul, 1911); Y. Kurbēt’ian, made a translation presumably from the Arabic original, *Muhammēt, Guran*, with an attached biography of Muḥammad (Varna, 1912).

An indirect, or what I call an “implied Islamology” describes the texts related to Islam from 1930s to 1980s. This is the theme of Chapter III entitled

“Implied Islamology in the 20th century — Disciplines of Philology, Arab-Armenian History, Politics.” These studies were in three areas: philology (K. Patkanyan, in 1879, and P. Gulēsērian in 1930s); Arab-Armenian history (B. Khalat’yan, Lēō, Y. Nalpanyan, and A. Tēr Ghewondyan); political studies of the Islamic pacts, granting the authenticity of the various versions (L. Arpee, L. Minassyants’, Y. Anassyan). The Armenian *Pax Islamica* was forcefully revisited and probably for the first time in the entire literature, the Prophet was depicted in positive terms as a fair and just oath-giver and guarantor.

The period after 1991 to 2014 is hard to classify. It was primarily a “third phase of translations”, as discussed in Chapter IV. Two partial (from Russian) and three full translations (from Arabic, Persian and Turkish) constitute a peculiar mixture yet a phenomenon, which however is neither scholarly nor historiographic. The partial translations both from Russian, by G. Guyumchyan (Moscow, 1991), and V. Dawt’yan (Yerevan, 1995) were for poetic interests in the Qur’ān. The reason stated for the first and mediocre translation from Arabic by N. Kilislian (Toronto, 2003) is his conversion to Islam. The translation from Persian by E. Hakhverdyan (Yerevan, 2006) is part of the cultural initiatives of Iran in the Republic of Armenia. The last and most inferior translation from Turkish, by Y. Aydin (Ankara, 2014) is again an apology for his conversion and other converts.

The last Chapter is a very brief survey of some recent publications related to Islamic themes that can be classified under three titles: Christian preaching among Muslims; biblical persons in the Qur’ān — Christ, Mariam; General themes, such as Islam today, Shī’ism, communities. Finally, there are some books that may be labeled “101 Islam” manuals, prepared for Christian missionaries in Muslim communities. Few others are books and articles on random subjects.

The last part is *In Lieu of a Conclusion*. It is a statement on a critical, holistic, and interdisciplinary alternative approach and path to develop a discipline of Islamic-Armenian studies.

PART ONE

THE MEDIEVAL “ARMENIAN MAHMET” AND HIS “LAWS”
(7th TO 11th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In its beginnings, also the patterns and the circumstances of development, Armenian Christianity was distinct from all others. Commonly made observations about the Christians of the Near East and Muslim-Christian relations in the region may not always apply to the Armenians.

One of the distinguishing factors was demographic. Even though by the end of the 7th century the larger area known as *Armīnyah* was part of the northern provinces of the Caliphate, contacts with the Muslim communities were negligible. Islam is an urban civilization and since the greater part of the Armenian population everywhere was not urban, there were few chances of cultural interaction. Contacts were limited to urban centers, where Arab commissioners, officials, merchants and small communities resided. In some cosmopolitan cities like Duin, Ani, Erzinjān and Edessa, the urban landscape became cosmopolitan but never “Islamic”, as it was the case in most locations in the Caliphate. There were however significant influences from the folklore, the arts, Arab sciences, and Islamic Law.

Elsewhere in the Near East, where the urban landscape became Islamic by architectural and public symbols, also by daily practices and customs, despite being the majority, the non-Muslim natives (Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian) found themselves in a changing world. The adoption of Arabic was not only required, but also unavoidable, necessary and useful. Already by the 8th century in Iraq, al-Shām, Palestine and Egypt, the Christians and their clergy in particular, adopted Arabic and gained direct access to the literature, the Qur’ān and *al-Kalām*. Several genres of literature, both by the Muslims and the non-Muslims reflected mutual responses and influences.

In contrast, among the Armenians Arabic was never adopted or sought in the literary culture, and in consequence there was no access to literature in Arabic, including and especially the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*. Armenians remained on the peripheries and distant from the intellectual life of the Caliphate. They maintained their native language in the literature and the church, which anyway controlled the cultural diplomacy. As Thomson said, “there is no specific reference to Armenians speaking Arabic in the

early sources of the 7th to 10th centuries.”¹ To the 18th century, at least, there is no evidence that late medieval and early modern Armenian authors, who were mainly from the clergy, knew Arabic and more importantly, had interest in or access to Arabic literature and the Qur’ān in particular. Islam and the Prophet were referred to only in chronicles and histories. The first translation in 1680 was not from Arabic but Robert of Ketton’s Latin version made in the 12th century.

As a powerful alternative faith and a religious culture, Islam did not concern Armenian authors, except when compulsory and voluntary conversions reached high levels in the late Middle Ages and the Modern Period. Unlike the Syrian Christians, the Armenians did not develop any other genre related to or in response to Islam. Only at the end of the 14th century two (and a minor one) polemical treatises appeared in response to Shī‘ī accusations of “blasphemy” and “impurity.” Elsewhere in the Christian communities of the Islamic world, theology developed along apologetical-polemical considerations in the face of the challenges of Islam. Medieval Armenian theology, and Christology in particular, developed in response to the challenges of the Chalcedonians, the Monophysites, the Roman Catholics and the heterodox trends. The primary concern of the church and the clergy was to maintain a distinctly national and autonomous character and position, despite and because of the politically vulnerable condition of the Armenian institutions in the wider region.

In the case of medieval histories, there is another peculiarity which distinguished the Armenian case. To the 19th century, most if not all the historians were from the clergy. To the end of the Middle Ages, many were spokesmen-promoters of the major aristocratic houses or the *nakharars*, depending on location and kinship. Even before the erosion of these houses by the 12th century, the church monopolized the intellectual culture and related initiatives and policies. While previously the histories reflected and followed the policies of the major *nakharars*, by the 11th century the church took control of this discipline. In general, the depictions of Islam and the Prophet remained confined to specifically Armenian circumstances under Arab, Seljuk, Kurdish, Mongol, Turkmen, Ottoman and Persian rules. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, or the Modern Period, polemical side-scripts on the margins of the first group of Qur’ān translations, and appendices appeared as discrete polemics, not addressed to the Muslims, but to the Armenian readers. The phenomenon reappeared in the second group of translations during the first decade of the 20th century.

¹ Thomson, “Arabic in Armenia”, 695.

A year before the defeat of the Byzantine armies in 636 at the battle of Yarmūk, Damascus just in its northeast had already fallen to the Arabs. The fate of the Persian Empire was decided a year later in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah (south of Baghdad west side of the Euphrates). The two major Christian cities, Jerusalem and Antioch were captured within the same year. By late 630s, the Arabs were in Vaspurakan and Taron in the southern and western parts of Armenia. Soon, Edessa in 640, Alexandria in 642 and Seleucia/Ctesiphon in 645 surrendered to the Arabs. Before the middle of the 7th century, the major patriarchates and bishoprics of the eastern Christians, including the Armenians', came under Muslim rule.²

By the end of the 11th century, most Christians of the Near East were under the rule of the Muslims, who to the 10th century did not make the absolute majority of the population in their caliphates.³ In addition to the Apostolic Armenians, the Christians came under three main categories: the Monophysites or the Jacobites, the Nestorians (after Archbishop Nestorius of Constantinople of the 5th century) and the Chalcedonians, also referred to as the Melkites. The Chalcedonians were the “ancestors” of the Greek Orthodox Christians, whose Christology is based on the formulae of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Following this council, the Armenian Apostolic Church permanently broke from the Greek Church because it considered the emphasis on the independent human and divine natures of Christ a dyophysite Christology. In many respects, and in particular nationally and politically, it became and still is an independent church, generally classified as “orthodox.” The Byzantine emperor, the four great patriarchates of the East in Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem were distinguished by their Chalcedonian Christology.⁴ The Monophysites or the Miaphysites known as the Jacobites (after the missionary bishop Jacob Baradeus), put the emphasis only on the divine nature of Christ.⁵ “Modern historians have occasionally presented the Syrian Jacobites as a fifth column, eager to welcome the Arab invaders and expel their Chalcedonian persecutors.” The Nestorians are radical dyophysites. Their church came to be known as the Christian Church of the Sasanian empire.⁶

² Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴ Wood, “Christians” 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

As the early Islamic *futūḥ* or the conquests took the Arabs into many parts of eastern Asia Minor and Armenia in late 630s, perceptions of their novel religious-political culture varied. During these early phases, like most Christians, the Armenians too looked at the conquests in biblical and apocalyptic terms, but their responses to Islam were probably the most peculiar. At the arrival of the Arabs around 640, Armenia was a divided land between the Sasanian and Byzantine empires. Their political circumstances were very different from the other Christians in the region. Most of the latter did not have sovereign states, at least in the immediate past. Most Christians felt relieved at Byzantine defeat and withdrawal, because of their oppressive rule and heavy taxation. Hellenophile Armenians lamented the defeat of Heraclius (r. 610-641), and the Iranophiles the collapse of the Sasanians.

Some authors, like Sebēos, the first historian of the Arab Period, seemed to realize that the entire region was coming under a hitherto unknown and unimagined world order. Faced with a choice between the Muslim Arabs and equally oppressive Christian Greeks, the Armenians were in an impasse. On the political level, as far as they were concerned, the Arabs replaced the Persian and the Byzantine rules. Furthermore, just as Zoroastrianism was the religious façade of the Sasanians, Chalcedonianism the façade of the Byzantines, Islam was in turn an aspect of Arab rule. Yet, unlike the latter, the visible symbols of Islam took a very long time to appear in Armenia. In the south and west, Islam immediately made its mark in most cities of the Near East. Soon after capturing Jerusalem in 637, Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644) established a mosque and set the general terms for a tolerant *Pax Islamica* with the Christians of the city and al-Shām (Greater Syria). It must be briefly mentioned here that these initial surrender and peace agreements have little or nothing to do with what came to be known as *Shurūṭ ‘Umar*, canonized in early 9th century, as it shall be discussed in Part Three. By the turn of the 7th century, Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705) completed the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (now in the old city). It was an imposing edifice, with explicitly anti-Christian inscriptions on the outer and inner bases of the dome. The message of Islam as the new world order was set permanently at the Holy City of Judaism and Christianity.

As public symbols of Christianity diminished and the urban centers changed, a World of Islam emerged with its own laws, landscape, sounds, images and daily life.

CHAPTER II

THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET” THROUGH PHASES THE FIRST PHASE IN THE ARAB PERIOD (7TH TO 9TH CENTURIES)

MAHMET AS *T'ANKANGAR*, LAWMAKER, PROPHET, WORLD-CONQUEROR

Prior to Islam as well, the Armenians referred to the Arabs as the “people of *Tachkastan*” (country of Tajiks), also in biblical terms, as Hagarians (*hagarats'ik'*), Ismaelites (*ismayelats'ik'*), or sons of Ismael (*ordik' Ismayeli*, the son of Hagar, the handmaid, from Abraham). Tajik (*tachik*) was the mostly commonly used term for the Muslims. At later stages (and still) the term *aylazgi* entered usage (*aylazg*, in modern Armenian). Literally, it means “from a different race/people”, not “foreigner”, as sometimes translated. The word was used to avoid using the more explicit term “Muslim” and “Tajik.” The precise synonym of “foreigner” is “*awtar*” or “*ōtar*.” Depending on the dominance of a given group in the immediate environment, the Muslims were also referred to as Persians (*parsikk'*), or Kurds, and Turks. In modern Armenian the word for Islam is *mahmetakanut'iwn* (Mahmetism), and for the Muslims *mahmetakans*, or the followers of Mahmet, as Christians are the followers of Christ.

From the first accounts of Islam by Sebēos in late 650s, to the end of the Middle Ages, and some of the Modern Period, Islam in Armenian literature was perceived as the “Laws of Mahmet.” Muḥammad, the name of the Prophet, was spelled differently by different authors at different periods and places, as *Mahmet*, *Mahmed*, *Mahmēt*, *Mehmēt*, *Mahmad*, *Mahomat*, *Mhmēt*, *Mehemēt*, *Mahamat*, *Mohammet*, *Muḥammad*, *Muhammēd*. In this study, in order to distinguish the figure in Armenian literature from the Prophet Muḥammad, I use the most common form of Mahmet, also using the variants in the given texts.

Already through the first accounts of the Prophet, what I call the Biographical Cycle of Muḥammad, or stories of the medieval “Armenian Mahmet” began taking shape. The “story of Mahmet” became a recurring theme in the literature. To the end of the Arab period in second half of the 11th century, it evolved through different versions.

The figure contained all that the Armenians knew, and needed to know, as they believed, about Mahmet, the Prophet of the Hagarians, or the

Ismaelites, or the Tajiks, or the *aylazgis*, and his “laws” or Islam. A merchant (*t’ankangar*) by career and a shrewd young man, he was tutored by an Arian monk called Sargis (Sergius) Bhira/Bahira/Bkhira, who taught him about monotheism, the Old and New Laws. He also taught him heretical ideas about the humanity of Christ, hence the Arian and Nestorian link of Islam to Christianity, and its subsequent dismissal during this period as just another heresy.

On a more positive note, this Mahmet was also a monotheist, a reformer sent by God to the pagan peoples of the desert. He was a law-maker (*ōrēnsdir*), a formidable world-conqueror, and a giver of fair covenants to the Christians and the Armenians. As such, he gained priority over his teachings, and as a consequence, Islam remained secondary to but closely tied to the person of this Mahmet, in the literature at least.

For a very long time, the interest of the Armenian authors in the “Laws of Mahmet” remained within the peripheries of the latter’s personality and career, as presented in the literature. Unlike other Christians in the entire medieval Near East, who made translations of the scriptures of the Muslims within a century of its advent, the first initiative to translate the Qur’ān was over a millennium later, but not from Arabic. Information about the Prophet and Islam came from indirect sources and never from the Qur’ān, the *Ḥadīth*, and the classic texts. There is no indication that anyone of the medieval and later authors as well, had read the Qur’ān, or parts of it, in any language. I argue that the complete marginalization and negligence of the Qur’ān in the literature for over a millennium — from the 7th to 17th centuries — can and must be explained in this perspective, or the focus solely on the Armenian Mahmet.¹

Since Islam was always defined as the “Laws of Mahmet”, the Armenian Mahmet became a shortcut. It was deployed as a convenient vehicle and a tool to understand, to present and most of all, to refute Islam. As a

¹ Links with Islam and the Muslims found extra-establishment channels in the Armenian dissident and heterodox factions. Being sympathizers of the Muslims, also their allies and associates already in the 8th century, these factions were familiar to the language, read the Qur’ān and taught it to their children. Mostly adoptionistic and iconoclastic these “heretics”, known as the Paulicians and the T’ondrakians, soon acquired military and territorial gains through the Muslim authorities. Contrary to traditional accounts, they maintained an acute sense of their ethnicity. Their Islam was a zeal without dogma, as I discussed in other studies and *The Fatimid Armenians* (1997) in particular. As much as they considered themselves genuinely Armenian, they also looked at themselves as pious Muslims. Most Fātimid Armenians were unique figures that defied all paradigms of Armenian nationalist historiography, which failed to understand the phenomenon and drove these episodes and figures behind an iron curtain.

consequence, in the literature at least, Islam, was confined to this framework and was readily dismissed as “unprophetic” and a version of the Arian heresy, unworthy of consideration as an alternative religion and a moral system. This peculiar aspect of the Armenian perceptions of and responses to Islam and the Prophet also shaped their polemical strategies and understanding of the terms of the *Pax Islamica*.

My main thesis in Part One therefore, is that in medieval Armenian literature the narratives of the Prophet’s life (by around fifteen authors) gradually generated the medieval Armenian Mahmet. Remotely related to the historical person and his classic biographies, this narrative was considered true and was readily adopted also as a comprehensive account of his teachings. Both in the Armenian East and West, each account was based on the previous ones and the medieval Armenian Mahmet grew steadily. Location, events, social and military changes, as well as new material were factors in the process.

From the 7th century to the end of the medieval period, three phases distinguished the development of the Armenian Mahmet. The first was during the Arab Period which ended after the middle of the 11th century, the second during the “Age of Kingdoms” to the 11th century, and the third phase (Part Two) in the Seljuk, Mongol and Turkmen times. A strict chronology is maintained in order to trace the dynamics of the narratives and the factors in their development.

The histories of Sebēos (7th century), Ghewond (8th century), and T’ovma Artsruni (late 9th - 10th century) cover the Arab invasions and rule, religious persecutions, rivalries between the Bagratuni, Artsruni, Siwni and the other houses. These three were promoted to dynasties, by ‘Abbāsīd approval and support.

Before the Arabs developed the administrative and military manpower to govern the conquered territories directly, the second half of the 7th century was still an “Indian summer” for the Christians. Locals were given administrative tasks of local governance, tax collection and defense against the Byzantines. At the time, Islam was the religion of a minority dispersed on large areas. The Muslims depended on “the resources and expertise of a much larger non-Muslim population” of many ethnic and religious backgrounds.²

² Wood, “Christians”, 27-8.

Armīnyah was brought under direct rule by Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik only around the last decade of the 7th century. Earlier on, Mu‘āwiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān, then the governor of Syria, was the first figure who became the “face” of the Muslim Arabs in Armenia. He was depicted more as an Arab than a Muslim, similar to the Umayyads, who are said to be first Arabs then Muslims. The ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, who were ethnically closer to the Persians, were first Muslims. The Umayyad caliphs of the 7th century, “took little interest in religion”, says Tritton.³ Under the first Umayyads, the conquerors were in good terms with the peoples of the places they conquered.”⁴ The Islamization also Arabicization of the Caliphate were launched by ‘Abd al-Malik and more systematically by ‘Umar II (r. 717-720), by the imposition of Islamic supremacy and subsequent stipulations. They were canonized a century later, at the beginning of the 9th century, then forcibly stated in the “Edict” of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) in 850. These developments had direct impacts on the circumstances of the Armenians and the literature reflected them.

A. SEBĒOS

Most scholars believe that the anonymous history attributed to Sebēos (or Sebios, d. c. 661), is one of the most significant sources of the early Arab invasions into eastern Asia Minor and Armenia (a region divided between the Byzantines and the Sasanians). Himself a senior contemporary of the Prophet, Sebēos is also one of the earliest authors who directly referred to Mahmet as a historical person, and a Prophet. His history was often quoted, but anonymously, by most subsequent Armenian authors. For its relevance to regional history as well, it was also the most frequently translated. The significance of this history, says Greenwood, “lies in its breadth of historical vision [and], its early date of composition.”⁵

The oldest manuscript of the *History* of Sebēos is in Matenadaran (henceforth M) Manuscript 2639. This is a collection of medieval texts, which also includes the history of Movsēs Khorenats‘i. It was accidentally discovered in 1831 by H. Shāhkhat‘unyan at Ējmiatsin, who put the

³ Tritton, *The Caliphs*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵ Greenwood, “Sebēos”, 143. Abgaryan, “Introduction, *Sebēos*”, 6, 9; see Tēr Ghewondyan, “The Work of Sebēos”.

title as *Patmut' iwn Sebēosi Episkoposi i Herakln* (History of Bishop Sebēos about Heraclius).⁶ It is now known as the *History of Sebēos*.⁷

The integrity of the text, as “established” by Malkhasyants’ is an unsettled matter. Greenwood believes that Sebēos was a “senior” figure judging from his familiarity with meetings between Emperor Constans II (r. 641-668) and Catholicos Nersēs III Tayets’i-*Shinogh* (“builder”, of the cathedral of Zwart’nots’ in 643-652, r. 641-661).⁸ It was M. Ōrmanian who first identified Sebēos as “the bishop of the Bagratunis”⁹ and one of the signatories of the Canons of the Council of Dwin in 645. It was convened by Catholicos Nersēs III, who later on accepted the Council of Chalcedon, compelled by, or in order to please Byzantium.¹⁰

Sebēos seems to suggest that he wrote his history at the order of his patrons the Bagratunis. Greenwood, however, questions this connection, as well as his participation in the Council of 645. “This important church council”, he says, “does not feature in the *History* [of Sebēos]. Far from displaying exclusively pro-Bagratuni sympathies, the text focuses as much, if not more, attention upon the rival Mamikonian family, not least in describing [and praising] Hamazasp Mamikonian, the leading prince of Armenia in 655.”¹¹ As it was the norm in medieval Armenian histories, Sebēos too concentrated on the major aristocratic houses of the Mamikonians, the Bagratunis, and the Ršhtunis. He may have had information on the incoming Arabs, that would not be accessible to an ordinary vardapet.¹²

When Sebēos began his history over a decade after the early Arab invasions, probably in 650s, Armenia had lost sovereignty for almost 250 years. The last Arshakuni king was deposed in 428, the land and the people were divided between the Persian and the Byzantine Empires. As a narrator of

⁶ M2639 was part of a collection made at Baghesh/Bitlis in 1672 with a number of other texts including the history of M. Khorenats’i, by the initiative of Vardan Vardapet Baghishets’i. However, in a catalog made in 1675 by the latter, there are discrepancies in the names and texts. See Arzoumanian, *Studies*, 8-9. Nine copies were made of this version and they are at present in different libraries. (*Ibid.*, 30-31, 35).

⁷ Other publications: Sebēos, *History of Heraclius* (Istanbul, 1851); Sebēos, *History of Heraclius* (St. Petersburg, 1879), and second publication: Sebēos, *History of Heraclius* (Tbilisi, 1912-13); Sebēos, ed. Malkhasyants’ (Yerevan, 1939); and the edition used in this study: Sebēos, ed. Abgaryan (Yerevan, 1979).

⁸ Greenwood, “Sebēos”, 139.

⁹ Ōrmanian, *National Narrative*, vol. II, 713.

¹⁰ Arzoumanian, *Studies*, 16.

¹¹ Greenwood, “Sebēos”, 139. For a full bibliography see same.

¹² Abeghyan, *History of Ancient and Medieval Armenian Literature*, vol. I, 388.

very grave developments in the region, and in view of the status of Armenia between three powers, Byzantine, Persian and Arab, Sebēos seems to have seen the primacy and significance of the regional contexts of all his accounts. He consistently contextualized all his accounts, and made correct assessments of the historic moment at the time. He was “the first non-Muslim author”, says Hoyland, “to present us with a theory for the rise of Islam that pays attention to the Muslims themselves thought they were doing.”¹³ Indeed, following the demise of the Sasanians and the withdrawal of the Byzantines before the Arabs, Sebēos saw the rise of a formidable power and a new order in the region. The list of contents of Chapter 42 (made later on by the editors) summarize his grasp of the events surrounding the appearance of Islam:

The abolition of the Sasanian [line] which had held power for 542 years; The Jews betake themselves to the Ismaelites; The appearance of Mahmet and his uniting the Ismaelites; The first battle between the Greeks and Ismaelites in Arabia; The defeat of the Greeks and taking of the Cross to Constantinople; The Ismaelites rule over Egypt; another army of Ismaelites takes Ctesiphon; The eclipse of the kingdom of the Persians; The death of Heraclius and the reign of his son Constantine; Entry of the sons of Ismael into Armenia; The capture of Dwin and the slavery of 35 thousand men from Duin. The incumbency of the Patrician T'eodoros Rshtuni. Ismaelites looted many lands all the way to the borders of India.¹⁴

The third part of the *History* has special relevance for this study. “It records the emergence and expansion of a new and dynamic Islamic polity. It sketches key beliefs, tracing them back to Muḥammad, a preacher and legislator and, intriguingly, the ‘path of truth’. In particular, Abraham is stressed as a common ancestor whilst the members of the community are defined repeatedly as the sons or children of Ishmael and occasionally as Hagarenes”.¹⁵

¹³ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 152.

¹⁴ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 94. The passage in Armenian: Բարձրուն Սասանականին, որ կալա զիւթանութիւնն ամ Շխ [542]: Դիմել Հրէից առ Իսմայէլացիս. երևել Մահմէտի և միաբանել զԻսմայէլացիս: Առաջին պատերազմ ի մէջ Յունաց և Իսմայէլացոց յԱրաբիա: Պարտութիւն Յունաց, փախուցանել զխաչափայտն ի Կոստանդնուպոլիս: Իսմայէլացիք տիրեն Եգիպտոսի: Այլ զար Իսմայէլացոց առնու զՏիգրոն: Հուազունն թագաւորութեան Պարսից: Մահ Հերակլի և թագաւորել որդւոյ նորա Կոստանդինի: Մուտ որդւոցն Իսմայէլի յաշխարհս հայոց: Առուն Դունայ և գերուն Լէ հազար արանց ի Դունայ: Պատրկութիւն Թէոդորոսի Ռեաունոյ: Իսմայէլացիք յաւարի առնուն զբազում աշխարհս մինչև ի սահմանս Հնդկաց: *Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 134.

¹⁵ Greenwood, “Sebēos”, 141.

Through the *History* of Sebēos, a surprisingly identifiable and positive portrait of the Prophet emerged only few decades after his death in 632, and the arrival of Arab armies in south eastern Asia Minor (just before 640). The following is the most significant passage in this respect:

I shall speak of the stock of Abraham, not of the free one but of that born from the handmaiden, concerning which the unerring divine word was fulfilled: 'His hands on all, and the hands of all on him.' Then the twelve tribes of all the clans of the Jews went and gathered at the city of Edessa. When they saw that the Persian army had departed from them and had left the city in peace, they shut the gate and fortified themselves within. They did not allow the army of the Roman empire to enter among them. Then the Greek king Heraclius ordered it to be besieged. When they realized that they were unable to resist him in battle, they parleyed for peace with him. Opening the gates of the city, they went and stood before him. Then he ordered them to go and remain in each one's habitation, and they departed. Taking desert roads, they went to Tachkastan, to the sons of Ismael, summoned them to their aid and informed them of their blood relationship through the testament of scripture. But although the latter were persuaded of their close relationship, yet they were unable to bring about agreement within their great number, because their cults were divided from each other.

At that time, a certain man from among those same sons of Ismael whose name was Mahmet, a merchant, as if by God's command appeared to them as a preacher [and] of the path of truth. He taught them to recognize the God of Abraham, especially because he was learned and informed in the history of Moses. Now because¹⁶ the command was from on high, at a single order they all came together in unity of religion. Abandoning their vain cults, they turned to the living God who had appeared to their father Abraham. So Mahmet legislated for them: not to eat carrion, not to drink wine, not to speak falsely, and not to engage in fornication. He said: 'With an oath God promised this land to Abraham and his seed after him forever. And he brought about as he promised during that time while he loved Israel. But now you are the sons of Abraham, and God is accomplishing his promise to Abraham and his seed for you. Love sincerely only the God of Abraham, and go and seize your land which God gave to your father Abraham. No one will be able to resist you in battle, because God is with you.'¹⁷

¹⁶ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 95.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96. In Armenian: ՁԱբրահամեանն հառեցից զգաւակէ, ոչ ազատէն, այլ զայն՝ որ յաղախնոյն ծնեալ, յորոյ վերայ անուտ կատարեալ աստուածային բանն, երէ՛ «ձեռք նորա յամենեան, և ամենեցուն ձեռք ի նա:» Յայնժամ երբալ ժողովեցան յեղեսացոց քաղաքն երկուտասան ազգք ամենայն ցեղիցն հրէից: Եւ եղև իբրև տեսին, թէ զնաց մեկնեցաւ ի նոցանէ զաւրն պարսից, և թողին ի բաց զքաղաքն խաղաղութեամբ՝ փակեցին զդուռն և ամրացան ի նա. և ոչ ետուռն մտանել ի նոսա զաւրացն հռոմայեցոց տէրութեանն՝ իսկ թագաւորն յունաց Երակլոս հրաման ետ պաշարել զնա. և երբ գիտացին սոքա, երէ՛ ոչ կարեն ունել զդէմ նորա պատերազմաւ՝ խաւսեցան ընդ նմա ի խաղաղութիւն. և բացեալ զդուռս քաղաքին՝ երբալ կացին առաջի նորա: Յայնժամ հրաման ետ նոցա երբալ դադարել յիւրաքանչիւր ի բնակութիւն. և

Following Mahmet's advice, and under his leadership, all the sons of Israel gathered and formed a large army.¹⁸ Sebēos continues:

Now when the sons of Ismael went to the east from the desert of Sin, their king Amr did not go with them. Being victorious in¹⁹ battle, they defeated both kingdoms; they occupied [the land] from Egypt as far as the great Taurus mountain, and from the western sea as far as Media and Khuzhastan. Then they penetrated with royal armies into the original borders of the territory of Ismael. The king commanded ships and many sailors to be gathered, to cross the sea to the south-east ... as far as the borders of India. So the troops rapidly made preparations and carried out their orders. They burned the whole land; and taking booty and plunder they returned. After making raids over the waves of the sea, they came back to their own places.

This we heard from men who had been taken as captives to Khuzhastan, [from] Tachkastan. Having been themselves eyewitnesses of these events, they gave this account to us.²⁰

Chapter 42 ends here. In Chapter 44, Sebēos wrote about the capture of T'ēodoros Ršhtuni by the treachery of a certain T'umas, his release and return to Armenia. The more significant event is the division of the "armies

զնացին նո՛ւա. և կալեալ զհանապարհս անապատին զնացին ի Տանկաստան առ որդիսն Իսմայելի, կոչէն զնոսա իւրեանց յազնականութիւն, և ծանուցանեն նոցա զհարազատութիւն իւրեանց Գրոց կտակաւ: Իսկ նոցա թէպէտ և հաւանեալ վասն մերձաւոր հարազատութեան՝ ոչ կարէին առնել հաւանութիւն ի մէջ բազմութեան նոցա, և զի էին պաշտամունք նոցա բաժանեալ ի միմիանց: (*Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 134.)

Յայնմ ժամանակի այր ոմն ի նոցունց իսկ յորդոցն Իսմայելի, որում անուն էր Մահմէտ, քանգար, որպէս ի հրամանէն Աստուծոյ երևեալ նոցա քարոզ՝ հռմարտութեան նախապարհ, զԱրքահամեանն ուսուցանէր նոցա նախաչել զԱստուած. մանաւանդ զի հմուտ և տեղեակ ևս էր Մովսիսական պատմութեանն: Արդ՝ զի ի վերուստ էր հրամանն՝ ի միոջէ հրամանէ ժողովէին ամենայն ի միաբանութիւն արիւնացն: Եւ թողեալ զունայնութեան պաշտամունսն՝ դառնային առ Աստուած կենդանի, որ երևցաւ հարն նոցա Արքահամու: Արդ՝ արիւնադրէ զնոսա Մահմէտ՝ ոչ ուտել մենելոտի, և ոչ ըմպել զինի, և ոչ խաւսել սուտ, և ոչ խառնակել ի պոռնկութիւն: Եւ ասէր. “Երգմամբ խոստացաւ Աստուած զերկիրն զայն Արքահամու և զաւակի նորա յետ նորա մինչև յաւիտեան: Եւ կատարեաց որպէս խաւսեցան առ այնմ ժամանակաւն, մինչ սիրէրն զԻսրայէլ: Իսկ արդ՝ դուք էք որդիք Արքահամու, և կատարէ Աստուած զխոստումն Արքահամու և զաւակի նորա ի վերայ ձեր. այլ միայն սրտիւ սիրեցէ՛ք զԱստուածն Արքահամու և երբա՛ջ կալարու՛ք զերկիրն ձեր, զոր ետ Աստուած հար ձերում Արքահամու, և ոչ կարէ ոք ընդդէմ ձեր կալ պատերազմաւ, զի Աստուած ընդ ձեզ է:” (*Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 135.)

¹⁸ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 97. Եւ ամենայն մնացորդ ժողովրդեան որդոցն Իսրայէլի ժողովեալ միաբանեցան ի միասին, և եղև զաւր մեծ: (*Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 135.)

¹⁹ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 101.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102. In Armenia: Բայց յորժամ ելին յարեւելք որդիքն Իսմայելի ի Սին անապատէն՝ ոչ էլ ընդ նոսա և քաղաւորն նոցա Ամո. Այլ իբրև յաղթեցին պատերազմաւ, վանեալ զերկոսին քաղաւորութիւնն [Byzantine and Sasanian] կալան յեզրիպատսէ մինչև ցլեառն Տարսոս, ի ծովէն Արևմտից մինչև ցՄարս և Խուժաստան՝ ... մինչև ի սահմանս Հնդկաց: Իսկ զաւրացն փութանակի պատրաստեալ՝ զհրամանսն կատարէին. և այրեցին զամենայն երկիրն, և առեալ զաւար և զկապուտ՝ դարձան անդրէն, արշաւանս դնելով ի վերայ ծովուն մկանացն հասանէին ի տելիս իւրեանց: Չայս լուաք յարանց զերկրոց ի Խուժաստան Տանկաստանէ, որոց ինքեանք իսկ ականատես եղեալ պատմեցից մեզ զայս բան: (*Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 139.)

of Ismael” into three and the invasion of Albania (Aghuank‘) and subsequent calamities. In the following passage his apocalyptic depiction of Islam and their rule are clearly stated:

Who could describe the fearful calamity of the Ismaelite brigand who set fire to sea and land? However, the blessed Daniel had earlier prophesied such a disaster which befell the land. Through four beasts he indicated the four kingdoms which would arise on earth. First of all, the kingdom of the west, the beast in human form, which is that of the Greeks. This is clear from his saying: ‘The thick wings were plucked, and it was exterminated from the earth.’ He speaks about the extermination of devilish idolatry: ‘And it stood as on the feet of a man, and the heart of a man was given it.’ ‘And behold the second beast was like a bear, and it stood to one side’, to the east; he means the Sasanian kingdom. ‘Having three ribs in its mouth’, the kingdoms of the Persians, Medes and Parthians. This is clear from what they were saying to him: ‘Arise, eat the flesh of many’, just as it ate, as all know. ‘Now the third beast was like a leopard; there were four wings of a bird on it, and the beast had four heads.’ He means the kingdom of the north, Gog and Magog and their two companions, to which was given authority to fly powerfully in their time in the northern regions. ‘The fourth beast was fearful and amazing, and its teeth were of iron, and its claws of bronze. It ate and broke in pieces and crushed the remnants under foot.’ This fourth, arising from the south, is the kingdom of Ismael, just as the archangel explained: ‘The fourth beast, the fourth kingdom, shall arise, which shall be greater than all [other] kingdoms; and it will²¹ consume the whole earth.’ ‘And the ten horns, the ten kings, shall arise. And after them will rise up another who is greater in evil than all the previous ones.’²²

In Chapter 48 Sebēos drew a very expansive regional stage. The Persian Empire is in extinction, and Byzantium is desperately trying to regain what it lost to the Ismaelites. When faced with difficult choices, as Sebēos explained, the Armenians under the command of T‘ēodoros R̥shtuni submitted to them, and a pact was signed. Upon this episode, in 653 (“12th year of his reign”) Emperor Constans II arrived in Armenia and many of the Armenian princes or *nakharars* went to him to show their loyalty.²³

²¹ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 105.

²² *Ibid.*, 106. In Armenian, abbreviated: Բայց ահագին զաղէաս հէնին Իսմայէլի, որ բորբոքեաց իրդեհեալ զծով և զցամաք, ո՞վ կարիցէ պատմել. բայց երանելին Դանիէլ կանխաւ գուշակէ մարգարէութիւնն զայսպիսի նեղութիւնս որ եկն եհաս ի վերայ երկրի. որ չորս զազանաւ նշանակէ զչորս թագաւորութիւնսն, որ յառնելոցն էին ի վերայ երկրի: Եւ նախ առաջին գլխումովց թագաւորութիւն, զմարդացեալ զազանն, որ է Յունաց... Եւ ահա զազանն երկրորդ նման արջոյ *Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 141. զՍասանականն ... Իսկ զազանն երրորդ իբրեւ զինձ ... զՀիւսիսային առ թագաւորութիւն, Գոգ և Մագոգ, ... Իսկ զազանն չորրորդ ... յարուցեալ ի Հարաւոյ կողմանէ՝ Իսմայէլեան թագաւորութիւնն ... որ առաւել իցէ քան զամենայն թագաւորութիւնս, և կերիցէ զամենայն երկիր: *Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 140-142.)

²³ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 163. The title of this chapter in Armenian. Պատերազմ Իսմայէլացոց ընդ Պարսիկս. Մահ Յազկերտի. Բարձունն Սասանեան տէրութեանն. Հայք

This was the first “written word” or pact between the Armenians and the Caliphate during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (r. 644–656). The account of this pact signed in 652 is probably one of the high points in the *History* of Sebēos, however, as far as subsequent authors were concerned, it seemed to be one of the low points. Many deliberately ignored this first peace pact, as an unjustified submission to the Muslim side and a betrayal of the Christian side.

This pact is known as the famous “Pact” or “Peace” of Mu‘āwīyah, then the governor of al-Shām, signed in 652 between the latter and T‘ēodoros ʔshtuni, the Byzantine appointed governor of Armenia. It was the first written agreement that set down the terms of the *Pax Islamica* in Armenia. It was prompted by a revolt against the Byzantines by anti-Byzantine Armenian *nakharars* and a subsequent alliance with the Arabs by the pragmatic T‘ēodoros ʔshtuni. Sebēos explained that the choice of the Arab side, instead of the Byzantine, was simply a “decision [by the Armenians] to serve the king of Ismayel.” “T‘ēotos, the lord of ʔshtunik‘”, he wrote, “master of all the Armenian princes, [thus] gave an oath of alliance with hell, abandoning the divine covenant.”²⁴ He then cited the text of this peace treaty. Even though this and all pacts are discussed in Part Three, for the sake of the integrity of this passage, I cite it here as well:

In that same year, the Armenians rebelled and removed themselves²⁵ from [allegiance to] the Greek kingdom and submitted to the king of Ismayel. T‘ēodoros, lord of ʔshtunik‘, with all the Armenian princes made a *pact with death and contracted an alliance with hell, abandoning the divine covenant*. [italics mine] Now the prince of Ismayel spoke with them and said: ‘Let this be the pact of my treaty between me and you for as many years as you may wish. I shall not take tribute from you for a three-year period. Then you will pay [tribute] with an oath, as much as you may wish. You will keep in your country 15,000 cavalry and provide sustenance from your country; and I shall reckon it in the royal tax. I shall not request the cavalry for Syria; but wherever else I command they shall be ready for duty. I shall not send amirs to [your] fortresses, nor an Arab army neither many, nor even down to a single cavalryman. An enemy shall not enter Armenia; and if the Romans [Byzantines] attack you I shall send you troops in support, as many as you may wish. I swear by the great God that I shall not be false.’ In this manner the servant of Antichrist split them away from the Romans. For although

մտանէն ի ծառայութիւն Իսմայէլացոց առաջնորդութեամբ Թէդորոսի Ռատունոյ. Գալ Կոստանդինի կայսեր ի հայս բազումք իշխանաց Հայոց զան առ նա և ցուցանեն զմիամտութիւն իւրեանց: *Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 163:

²⁴ In Armenian: “աստուծային դաճնաւորութիւն.” *Mihردادiants‘, Sebēos*, 215–216.

²⁵ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 135.

the emperor wrote many intercessions and supplications to them and summoned them to himself, they did not wish to heed him. Then he said: 'I am coming to the city of Karin. Do you come to me.' Or: 'I am coming to you, and I shall give you a subsidy as assistance, and we shall decide together what is best to do.' Yet even so they did not wish to heed him.²⁶

This first account of the Prophet of the Ismaelites, the Mahmet of Sebēos was an intriguing combination of traits. As a prophet with a “divine mission”, he was cleared of all blame and set on a margin. However, growing violence cast a dark shadow on him. The Tajiks, his followers came in unfavorable light and were described as a “great storm from the desert”, and the “fourth beast” in Daniel’s prophecy, “more evil than the others.” Consequently, the pact signed with Mu‘āwiyah was inevitably an “alliance with hell.”²⁷ Sebēos depicted Islam on a primarily political-military stage, where Byzantine failure and growing Arab power shaped the fate of the Armenians. He did not go as far as blaming Mahmet’s teachings for the actions of his followers, as all subsequent authors did. Yet, he set the doctrinal framework for Arab invasions when he quoted Mahmet telling followers to “go and seize the land which God gave to your father Abraham. No one will be able to resist you in battle, because God is with you.”²⁸

B. GHEWOND

Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik initiated a new phase in the evolution of the Caliphate by setting three objectives that also defined it as primarily an Islamic state, thus changing the identity of the region. These were

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136. In Armenian: Եւ ի նմին ամի ապստամբեցին Հայք և ի բաց կացին ի բազաւորութեանն Զուռաց և հնազանդեցան ի ծառայութիւն արքային Իսմայելի, եղին ուխտ մահու, և ընդ դժոխց դաւինս կոեցին Թէոդորոս Ռատունեաց տէր ամենայն իշխմանս հայոց, ի բաց ընկեցեալ գաստոածային դաւանաւորութիւնն: Արդ՝ խաւսէր ընդ նոսա իշխանն Իսմայելի և ասէր. ‘Այս լիցի ուխտ հաւատութեան իմոյ ընդ իս և ընդ ձեզ՝ որչափ ամաց որ դուք կամիջիք. և ոչ առնում ի ձեզ սակ զերեւմ մի: Ապա յայնժամ տաջիք երդմամբ, որչափ և դուք կամիջիք: Եւ հեծեալ կալէր յաշխարհիոյ ժե հազար, և հաց յաշխարհէն տուէ, և ես ի սակն արքունի անգարեմ. և զհեծեալսն յԱտրիս ոչ խնդրեմ. Բայց այլ ուր և հրամայեմ՝ պատրաստ լիցին ի գործ. և ոչ արձակեմ ի բերդորայն ամիրայս, և ոչ տանիկ սպայ՝ ի բազմաց մինչև ցմի հեծեալ: Թեւեմ մի մոցէ ի հայս. և եթէ գայ Հռոմ ի վերայ ձեր՝ արձակեմ ձեզ գաւառս յազգնականութիւն՝ որչափ և դուք կամիջիք՝ Եւ երդնում ի մեծն Աստուած ոչ ստեմ:՝ Եւ այսպէս քակեալ պատառեաց զնոսա ի Հռոմոց նեղին արբանեակն, զի քէպէտ և բազում աղաչանս և պաղատանս գրեաց առ նոսա կայսրն և կոչեաց զնոսա առ ինքն, և ոչ կամեցան լսել նմա: *Sebēos*, ed. Abgaryan, 164.

²⁷ *Sebēos*, trans. Thomson, 136.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

centralization, Islamization and Arabicization. In *Armīnyah*, as elsewhere too, he launched a crack-down on the *nakharars*, under the pretext of their being allies of Byzantium. In northern Iraq he targeted the high nobility and appointed governors. The “centralization of the state, and the revenue that it brought, was also used to fuel a deliberate articulation of the state’s Arabic and Islamic character”, says Wood.²⁹ As part of these measures, harsh taxation on non-Muslims clearly differentiated between them and the Muslim communities, and led to conversions, as planned. They also fueled rebellions by the nobility. The first three years of the 8th century were catastrophic times for the Armenians. They ended at a peace pact, as it shall be discussed in Part Three.

The construction of Islamic monuments initiated by ‘Abd al-Malik in Damascus and Jerusalem were the visual manifestations of these measures. They stated the Islamic character of the state, the majority of which inhabitants were non-Muslim natives. ‘Abd al-Malik also Arabized the bureaucracy. “Even for non-Muslims, success in this world would have required the use of large numbers of religious formulae derived from the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*.” Arabic gradually became a suitable, in fact the only language for the Christian educated elite, who were mainly from the clergy. These measures gave a very significant advantage to the local Arab Christians. In addition to Syriac and Greek, through their fluency in Arabic, they played a pivotal role as translators of Greek philosophical and other texts into Arabic. They also developed their own apologetic-polemical literature in Arabic, based on a direct knowledge of the Qur’ān, the *Ḥadīth* and *al-Kalām*.³⁰

The violent events that followed the uprisings by the Armenian *nakharars* in 701-703, and the granting of a peace pact in 703 were first told by Ghewond, the most important author of the 8th century, in his *Invasions of the Arabs into Armenia*.³¹

²⁹ Wood, “Christians”, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

³¹ Ghewond, *Invasions*, ed. Shahnazaryants’ (Paris, 1857). The title of the manuscript used for this edition is: *Patmut’iwn Ghewonday Metsi Vardapeti Hayots’ or Ereweloy Mahmeti ew zgni norin t’ē orpēs kam orov Ōrinakaw Tirets’in Tiezerats’ ew Arawel Azgis Hayots’* [History of the Great Vardapet Ghewond of the Armenians Concerning the Appearance of Mahmet and how in his Example they [his followers] Dominated the Universe and the Armenian Nation]. In 1851, E. Dulaurier copied the text from M. Brosset’s copy of Ghewond. As per the colophon, the manuscript was copied in the 17th century and belonged to Karapet Bagratuni of Tbilisi. See *History of Ghewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*,

Some scholars consider Ghewond a 9th century author.³² Identified as *erēts*‘ (pastor, presbyter) and sometimes as vardapet, Ghewond greatly militarized the initial political framework of Islam by Sebēos. He drew a broad image of the region during the hundred and fifty years following the death of the Prophet. Along with the Muslims, the Armenians too of all ranks and capacities, were protagonists. His narratives are rooted in the regional dynamics, hence the unique significance of his *History* for Islamic-Armenian studies.

Almost nothing is known about Ghewond, who was the first historian to use the Armenian calendar.³³ He was probably born in Ghoghht‘n (in Nakhijewan, in the south western province of modern Armenia, now part of Azerbaijan) and studied at Duin (just south of Yerevan).³⁴ His immediate successors do not seem to be familiar with his work. The first reference is by Step‘anos Taronets‘i Asoghik of the 11th century. In the next century, Samuēl Anets‘i and Mkhith‘ar Anets‘i mention him, and through them Vardan Arewelts‘i and Kirakos Gandzakets‘i in the 13th century.³⁵ Mik‘ayēl Ch‘amch‘iants‘ seems to be unaware of Ghewond’s *History*, probably because it was first published in 1857 by Shāhnazaryants‘ in Paris, as part of a series on Armenian historians.

A continuator of Sebēos, and a predecessor of T‘ovma Artsruni in the next century, Ghewond is the single most important source on the invasions of the Arabs into Armenia and their rule. His *History* starts at the death of Mahmet in 632, covers the anti-Arab revolts of 701-703, 747-750, and 774-775, and ends at the election of Catholicos Step‘anos I Dēwnets‘i (r. 788-790). The first section of the original manuscript being damaged, the title is added later, as *The Invasions of the Arabs into Armenia Written by Ghewond Vardapet of the Armenians — 632-788/9*. [Arshawank‘ Arabats‘ i Hays Arareal Ghewond Vardapeti Hayots‘].

All the copies of Ghewond’s history are believed to have been made from a 14th century manuscript, now in M902. The colophons provide no information about the author and the book. This copy was made by a

Arzoumanian, *Studies*, 23. In 1862, Kerovp‘ē Patkanyan published a translation into Russian from the 1857 edition. (*Ibid.*, 24); Another early publication is: *Patmut‘iwn Ghewonday Metsi Vardapeti Hayots‘* [History by the Great Vardapet Ghewond of the Armenians], ed. K. Ezyan (St. Petersburg, 1887). English translation by Z. Arzoumanian, *History of Ghewond* (Philadelphia, PA, 1982); *Ghewond History*, trans. Tēr Ghewondyan.

³² See Greenwood, “Ghewond”, 867.

³³ See Arzoumanian, *Studies*, 31.

³⁴ Tēr Ghewondyan, “Introduction, *Ghewond History*”, 3-4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 14.

scribe called Sargis, near Ashtarak (just north west of Yerevan) probably sometime between 1279 and 1311. It was repaired in 1664, and in 1690 kept at Ējmiatsin. There is also M3070, prepared at Van sometime between 1669 and 1674.³⁶

Ghewond had a unique style of approaching and presenting his subjects. He avoided, and probably deliberately, the literary motif of confrontation-martyrdom on a strictly Armenian stage. Like Sebēos about a century earlier, he too repeatedly claimed to be an eyewitness of the events he related, and indeed, he was quite accurate in his reports. Also, in the tradition of Sebēos, he constructed stories on a regional grid, but he placed them in the larger contexts of Arab politics and administration in eastern Asia Minor and *Armīnyah*.

As Greenwood says, Ghewond's *History* also becomes an "important witness to the development of Christian-Muslim relations in the 7th and 8th centuries."³⁷ In my opinion, it was this peculiarity of the text that allowed, rather invited, the very long section on the alleged correspondence between Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II (r. 717-720), the initiator of the dialogue/debate in letter format, and Byzantine Emperor Leo III (r. 717-741), during the incumbency of Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets'i, (r. 717-728).

Both in the edition of Shāhnazaryants' (1857) and Tēr Ghewondyan's translation into modern Eastern Armenian (1982), one third of the entire text, over sixty pages, is devoted to the interfaith dialogue between the two monarchs, both held in high regard in the text. In the opinion of most scholars, this section was a later addition.³⁸

Ghewond introduced his history in a very unconventional style. The missing pages at the beginning of the only surviving copy of the manuscript can be the reason. Instead of the common introductions about the dire circumstances of the Armenians and the failures of their spiritual and temporal leaders at the time, the text starts abruptly and dramatically at the death of the Prophet, his successors, and the speedy expansion of the Muslims into vast territories previously held by the "Hoṛoms" or the Byzantines.

First of all [we write] about those who came to be known as '*amir-al-mumnik*' [*amīr al-mu'minīn*]. After remaining in power for twenty years, Mahmēt passed away, and his reign was held by Abu-Bak'r, Amr ['Umar] and Ot'man

³⁶ Tēr Ghewondyan, "Introduction, *Ghewond History*", 15. Arzoumanian, *Studies*, 23-25. Arzoumanian used M1902 for his translation: Arzoumanian, *History of Ghewond*. For descriptions of the manuscripts, see Akinian, "Ghewond Erēts' the Historian".

³⁷ Greenwood, "Ghewond", 869.

³⁸ For the subject of this correspondence, see Greenwood, "Letter of Leo III".

[‘Uthmān] for thirty-eight years [622-661, no mention of ‘Alī] in the 11th year of the reign of God-blessed and pious king of the Horoms [Heraclius, r. 610-641]. As long as God-blessed Heraclius was alive, they [Muslims] could not send their marauders into Judaea, for the reputation of his courage terrified them.³⁹

Ghewond wrote in rather popular language but dramatic style. For the first time in the literature, he labeled the Prophet as the “lawmaker Mahmet” (*ōrēnsdirn Mahmēt*). He is also a powerful and cunning political figure, who liberated his people, the “sons of Ismayel”, from Byzantine rule and led them to consecutive conquests. Ghewond calls Mahmet’s successors the caliphs “*amiralmumnik*” (*amīr al-mu’minīn*). The Muslims are referred to in a number of terms, depending on the context. They are the *sarasinōk* (Saracens, for the first time and very rarely used in Armenian literature), *Ismayelats’ik* (Ismaelites), *ordik’ Ismayeli* (sons of Ismael), *azg Ismayeli* (nation/race/clan of Ismael), *Hagarats’ik* (Hagarians), Tajiks or just *Ismayel*. Muslim armies are *zork’n tachkats’* and *zork’n Ismayeli* (armies of the Tajiks, armies of *Ismayel*). The caliph is the “prince of Ismayel” or prince of the Tajiks (*ishkhan tachkats’*). Thus, Umayyad Mu’āwiyah and other caliphs are “princes of the Tajiks” (*ishkhann tachkats’ Mawia*).

With the exception of the following passage, Ghewond has no other comment on Islam, the “laws” of Mahmet. In the context of his description of the early stages at Medīnah, he wrote:

And they started to form troops and armies against the rule of Constantine [r. 641-668] over Land of the Jews and Assyria, empowered by the advice of their Lawmaker, who planted the seeds [of aggression?] and said ‘Rise against the world, conquer them by your own hands, for defeating the world is given/destined for us. Consume the flesh of their [enemies] elite and drink the blood of the powerful ... It is said that God promised to put the inhabitants of the world in the service of Abraham, and we are the heirs and sons of the patriarch [*nahaper*]. [At Medīnah, continues Ghewond, the Jews told the Muslims that God was wary of their evildoings, and punished them by slavery to the Byzantines. As in turn descendants of Abraham, they asked the assistance of the Muslims and their cooperation in breaking out of the rule of the Byzantines and establishing their own.] They told them [Muslims] ‘rise and save us from the slavery to the king of the Greeks and together let us establish our reign’.⁴⁰

³⁹ In Armenian: Նախ և առաջին որ և Ամիր-ալ-Մումնիք անուանեցան, զի քսան ամ կայեալ զիշխանութիւնն Մահմէտ՝ մեռանի: Յետ այնորիկ փոխանորդէ զիշխանութիւն Մահմէտի Աբու-Բաքր և Ամր և Օթման, ամս երեսուն և ուր: Ի մետասաներորդ ամի Հերակլեայ աստուածապսակեալ և բարեպաշտ թագաւորին Հռոմոնց: Որ մինչդեռ էր կենդանի աստուածապսակեալն Հերակլէս, ոչ կարացին սփռել զասպատակս իւրեանց ի վերայ Հրէաստանի զի համբաւ քաջութեան նորա սփռեալ էր և զարիւրացուցանէր զնոսա: Ghewond, *Invasions*, ed. Shahnazaryants, 19-20.

⁴⁰ In Armenian: Եւ սկսան զունդ կազմել և զաւրս զունարել ի վերայ իշխանութեանն Կոստանդինի [641-668] ի վերայ Հրէաստանի և Ասորեստանի, զի զպատուէր Օրէնադիրն

Despite his detailed coverage of all the significant episodes, Ghewond is silent about the 652 pact between Mu‘āwiyah and T‘ēodoros during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān,⁴¹ also the agreement between ‘Umar II Ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz and Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i in 719. But he has a long passage about the 661 agreement between the Armenian *nakharars* and then “*ishkhan tachkats*”, (prince of Muslims) Mu‘āwiyah concerning an annual tax of 500 *dirhams* in return to safety “in their own land.”⁴² In view of Ghewond’s familiarity with the *History* of Sebēos, the omission of the 652 pact, the first written protocol between the Armenians and the Caliphate, seems to be deliberate.

According to Ghewond, the 661 agreement was inconsequential, because of the “internal wars”, as Ghewond put it, among the Muslims themselves, meaning the assassination of Caliph ‘Alī, his son al-Ḥusayn, and the rise of the Umayyads.

Ghewond is the source of the episode of the peace pact granted by the general Muḥammad Ibn Marwān in 703 to Catholicos Sahak III Dzorap‘orets‘i (677-703) posthumously, at “Kharan” (Harrān, now part of Turkey, just north east of Manbij). Ibn Marwān had crushed the rebellion of the *nakharars* and returned to Syria with booties and slaves, among whom there were dignitaries and clergy.⁴³ The Armenian delegation “took a written word of oath from the general of Ismayel back to Armenia”,⁴⁴ wrote Ghewond.

The story of this posthumous peace agreement and the noble gesture by Muḥammad Ibn Marwān (under ‘Abd al-Malik) was told in semi-epic dimensions by almost all subsequent authors to the end of the Middle Ages. It was the fourth pact between the Caliphate and the Armenians, the first was in 652, the next in 654, the third in 661. The fifth was again by an Umayyad, Caliph ‘Umar II in 719. These pacts will be discussed

իւրեանց ունէին օժանդակ, զոր պատուիրեանցն որոմանցն սերմանողի թէ ‘Ելէք ի վերայ աշխարհաց, նուանեցէք զնոսս ընդ ձեռամբ ձերով, զի մեզ ասէ տուեալ է զպարտութիւն երկրի. կերա՛յք զմիս ընտրելոց երկրի և արբէք զարիւն զարաւորեաց ... Աբրահամու ասեն խոստացաւ Աստուած տալ զբնակիչս երկրի ի ծառայութիւն և մէք եմք ժառանգք և որդիք հաւապեալին: [At Medīnah the Jews told them that God was wary of their evil-doings, and punished them. As descendants of Abraham, they asked the assistance of the Muslims and their cooperation in breaking out of the rule of the Byzantines and establishing their own. They told them:] ‘Ելէք ընդ մեզ և փրկեցէք զմեզ ի ծառայութենէ արքային Յունաց և ի միասին կալցուք զիշխանութիւնս մեր: Ghewond, *Invasions*, ed. Shahnazaryants’, 20-21.

⁴¹ Sebēos, ed. Abgaryan, 164.

⁴² Ghewond, *Invasions*, ed. Shahnazaryants’, 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 40-41; Tēr Ghewondyan, *Ghewond, History*, 30-31.

⁴⁴ In Armenian: Եւ ինքեանք առուին զօրավարէն Իսմայէլի բան երդման ի ձեռն զրոյ. Shahnazaryants’, *Ghewond*, 49-53; Tēr Ghewondyan, *Ghewond*, 36-37.

in Part Three. After the death of ‘Abd al-Malik, his policies of centralization were forcefully applied by his successor, al-Walīd I (r. 705-715).

A brief reference to the correspondence between ‘Umar II and Leo III is a necessary diversion at this point, before proceeding to the *History* of T’ovma Artsruni. It is believed that it was a later addition to Ghewond’s *History*. Its authenticity, date, original language (Greek or Armenian) and provenance remain unresolved matters. Most probably, it was written in Greek then translated into Armenian, as J.-P. Mahé, T. Greenwood and others believe, but details about the Greek original are undecided.

“Although rightly incorporated into the *History* of Ghewond in the reign of ‘Umar II”, says Greenwood, “its translation into Armenian may well belong to the second half of the 9th century, perhaps during the patriarchate of Photius, although this remains conjectural.” He concludes that Caliph ‘Umar’s letter in Ghewond’s *History* cannot be genuine but a literary composition based on fragments from Leo’s “reply” to ‘Umar. In this text, in meticulous and ornate Byzantine style, Leo argues against Islamic beliefs and rituals, the Qur’ān and the Prophet.⁴⁵ Taken as a literary phenomenon, and independent of the unresolved matters of authorship, time and locations, these letters constitute a Muslim polemic and Christian apology during the early decades of the 8th century. They reveal “Muslim attitudes to and interpretations of the Bible, and Christian knowledge of the Qur’ān.”⁴⁶ From this perspective, their significance supersedes the concerns about authorship, timing, and language.

The figure of ‘Umar II is a dramatic creation by a Christian author. Thus, at the end of the lengthy section about the correspondence, the author wrote that this caliph was the most tolerant and kind person in his entire “clan.” He then tells the many instances of his benevolence toward his own people, the Christians and the Armenians. Strangely, there is no mention of the semi-legendary visit of Catholicos Yovhan II to Damascus by ‘Umar’s invitation and the subsequent pact in 719. This omission may be an indication of the non-Armenian ethnicity of the writer. Almost no Armenian would be silent about the victorious journey of their catholicos to the Umayyad capital and his return with a very positive pact.

⁴⁵ See Greenwood, “Letter of Leo III”.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 206. For the subject of this correspondence see: Jeffery, “Ghevond’s text of the Correspondence”; Mahé, “Le problème de l’authenticité”, 119-126; Hoyland, “The Correspondence of Leo III and ‘Umar II”; Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm*, Appendix 2, 153-71: “The authenticity of the Leo-Umar correspondence”.

The high praise of ‘Umar II, who ruled for two and a half years only, otherwise not known for his tolerance toward the Christians, is strange. This caliph was convinced of the ascendancy of Islam and believed that it was his duty to make sure that it was reflected in the inferior status of the non-Muslims by various manifestations, such as the *ghiyār* (a compulsive distinctive mark in the garb of the *dhimmīs*). In some respects, he was more hostile than his predecessors. He forbade the chimes and the raising of voices from the Christian churches. He discriminated against non-Muslims, if an Arab killed a Christian, he was not punished by death, as a Christian would be, but required to pay a fine of 5000 *zuzes*. When ‘Umar II stipulated that all converts would be exempted of taxes, predictably, many converted.⁴⁷ At the end of the long texts of the correspondence, the author added that the letters of Leo had a deep impact on the caliph, and “he became even more tolerant and benevolent toward the Christians. He released the slaves with no ransom money ... he also became more generous toward his own people.”⁴⁸

C. T’OVMA ARTSRUNI

The History of the Artsruni House [*Patmut’iwn Tann Artsrunesats’*] by T’ovma Artsruni is the third important history of what may be called the “High Arab Period in *Armīnyah*”, from the 7th to the 10th century.⁴⁹ This text is a particularly important source for the events of the second half of the 9th century in Vaspurakan (in southern Armenia, between Lake Van to Lake Urmia, extending north and south), where the Arab armies arrived first. The book has two anonymous continuators, and survived in a single manuscript made in 1303, on the Island of Aght’amar on Lake Van.⁵⁰

Believed, rather assumed to be a member of the aristocratic Artsruni house, T’ovma (c.840-908/9) is an elusive figure. Kirakos Gandzakets’i (13th century) placed him around the year 900.⁵¹ He probably was a high-ranking clergy connected to the Artsrunis and had access to important

⁴⁷ Fattāl, *Le statut légal*, 68-69.

⁴⁸ Tēr Ghewondyan, *Ghewond*, 86.

⁴⁹ *History of the Artsruni House* by T’ovmay Vardapet Artsruni (Constantinople, 1852); *History of T’ovma Vardapet*, ed. K’erowp’ē Patkanyan (St. Petersburg, 1887); T’ovma Artsruni and Anonymous, *History of the Artsruni House*, trans. into modern Eastern Armenian by Vrēzh Vardanyan; T’ovma Artsruni, *History of the Artsruni House*, in *Matenagirk’ Hayots’*, vol. XI, 9-315, henceforth *T’ovma*, *Matenagirk’*.

⁵⁰ Thomson, “Introduction, *T’ovma*”, 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

records. He wrote his *History* by the order of Prince Grigor Derenik Artsruni (r. 847-887) of Vaspurakan, obviously to praise the merits of his House. He must have started the book before 887 and completed between 903 and 908,⁵² or later, because he tells the story of the arrival of a crown for Gagik I Artsruni from Caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932) in 908.⁵³

T'ovma was the first to elaborate and more or less credible narrative of the appearance of the Prophet Muḥammad, his teachings, ascent to power in a region that for centuries was dominated by great empires. He was also the first, and one of the very few authors to use the term *Kuran*. In turn, he claimed to be an eyewitness of the events of the second half of the 9th century, also to have used the reports of only credible eyewitnesses. He referred to the land of the Muslims as the “land of Persians” (*erkirn parsits'*), and to the Muslims as the “sons of Hagar”, “sons of Ismayel” or simply the Tajiks.

Mahmet is introduced very ceremoniously in Chapter IV of Book II of the *History*. For the unique significance of T'ovma's account, the entire section is cited below in the translation of R.W. Thomson.⁵⁴

How the evil kingdom of the Persians came to an end and was succeeded by the even more evil [kingdom] of the Ismaelites

In the time of the Roman Emperor Heraclius the Persian kingdom reached its end. And at that time there came and gathered in the city of Edessa twelve thousand men from all the tribes of Israel, for they had seen that the Persian army had left and abandoned the city. They entered, closed the gates, fortified themselves therein, and began to rebel against Roman rule. [At this point, T'ovma goes to Sebēos, but his account of the origin of Islam, is not found in the latter.]⁵⁵

But the Emperor Heraclius commanded them to be besieged. The king's brother Theodore [not named in Sebēos]⁵⁶ and the host of the army wished to slaughter them, but the king commanded them to leave his territory. They took the desert road and went to Arabia to the sons of Ismayel, to the city called Madiam, which Israel had destroyed on leaving Egypt in its war with Balak, king of Mosab. And because the Persian power had become very weak, they fearlessly restored the city of Madiam and dwelt in it.⁵⁷

⁵² See Greenwood, “T'ovma”, 102-103.

⁵³ *T'ovma*, Matenagirk', 282.

⁵⁴ The Armenian text, in *T'ovma*, Matenagirk', 133-139; all references in this quoted passage are from *T'ovma*, trans. Thomson, 164-170.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 164, N. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, N. 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

They sent messages to the sons of Ismayel, indicating their close relationship: “We are the sons of Abraham — we need you, brothers. You must come to our help, and we shall take the land of our inheritance.” But although the latter were persuaded, yet there was great opposition between them, because they were divided by the worship of idols according to each one’s desire [as in Sebēos].⁵⁸ [At this point, T’ovma leaves the narrative of Sebēos, to return to it after few pages] At that time there were some despotic brothers in the regions of Arabia Petraea in the place called P’aran, which is now called Mak’a [alternatively and randomly spelled as Mak’ay as well], warlike chieftains, worshippers of the temple of the image of the Ammonites’ temple called Samam and K’abar [Zamzam and Ka’bah]. It happened that one of them, called Abdla, died leaving a son of tender age called Mahmet. His uncle Abutalb took and raised him until he reached puberty. On attaining a sufficient age, he dwelt with a certain wealthy man from among their kin. He served him faithfully, pastured camels, and was the steward [*hramanatar*] of his house. When some time had passed, the master of the house died. His wife, seeing that Mahmet was a faithful man and very sagacious in all worldly affairs, married him and turned over to him all the supervision of the house and property. So, he became a merchant by trade and skilled in commerce. He undertook distant journeys on mercantile business, to Egypt and the regions of Palestine. And while he was engaged in this business, he happened to meet in the regions of Egypt a monk called Sargis Bhira,⁵⁹ who had been a disciple of the mania of the Arians. Becoming acquainted with him and in the course of time becoming friendly, he taught [Mahmet] many

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 165, N. 1.

⁵⁹ See: Thomson, “Armenian Variations on the Bahira Legend”. The story of Sargis Bahiray/Bhira in Armenian texts, appeared in T’ovma’s history for the first time. Soon it was integrated in the figure of the Armenian Mahmet, because it established the Christian heretical connection of Islam. From the beginning, it was anyway regarded and dismissed as a version of the Arian heresy. As we shall see in subsequent histories, all the references to and use of the Bahīrā legend in Armenian literature deliberately overlooked the apocalyptic aspects of the legend. Some versions invested on the subversive personalities of the monk and his disciple, the development of their relationship, even to conflict and murder of the monk by Mahmet, to show the violent side of the latter’s personality. Furthermore, while in the Syriac versions in particular, direct quotes from the Qur’ān are deployed in the polemic, Armenian versions restricted themselves to a very simple version of the initial plot. Otherwise, the story is a Syriac polemical legend of undecided original milieu. Primarily, it is an account of the rise of Islam from a Christian perspective through the influence of an Arian/Nestorian monk on Muḥammad during his early life. The story borrowed elements of Muslim biographies of the Prophet (e.g. Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīrah*) about a monk called Baḥīrā (“chosen one” in Aramaic) and his prophecy about young Muḥammad’s future as a true and final prophet. It begins and ends with apocalyptic sections, the encounter between the monk and Muḥammad is in the middle. In the first section, Baḥīrā receives a vision on Mount Sinai about the imminent political rise of the ‘Sons of Ishmael.’ This is repeated in the final section in the form of a long prophecy, in which the destiny of humankind, and of the Christians in particular, under the ‘Abbāsids (‘Sons of Hāshim’) is spelled out. See Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*; Roggema, “The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā”.

things, especially concerning the old testaments and that God has by nature no Son. He tried to persuade him to follow the earlier faith of the Israelites: "For if you accept this, I predict that you will become a great general and the leader of all your race." He reminded him of God's promise to Abraham and the rites of circumcision and sacrifices and all the other things which it is not necessary to mention here in detail. On these the Ismaelites mediate *ad infinitum*.

It happened one day when he [Mahmet] was departing from him (Bhira) that a⁶⁰ strange voice, and influence fearsome and demonic fell on him and drove him out of his senses, as is now appropriate to indicate according to the following example. For they say of the woman from whom Antichrist will be born, that journeying from Egypt to the land of Palestine and desiring to see the column of Lot's [Genesis 19.26] wife, she went and lingered there to rest. And as she dozed, a strange spirit cried out from the mouth of the woman turned into stone: "You will bear a son who [will] conquer the world." And indeed, a daughter of the tribe of Dan conceived from fornication. Such things also occurred in his [Mahmet] time. For when his traveling companions asked why he had lost his wits, he said; "Some fearsome angel's voice fell on me, and ordered me to go as a messenger [*patgamawor*] to my nation, to show [them] God the Creator of heaven and earth, to take upon myself the title of leadership and to refute and destroy the false faith in idols." Coming to P'aran he repeated these same words to his uncle called Apljehr [?]. He said: "What is this new faith which is now being revealed by you? If you repeat it again you will be condemning your own self." Grieved he went to his own house, for he was continuously oppressed by the demon; perhaps God allowed him to suppose that his loss of reason was caused by an angel. And many of them believed him when he said he was a messenger of God.

One day when he was depressed from his uncle's threats, Ali son of Apu-talp came to him and said to him: "For what reason do you sit depressed?" He said: "I preach God the Creator of heaven and earth, but they reject me with threats." Now Ali was a valiant man. He said to him: "Arise, let us go out, for there are many men with us. Perhaps there may be some good solution to this matter."

When they had gone outside Mahmet began to speak the same words publicly. There was a great outcry among them and such a dispute that many of them drew their swords. Mahmet's side was defeated; many of both sides were wounded; and Mahmet and Ali fled with about forty men. They came to the city of Madiam which we mentioned above. On hearing the cause of⁶¹ their flight, the Jews, like zealots for God and sons of Abraham and mutual brothers, were emboldened to unity and to proclaim that his words were true. They joined him and made a pact, and gave him a wife from their nation, and made ready to support him in whatever way his wished might dictate.

⁶⁰ *T'ovma*, trans. Thomson, 165.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

So, one could say that it was by a command from God that this undertaking began. The Jews joined the Ismaelites, forming a large army. Attacking P'aran, they inflicted a great defeat on their opponents, killed Apljehr and many of the Ammonite and Moabite troops, destroyed the images of Samam on the altar, and subjected all the inhabitants of the neighboring regions and wiped out by the sword of resistance.

When Mahmet saw the success of his venture and the concord of the Jews, he proclaimed himself head and leader of them all. He appointed as his officers [*hramanatar*] and generals Ali and Apubak'r and Amr and Ut'man. He sent a message to Theodore, the brother of Heraclius, [here T'ovma returns to Sebēos] that the Jews had co-operated: "God promised this land to Abraham and his seed, and it was in their possession for a long time. And if God was disgusted with their wicked deeds and gave it into your hands, let the period you have held it suffice for you. Now we the sons of Abraham, and you know the promise made to Ismael our father. Give to us our land peacefully, otherwise we shall take it by war — and not only that [land] but also many others." He [Theodore] wished to show it to the king, but Heraclius died in those same days. His son Constans did not agree to respond as he [Theodore] had wished, but simply ordered caution and not to wage war against them until he saw the outcome of the event. But the army of Ismael was vigorously straining for war. So, wishing to defend the country [the Romans] went out against them. Leaving their horses, they opposed them on foot. The [Muslims]⁶² having been at rest, attacked them. Exhausted by the weight of their arms, the heat of the blazing sun, the density of the sand which gave no support to their feet, and their tramping on foot, and distressed in every way, [the Romans] fell into the hands of the enemy, who slew them with their swords. Reaching the site of their camp, [the Muslims] seized a great amount of booty and began fearlessly to spread over the land because they had no worries of any battle.

Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem, seeing the perilous situation with no hope of help, took the divine Holy Cross of the Lord with other church ornaments and brought them to flight to the imperial capital to Constans. And Ismayel ruled over all Judaea.

Now the Arian monk whom we mentioned above, Mahmet's teacher, on seeing his success rose up and went to Mahmet to show him his kind favor, as if he had attained such things on his being instructed by his teacher. But since [Mahmet] was proclaiming that his mission was from an angel and not from a man, he was very vexed at this and killed him secretly.

At this very time there was another hermit in the regions of Persia who had a pupil called Saghman [Salmān]. At the hour of his death the hermit gave him these instructions: "My son, on my death do not remain in this land lest you lose your faith among the infidels. But go to the regions of Egypt to dwell in the numerous company of brethren, so that you may gain your soul." When the hermit died, Saghman intended to carry out his instructions. On

⁶² *Ibid.*, 167.

his journey he happened to come to the city of Madiam; he had knowledge of the Scriptures, though not a perfect one. When Mahmet saw him, he summoned him and attached him to him, and ordered him to write a book of laws for his nation at the hand of Abut'uraba the Ismaelite; for he himself did not know writing or reading. Saghman agreed to write for him and set down a composite book, some of it from accurate memory, other parts being imaginary sayings. But Mahmet himself, moved by a raving spirit, had him write perverse [things] of which we shall give brief extracts.

He said that he was the Consoler whom the Lord Christ had promised to send to his disciples; he said he was equal to the⁶³ Savior, his travelling companion in the words of Isaiah: "riding one on a donkey, and the other on a camel." [Isa. 21.7] All this he applied to himself. Instead of Holy Baptism [he prescribed] continual ablutions with water and reckoned this was sufficient for purification. The heavenly gifts which the Lord has for the future, the ineffable and angelic renewal, he said, were vast quantities of food and drink; should one wish to eat insatiably one would find them ready. And there would be continual and insatiable intercourse with women who remained virgins. It is too long to repeat all his impure sayings, for they are very many and opposed to God. And all this he affirmed and set down for his nation, calling it K'uran ... All these evils he accomplished, and even more laws than these he established for his nation in his multifarious wickedness. Having lived for 20 years in this fashion he died, and himself appointed Apubak'r to the leadership of the Tajiks. The latter lived for 2 years and died. Then the leadership of the Tajiks fell to Amr, son of Hatap, for 20 years and 6 months. He drove out the Greeks, gathering a great army attacked the enfeebled kingdom of the Persians in the land of Parthians and their king Yazkert. ...⁶⁴ the kingdom of the Persians and of the race of Sasan was ended; it had lasted for 542 years.⁶⁵ [At this point, and in one of the rare instances, and with no mention of Umayyads, T'ovma briefly refers to the wars of succession between Caliph 'Ali and the Umayyads, which in ended in the rise of the latter's dynasty in 661.] Mawi [reigned] 20 years and 3 months and a few days. There was a fierce war between Ali, son of Aputalp, and Mawi for 5 years and 3 months. For Ali claimed that the leadership of the Muslims was rightly his.⁶⁶

After an approximate list of the caliphs up to Marwān (r. 744-750), without posing at the rise of the 'Abbāsids, T'ovma continues the list with two "Abdlas" (al-Mahdi, r. 775-785) then "Aharon" (Hārūn al-Rashīd, r. 786-809) and finally "Jap'r". The dates are inaccurate.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 170, N. 3. 542 is a strange number, if the Sasanian Empire lasted from 224 to 651, as Sebēos gives, it must be 427 years. Ghewond gives 481 years, Asoghik 386.

⁶⁶ *T'ovma*, trans. Thomson, 170.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Mutawakkil, also called “Jap‘r” and his brutal commissioner, the *ostikan* (commissioner) Bughaa are at the center of several episodes related by T‘ovma. The rise of al-Mutawakkil to power and his policies in Armenia are given a separate chapter in the *History*. At the end of the previous chapter, he has a brief discussion about the Umayyads. In turn, he highly praises ‘Umar II, whom he calls “Umar son of Abdlay.” Almost repeating Ghewond, T‘ovma speaks of the caliph’s correspondence with Leo III, his piety and benevolence toward the Christians and his own people. He then contrasts him with his successor, “Yazid” (Yazīd II, r. 720-724), a hater and “torturer of Christians.”⁶⁸ Very briefly, he also refers to power struggles among the Tajiks, meaning the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids, the victory of “some factions” in Iraq, the building of a “capital-city called Baghdad” by “Abdla”, which, he explains, means “servant of God.” He stops at this point and declares that the more pressing subject is “Jap‘r” and his activities around the year 850/1, the year he issued his “Edict”, which T‘ovma does not specify as such.⁶⁹

He starts a new chapter dedicated to al-Mutawakkil, with a very elaborate title: “Concerning the King Jap‘r ... in the Muslim year 222 (836), his despotism ... what he planned for Armenia ... the king of the Tajiks T‘ok‘l (Mutawakkil) known as Jap‘r.”⁷⁰

This caliph’s name was Abu‘l-Faḍl Ja‘far Ibn Muḥammad al-Mu‘taṣim bi‘llāh. He was born in 822 and rose to the throne at the age of 25, in 847, not 836, as T‘ovma wrote. His regnal name was al-Mutawakkil ‘alā Allāh (he who relies on God). “Jap‘r” is probably a distorted transliteration of “Ja‘far.” “T‘ok‘l” seems to be a distorted second syllable of “Mutawakkil.” The Hijrah year 222, or 836 is over ten years early, as al-Mutawakkil’s incumbency started in 847. The name of this caliph will appear as “Jap‘r Mot‘ok‘l” in another passage, where he boasts for his massacre and persecutions of the Christians.⁷¹

According to T‘ovma, in order to legitimize his invasion of Vaspurakan, Bughaa or “Bukhay” forged a letter with the seal of al-Mutawakkil, and presented it to Prince Gagik Artsruni. The depiction of this caliph by Bughaa is interesting, he wrote:

⁶⁸ *T‘ovma*, Matenagirk‘, 139.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 140

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 218-219.

I Bukhay, head of the generals of the armies of the king of the Tajiks Jap‘r, who reigns over the seas and lands, equal to the lawmaker-legislator Mahumat‘, and loyal mediator between God and men, and universal monarch over all the peoples ...⁷²

In another passage and in the context of the establishment of the Arstruni kingdom, T‘ovma wrote:

And the head/king of the Tajiks, whose name is Jap‘r and the surname Mukt‘dir [al-Muqtadir, r. 908-932], when he heard that Gagik was king over Armenia, sent him a crown and royal gowns and astonishing ornaments and received [from him] the taxes.⁷³

Despite his meticulous citation of letters, decrees, and documents, also of persecutions and taxes, T‘ovma makes no specific mention of the famous “Edict of al-Mutawakkil”, as mentioned. For the first time, he lists the caliphs, the successors of the Prophet, quite accurately with few errors, and no distinctions between the caliphates. He briefly mentions struggles for power among the Muslim “tribes” and factions, and the Armenian revolts in response to extreme oppression by the Tajiks or the “Hagarians.” The episode of the capture of the Armenian dignitaries and their exile to Samarrā’ is an occasion for T‘ovma to speak of Islam.

“Several themes are developed within the narrative”, says Greenwood. The most important is his “refutation of Islam, arguing that it relied on the ‘unsupported and uncontrolled’ argument of a single person and contrasting this with Muslim legal practice, which respected multiple witnesses.”⁷⁴

T‘ovma mentions martyrs, also nobles who committed apostasy, such as Bagarat Bagratuni, Vasak Artsruni and Ashot Artsruni (father of Grigor Derenik). He “implies that those who returned from captivity in Samarrā’ had all been guilty of apostasy.” The model he follows in these accounts is Eghishē’s *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* (against the Sasanians in 451).⁷⁵

⁷² *Ibid.* 176. In Armenian: “Բուխայ գլուխ զաւրաւարաց ընդհանուր թագաւորութեան տանկաց, Ջափր ի թիւեցոյ ծովու և ցամաքի, հաւասար և արէնացիրն մերոյ Մահումաթի և հաւատարիմ միջնորդ Աստուծոյ և մարդկան, և թագաւոր ընդհանուր ազգաց...”

⁷³ *Ibid.* 282. In Armenian: “Եւ գլխաւորն տանկաց, գորոյ անուն Ջափր գիտելով ի նոցունց զրոց և զմիւս ևս վերագրեալ անունն Մոկրդիր, իբրև գիտաց զթագաւորելսն Գագկայ ի վերայ Հայաստանեայց, առաքէ ի նմա թագ և հանդերձս զարդուց զարմանալիս և յանձն առնէ նմա գիարկս արքունի.”

⁷⁴ Greenwood, “T‘ovma”, 105.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Ananun Arstruni, the continuator of T'ovma, mentions the name of the incumbent Caliph al-Muqtadir as *Mokdt'dik'*, but not Jap'r. It was by the support of this caliph that the Artsruni kingdom, the rival of the Bagratunis, rose in Vaspurakan. Similar to Ashot I Bagratuni (in 884/5), Gagik I Artsruni (r. 908-943) too, the first on this throne, received his crown from the 'Abbāsīd caliph in Baghdad.⁷⁶

In several respects, T'ovma's *History* is simultaneously an Armenian and a regional history. By the second half of the 9th century the rival Arab emirates were part of the landscape too, with Armenian alliances, some through marriages. Muḥammad Afshīn Ibn Abī al-Sāj, the *ostikan* of Azerbaijan, was married to the daughter of Shapuh Bagratuni. There were cultural ties and influences as well, the Church of the Holy Cross and the royal palace at Aght'amar built in Arab-Islamic spirit (by King Gagik I Artsruni, between 915 and 921), are major paradigms. Arabic names, such as Abas, Hasan, Apuset' were common even among the clergy.

⁷⁶ *T'ovma*, *Matenagirk'*, 282; Greenwood, "T'ovma", 106.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND PHASE IN THE FORMATION OF THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET” (10th TO 11th CENTURIES)

A. THE HISTORIANS OF THE “AGE OF KINGDOMS”

1. *Yovhan V Draskhanakertts'i*

The incumbency of Catholicos Yovhan V Draskhanakertts'i (r. 898-929) known as *Patmaban* (historian), coincided with the reign of two Bagratuni kings, Smbat I *Nahatak* (martyr, r. 890-914) and his son Ashot II *Erkat'* (iron, r. 914-928). Despite his direct involvement in politics and close encounters with Arab officials in Armenia, in his *History* he has surprisingly brief references to Islam and its founder Mahmet.

Yovhan V witnessed some of the gravest events, such as the treacherous murder of King Smbat, perpetuated by the notorious *ostikan* Yūsuf in collaboration with the Artsrunis. Yūsuf even captured Yovhan, while on a good will mission to his headquarters. Eventually the catholicos resorted to Vaspurakan, where he spent his last years and wrote his *History* at the order of Bagratuni king Ashot II *Erkat'* and Artsruni King Gagik I, as he mentioned in the book.

The *History* of Sebēos is a major source for Yovhan's *History*. The narratives of the remote past are collections from previous authors. He too claimed to be an eyewitness to contemporary events. He wrote in autobiographical style and in the strictly classical language or the *grabar*. At the time, the vernacular or *gegghjuk ban* (literally, peasant language) was being used in the literature. Yovhan chose to go back to the “pure” language of the 5th century or the Golden Age (*Oskedar*) of the literary culture.

He refers to Mahmet in his narratives of dissident unrest, the erosion of the aristocratic houses and Yūsuf's religious persecutions. Concerning Mahmet's first appearance in the 7th century, he wrote: “... at this time appeared the son of the servant Hagar Mahmet ... the ruthless leader of the Hagarians ... and Arabia,” also called Tachkastan and the land of the Tajiks.¹

¹ *Draskhanakertts'i*, *Matenagirk'*, 407. Other edition: Yovhannēs Draskhanakertts'i, *History of the Armenians*, ed. Emin (Moscow, 1853); English translation: Yovhannēs Draskhanakertts'i. *History of Armenia*, trans. Maksoudian.

He described Islam as the “Laws of Mahmet”,² and the “irregular religion of Mahmet.” (*ankanon grawnits‘n Mahmeti*).³ Otherwise, at least in his *History*, Yovhan showed no interest in Mahmet’s teachings and dismissed his followers as the “corrupt multitudes of Hagar.”⁴ He particularly focused on the events of 650s. He described the Arab armies as the “destructive forces of Hagar” and “Ismaelite forces.”⁵ He mentioned the Chalcedonian Catholicos Nersēs III and the building of the great cathedral of Zwart‘nots‘ (just south of Ējmiatsin).⁶ At the time, he wrote, no one dared to rise against the “head-amir” (*amirapet*) or the caliph. Without naming Caliph ‘Uthmān, he related that the latter decided to dispatch his armies into all sides of the earth, from Armenia to India.⁷ T‘ēodoros (who according to him was appointed by Byzantium at the request of Nersēs III), and the *nakharars*, had no choice. They had “to obey the Hagarians and making an oath of death, they signed an infernal pact with them”, concludes Draskhanakertts‘i, repeating Sebēos verbatim and without further comment.⁸

Writing in virtual retirement at Aght‘amar, Yovhan gave the institution of the church, and the catholicoi in particular, uniquely significant positions in Armenian politics. Indeed, many were involved in peace negotiations with the Byzantine and the Arab-Muslim authorities. A Hellenophile, Nersēs III in the 650s was a politically active figure too. Yovhan almost justified the public acceptance of the Chalcedonian creed by Nersēs III (under Byzantine pressures at the time.) In high poetic style, he told the story of Catholicos Sahak III Dzorap‘orets‘i (first related by Ghewond) and the granting of the “written word” of peace by Muḥammad Ibn Marwān at Ḥarrān in 703. However, he added that despite the promises and the “written word”, Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik soon broke the pact and “burned the land” of the Armenians.⁹ Yovhan also narrated the epic journey of Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i to Damascus, the meeting with ‘Umar II, and the granting of another oath by the caliph. However, he did not mention the actual relaxation of restrictions, the exemption of the church and clergy of taxes, also the support the catholicos received from the Arab side in his persecutions of the iconoclastic Paulicians into the Byzantine side,

² *Draskhanakertts‘i*, Matenagirk‘, 431.

³ *Ibid.*, 566.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁵ In Armenian: ապականիչ զաւրն հագարայ, իսմայէլեան զաւրք. *Ibid.*, 408.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 409

⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁹ *Ibid.* 416-417.

also his initiatives for reconciliation with the Syrian Churches.¹⁰ Yovhan V himself was involved in negotiations with Yūsuf, and barely escaped, as mentioned. He died in 929 at Aght‘amar, probably shortly after completing his history, also known as the *Universal (tiezerakan) History*.

2. *Movsēs Kaghankatuats‘i — Movsēs Daskhurants‘i*

Two names are attached to the *History of Aghuank‘* (Caucasian Albania) (*Patmut‘iwn Aghuanits‘ Ashkharhi*), Movsēs Kaghankatuats‘i and Movsēs Daskhurants‘i.

According to Mkhit‘ar Gōsh (c.1130-1213), Daskhurants‘i was the compiler. Kirakos Gandzakets‘i (d. 1271) considered Kaghankatuats‘i the author. Both were from Aghuank‘ in the north east of Vaspurakan as well as modern Armenia, much closer to the latter. They were contemporaries of T‘ovma Artsruni, also of Catholicos Yovhan V retired at the Artsruni estate, where T‘ovma was too.

According to Greenwood, “the earliest allusion to a text entitled *History of Aghuank‘* was made in a letter composed by Catholicos Anania Mokats‘i around 958.”¹¹ The volume must have been compiled at the beginning of the 10th century, probably before 914 and “almost certainly before 919.” Sahak Sevada, the prince of Khach‘en (east of Siwnik‘), an enemy of Smbat I Bagratuni (d. 914) may have been the sponsor.

The first part of the book covers the period from Noah to the 5th century. The information is gathered from existing sources, using “one source at a time”, as Greenwood put it.¹² The second part covers the 7th century, but from an Albanian perspective. In the context of the visit of Javanshir (Juansher, Jivanshir, r. 637-680), the prince of Caucasian Albania to Damascus (after switching loyalties toward the Muslim side), the author refers to Mu‘āwiyah as the “king of the south” and “the conqueror of the world.”¹³

Only the first two chapters of Book Three of the *History*, are directly relevant to the concerns of this study. The passages below are in my translation. The title of the first chapter is “Concerning the invasion of the Ismaelite nation from the south into all sides of the world, and on the appearance of the false prophet Mahmet.”¹⁴ The passage is the following in my translation:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 420-422.

¹¹ Greenwood, “Movsēs”, 262.

¹² *Ibid.*, 263.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁴ In Armenian: Նախ սակս իսմայէլեան ազգին յարձակմանն ի հարաւոյ երկրէ ունել զժապս տիեզերաց, և երբ ի Մահմետէ սուտ մարգարէին եղև սկիզբն. *Movsēs, Matenagirk‘*, 358. The

This is what we heard from the glorified vardapets [previous historians?] about the one, who claimed prophethood among Ismayel and dominated the great nations ... At the time of the decline of the Sasanians, there appeared a man called Mahmet of the false prophets, of which we learned from the Savior. He was a demonic spirit and a violent arrow-man of the desert. One day he aimed his arrow at a demon-shape [creature] that looked like a deer but was a monk from the fake/false sect of Arios [Arius]. His name was Bahiray, and no harm was done from Mahmet's arrow. The monk shouted at him saying "Do not commit evil my son, for like you I am a man."¹⁵ And Mahmet asked him, "If you are a man why do you reside in a cave?" He [Bahiray] took him [Mahmet] to his side and started teaching him the Old and New Testaments according to Arios, who called the Son of God a mere creature, and similar things. He [Mahmet] was thus tutored by the heretical vardapet, who ordered him to teach all he knew to his chaotic (*khuzhaduzh*) people of the Tajiks and objected that no one [of those] people knew of these things. And the mindless, pagan and lustful people were astonished at the wondrous things that Mahmet spoke of and asked him "Where do you learn these things from?" And Mahmet exploiting their ignorance told them that "an angel spoke to me, as one of the divinely inspired prophets." And his people secretly sent spies in order to find out who had spoken to Mahmet or where did he learn all that. But Mahmet found out and slyly killed the evil vardapet in the desert. Then sitting in his place, he told the spies "This is where the angel appeared to me and spoke of wondrous things." When they [spies] heard and saw this they went and told their confused and fallacious Tajiks. The latter then gathered in big multitudes and headed toward the dry and demon-infested desert, and with great honors took Mahmet among them.

Then the Savior's message about false prophets happened in fact,¹⁶ and demonic Mahmet began acting as a prophet. He said "If you listen to my prophecy and accept my teachings, great power awaits our nation, and as the book of the Horoms said, power is given to us by God for our faith [in Him]." Where the temple of demons was [at Mecca], they called the "Dome of Abraham" and divinely visited. He then ordered slaughters everywhere in the name of Abraham, also ordered to pray around the altar, to stand by the stone [*al-ka'bah?*] and kiss it in the name of Abraham. As the prophets said that "If a woman leaves her husband and goes to another, then she returns, it is not right to take her." But this is exactly what Mahmet did.

A certain Tajik called T'alb [?] had a beautiful wife. Mahmet told him that "God ordered you to leave your wife." T'alb brought his wife to the city square and swore to leave her. And Mahmet took the woman, satisfied his lusts, then told T'alb that "God ordered that you take her back as your wife."

Manuscript is published in the form adopted by Varag Aṙak'elyan (Movsēs, *History of Albania*, ed. Aṙak'elyan).

¹⁵ *Movsēs*, *Matenagirk'*, 358.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

He thus introduced this repulsive law into his people, that it is allowed to leave one's wife to another then take her back.¹⁷ This is how unjust is his legislation. They swear in the name of God, but they lie as soon as they take them [wives?], they betray them. And they commit many more obscenities, these precursors and armies of the Ner [Anti-Christ] and his worshippers and associates. Of such people Paul said “corrupt people and sinners, betrayers of faith, whose mindlessness will be revealed on the Day of Divine Judgment.” [Tim. 3.9] “In tears I tell the enemies of Christ's Cross that their way leads to destruction.” [Phil. 3.18]¹⁸

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 358-360, in Armenian: Հնդ նուազել րազաւորութեանն պարսից սասանական ազգի՛ն՝ վերբերեալ այր մի Մահմետ անուն՝ ի սուտ մարգարէիցն, զոր ի Փրկչէն ուսա՛մ, դիւական ոգով, վայրագ և աղեղնաւոր յանապատս կեայր: Եւ ի միում աւուր կերպարանեալ սատանայի ի ձև էրէոյ վայրոյ դիպեցուցանէ՛ զնա Արիստի կեղծոյն միայնակեցի ուման՝ անուն Բահիրայ. և չարն չի՛ք եղեալ ի տեղուցն. և լիալին աղեղն ի Մահմետէ՛ գեղապարիւր մարդոյն: Իսկ նորա սաստիկ ծայնեալ ասէ. “Մի մեղանչեր, որդեա՛կ, զի իբրև գեղ մարդ եմ:” Ասէ առ նա Մահմետն. [Movsēs, Matenagirkʻ, 358.] “Զի մարդ ես, վասն է՞ր կաս ի քարանձաւդ:”

Յայնժամ կոչեցեալ առ ինքն զնա՛ սկսաւ ուսուցանել ի Հին և ի Նոր կտակարանաց ըստ Արիստի, որ արարած գորդի Աստուծոյ ասաց. և նա զոր ինչ ի նմանէ, լինէր ուսեալ ի պիղծ վարդապետէն, հրամայէր նմա զնոյն խուժադուժ ազգին տանկաց պատմել. և բողոքէ առ նա, զի մի ո՛ք գիտացէ զնորա տեղին: Եւ անխմաստ, հեթանոսամիտ և մարդահանոյ ազգն այն ի զարմանս եղեալ սակա հրաշաքանութեանն՝ ասեն ցՄահմետ. “Ուստի է՛ քեզ գաղղ գիտել:” Եւ Մահմետն հայրայրեալ զանձանաւորն զիւր ազգ ասէ. “Հրեշտակ խաւսի ընդ իս, որպէս ընդ մի ո՛ք յԱստուածախաւս առաջին մարգարէիցն:” Եւ նոցա գաղտնի լրտես կացուցեալ առ ի գիտել թէ՛ ով պատմէ նմա զայմ կամ ուստի գիտէ՛ նա զայս ամենայն: Իսկ զայս իմացեալ Մահմետի զդաւանանն ծածկաբար զչար վարդապետն իւր սպանեալ ընդ աւագեաց: Եւ ի նմին տեղուց նստեալ ինքն լրտեսացն ասէ. “յայս տեղուց հրեշտակ ինձ երևեալ մեծամեծ սխանչելիս պատմ:” Եւ նոցա տեսեալ զնա միայն եկին պատմեցին վրիպական, մուրաւոր ազգին Տանկաց: Եւ նոցա մեծախումբ արարեալ ժողով դիմեցին յանջրդի, դիւական յանապատս եւ մեծագոյն պատուով զդիւաւաւանչն այն Մահմետ ածին իւրեանց մէջն:

Եւ փրկչական բան անգանաւոր կատարիւր՝ յառնել սուտ մարգարէի, զոր [Movsēs, Matenagirkʻ, 359.] Դիւապատիր Մահմետն առնել սկսաւ մարգարէութիւն: Ասէ. “Եթէ դուք անսայք ինում մարգարէութեանս և քարոզութեանս և առնէք, մեծ իշխանութիւն ազգիս մերոյ հասանէ, որպէս Հռոմոնց զիրն ասէ, թէ՛ Մեզ իշխանութիւն վասն հաւատոյս մերոյ տուաւ յԱստուծոյ:” Եւ զոր իւրեանց ատուաւանց և զոհից էին տեղիք՝ Գմբէթ Աբրահամու անուանեաց և տեղի աստուածակոթի: Եւ անդէն և անդ հրամայեաց կոտորած առնել և զարն զայն Աբրահամու անուանեաց. և հրաման ետ չորեքիւսի ի զոհանոցն աղարել. քարածան տայր կանգնել և համբուրել յանուն Աբրահամու: Եւ առ նա երանելի մարգարէն առնէր զմարգարէութիւնն. “Եթէ թողցէ այր զկին իւր, և լինիցի առն այլում, եթէ դառնայցէ առ իւր, ո՞չ ապաքէն պղծելով պղծեսցի կինն այն:” Զայս իսկ կատարեաց Մահմետն:

Տալք ոմն տանիկ ունէր կին գեղեցիկ: Վասն որոյ յղեալ պատգամ առ նա, եթէ Աստուած հրամանեաց թողուլ զկինն քո: Իսկ Տալքն այն զկին իւր ածեալ ի մէջ հրապարակի՛ն՝ երդմամբ կացուցեալ վկայս եհան արծակեաց յիւրմէ: Եւ Մահմետն առ ինքն առեալ զկինն ելից զբջջախոն ախտին իւրոյ տոփանս. և յետ այնորիկ դարձեալ ասէ ցՏալքն, “Աստուած հրամայեաց առնուլ զկինն քո առ քեզ:” Եւ այն արեւնք տաղտկալի յազգ նոցա եմուտ, եթէ զկինն քո թողալ ի կնոսքնէ, ապա առ այլում եղեալ ի քուն՝ առ ինքն առնու: [Movsēs, Matenagirkʻ, 360.] Եւ այսպէս է՛ անարեւն նոցա արեւնսդրութիւն, որ մինչ յահեղ անունն Աստուծոյ երդնուն, ստեն, և մինչ յառական կանանց եղնուն, զայն անսուտ պահեն: Եւ այլ ինչ բազում աղտեղութիւն

In Chapter two of Part Three, there is an inaccurate list of caliphs (*amirmomnik*) until the year 831.¹⁹ In chapters 3-11 a very interesting correspondence is cited between the pro-Arab Catholicos Eghia I Archishets'i (r. 703-717) and the "conqueror of the universe *amirmomin*", 'Abd al-Malik, sometime between 703 (the election of the catholicos after the death of Sahak III) and 705 (the death of 'Abd al-Malik). The occasion of this unusual contact was a dispute between the Catholicosate at Duin and the Church of Albania. Reconfirming his obedience to the Caliphate, Eghia was seeking the approval of the caliph to punish the latter. Yovhan II Odznets'i, his successor adopted and continued Eghia's pro-Arab policies, as it shall be discussed below.

3. *Shapuh Bagratuni the Anonymous Storyteller*

The identity and the background of the Anonymous Storyteller known as Shapuh Bagratuni, also the integrity and the authorship of the *History of Shapuh Bagratuni* are undecided matters. The book was first published in 1921 from a fragmented copy.²⁰ Akinian's opinion that Shapuh was a 9th century figure, a grandson of Shapuh Bagratuni (the patron of Ghewond's *History*), and an eyewitness of the events of 853-885, is no longer accepted.²¹

The *History of the Anonymous Storyteller*, says Greenwood, "was established at the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century, somewhere in the three decades between 990 and 1020. If one accepts this dating, this composition becomes a near-contemporary work emanating from Vaspurakam, with which the *Universal History* of Step'anos Taronets'i may be compared."²² In the Introduction to his translation of Asoghik's *History*, Greenwood wrote that even though, and as Thomson says too, the work is a "collection of oral tales ... which were gathered at an unknown time and written down by an unknown author ... there are

աւանդեաց ազգին այնմիկ. որք են կարապետք և զարք Նեոինն և լինելոց են երկրպագուք նմա և մարտակիցքն նորա լինին: Առ նոսա առէ արինեալն Պաւլոս. "Մարդք ապականեալք մեղաւք, անպիտանք ի հաւատս, որոց անմտութիւնն յայտնի լիցի յաւուր մեծի դատաստանին Աստուծոյ", (Բ Տիմոթ. Գ 9) և այլուր. "Եւ լալով իսկ ասեմ զբռնամեաց խաչին Քրիստոսի, որոց կատարածն կորուստ է:" (Փիլիպ. Գ 18).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 362

²⁰ [Shapuh Bagratuni], *Anonymous Chronicle*, ed. Sargisian, (1904); *Shapuh Bagratuni History*, ed. Tēr Mkrtch'yan and Tēr Mesrop'yan (1921); *Pseudo-Shapuh*, ed. Darbinyan-Melik'yan.

²¹ Akinian, "Shapuh Bagratuni and his History", 174, 177.

²² Greenwood, "Introduction, *Step'anos*", 15.

several features which, when viewed collectively, do afford insight into where and when this collection was compiled.”²³

Judging by the name, the Bagratuni connection of the author may not be taken for granted. Greenwood observes that the narrator talks about all the existing houses and does not limit himself to any one. Furthermore, even if the collection of stories is highly imaginative, the “geographical space” which these nobles inhabit “is real”, therefore historically important.²⁴ Greenwood also argues in favor of the “Persianate character” — I would add Shī‘ī-Persian character — of the text, based on the Iraq-Baghdad environment of the appearance, the career of Shapuh’s Mahmet, also the rule of Caliph ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (656-661). The book itself remained little known and seldom used by subsequent authors, who seemed to have more access to Ghewond’s work. Step‘anos Taronets’i Asoghik, a near contemporary, also Samuēl Anets’i (d. 1180) were familiar to an author called Shapuh.

A copy of the manuscript, made in the 17th-18th centuries, survived in fragmentary condition. The first edition in 1921 was incomplete. The critical edition used at present was published in 1971 by M. Darbinyan-Melik‘yan based on all the manuscripts at the Matenadaran. This is the *History of the Anonymous Storyteller*, with a facing Russian translation of the Armenian text, and an Introduction dealing with the dating of the written versions of these tales, and brief annotations. This complete version is translated by Thomson.²⁵

As it was customary in medieval Armenian histories, the book is divided into three parts. The first opens with a most unusual and unprecedented story of Mahmet and the advent of Islam, this time in Iraq. The next story is more or less contemporary, and covers events related to Emperor Maurice (r. 582-602), then Heraclius, who faced the first waves of Arab invasions into the north in Palestine and Syria. The successors of Mahmet are listed next, and the section ends with the repentance of prince Vard (a son of T‘ēodoros Ṙshtuni) for assisting the Muslims in Armenia and causing the massacre of the Byzantine soldiers. There is no mention of the pact made between T‘ēodoros and Mu‘āwiyah in 652.

Most of the stories in the second and more coherent part of the book, are about the Artsrunis, their relations with the Bagratunis and the caliphs

²³ Greenwood, “Introduction, *Step‘anos*”, 13; Thomson, “Introduction, *Pseudo-Shapuh*”; Thomson, *Pseudo-Shapuh*, 171.

²⁴ Greenwood, “Introduction, *Step‘anos*”, 14.

²⁵ Thomson, *Pseudo-Shapuh*. 171-232.

at Baghdad. These accounts have parallels in earlier histories such as Ghewond's and T'ovma's. In the opinion of Darbinyan-Melik'yan, the earliest part of the book on the emperors Maurice and Heraclius, dates from the 9th or 10th centuries. Whereas the sections on the Artsruni princes were written after the 12th century.²⁶ The following is the story of "Mehemet/Mahamat/Mahmet" by the Anonymous Storyteller, in the translation of Thomson.²⁷

Then the harbinger of Antichrist appeared, who is Mehemet, leader of the Tajiks. There was a certain man from the land of the Persians called Abd Rahman²⁸ son of Abdala, son of Belmikin, from the city of Rueran near the city of Rey, opposite the castle of Isfahan. He begot a son and named him Mehemet, then he begot a daughter also and called her name Fat'ima a very beautiful woman. Now the son of Abd Rahman, Mahamat, was possessed by a demon and was deranged by this demon day after day. Incensed by the demon he burst his iron chains and bonds, and was driven by the demon into deserts, mountains and caves. His father spent much money on doctors, but he was not helped and remained in continual anguish. There came a man to him and told him; "Take your son to the land of Syria to a man called Sargis. In accordance with his faith he is dressed in black and wears a cassock, and he will heal your son." Abd Rahman arose, took Mahmet his son, went to the land of Syria, and met a Syrian monk. When they reached the mountain of the monastery, the demon seized [Mahmet] and struck him to the ground; he raved and foamed greatly. Sargis came up, took hold of Mahmet and raised him. Abd Rahman said: "If it is possible and you can cure my son, I shall give you many treasures, honorable garments and noble horses." He undertook to cure him. So, Abd Rahman left his son Mahmet with him and went away. The man was Nestorian by faith, devilish and a lover of magic, very skilled in the demonic arts of fortune-telling and sorcery. Whereas Mahmet was an idolator by religion and a magus. Sargis said to Mahmet: "If you believe in God and turn from idolatry, I shall cure you." He agreed and was baptized by him. He baptized him according to the Nestorian faith. Mahmet lived with him for twenty-three years, united with Satan in his body and his soul; he studied the art of sorcery and learned all the magical doctrines and heresies of Nestorius.

After this, the news reached Mahmet: "Your father Abd Rahman has died." When Mahmet heard it, he wept. Sargis said: "Do not weep if your father has died, for I shall make you greater than your father and all your family. Now rise up, visit the house of your father, and return to me." So Mahmet arose, took two of the monks from the monastery and went to his country. He reached Samara and found his dead father and his sister, the

²⁶ Thomson, "Introduction, *Pseudo-Shapuh*", 173.

²⁷ Thomson, *Pseudo-Shapuh*, 182-191.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

wife of Ali his nephew. He said: "Ali, why did you raid the house of my father and take all my father's treasure and clothes and all his possessions?" Mahmet made a great outcry, took a part from Ali, returned to the land of Syria to the monastery of Demetrius to the monk Sargis, and told him what had happened. Sargis said: "Do not fear, Mahmet, as I have a means to make you great. Now arise and go again to your father's house, and there induce some men to go as merchants to the land of Egypt. When you arrive opposite my monastery, pitch camp. But²⁹ you are not to say; 'I know this monastery or this place or this region', or that I have marked the site of your camp. And I, taking my deacons, with torches and candles will come to you, and raising our voices to heaven I shall frighten the Persians who will have followed you, and I shall say to them: 'I saw a heavenly vision concerning this young man'; for he is a prophet and one must believe him, and whatever he says will surely come about." Mahmet did everything that the sorcerer Sargis had instructed him. Mahmet went to the land of Persia, to the city of Samara, and induced merchants to go to the land of Egypt, to the city of Alexandria. Rich and honorable men assembled and journeyed as far as the land of Syria. On the way Mahmet said: "O Persian magnates, we are not in the [right] faith and piety, for our idols are vain. Now I have heard from some people that there exists a God in heaven, above the sun which is visible to us." They said: "What is the matter with you, Mahmet? Be quiet and do not speak about that." But he began to expound to them the earliest days, from Abraham and Noah and even from Adam. They were astonished at his wisdom and said: "O Mahmet, what is your source for such sayings and all this knowledge?" He replied: "Wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy have been given me from above." And when they had drawn near to the monastery, they camped there opposite the monk's monastery in accordance with his advice. [That] night the monk Sargis came out with torches and candles accompanied by deacons and monks from the monastery. They came to the spot where Mahmet was and surrounding him they raised a great shout. The merchants, waking with a start, were terrified. Rising up, they went to him and said to the monk: "What is this we hear, Nestor Sargis, about this man?" And he replied: "I saw a heavenly vision concerning him, and a great light and angels who said that he is a great prophet, and that whatever he says his words are true." Then the merchants realized: "The words he told us when we were journeying were true." Rising up, they went on their way. When they had returned to their own land and had gone each to his own house, they gave out that Mahmet was a prophet.

Capasp [Khosrow] K'asre, King of Persia, heard of this and sought to kill Mahmet, saying: "He has learned Syrian heresy and wishes to destroy the cult of our idols." Mahmet and Ali arose, took Fat'ima, went from their own country, from Persia, and came to dwell in the land of the Babylonians. And it was the beginning of the Armenian year 36 (587) Mahmet began to build the great city of Baghdad on the bank of the river Euphrates. And there

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

was dissension between Ali and Mahmet. Ali held one side of the river, and Mahmet the other. ... war between Ali and Mahmet.³⁰ For the latter did not permit the practice of prophecy which Ahmad had. He planned to kill Mahmet but was unable to do so because his sister Fatima was wife to Ali and she would not allow him to kill Mahmet.³¹

The Roman Emperor Heraclius, taking the Cross came to the city of Karin [Erzurum]. He gave the holy wood to Kostendin [Constantine] and to T'eoydas [Theodosius] his sons, saying: "Go to the city of Jerusalem and place the Holy Cross on Golgotha in the place where Christ was crucified, and carry out a great vow to God and glorify the sign of the Cross". When they had gone and were close to the city of Jerusalem, they heard that Jerusalem had been taken by the rebellious Mahmet, son of Abd Rahman. For when Heraclius went to Persia, the elders and magnates [of] the Israelite Jews had arisen; they took the book of the laws of Moses and many other presents and went to the city of Baltat [Baghdad]. They met Mahmet and said to him: "We have heard about you that you have become king of the land of the Babylonians. So be informed that you are a son of Ismayel, begotten by Abraham, and we are sons of Isahak. Isahak and Ismayel were blood-brothers begotten by Abraham. So, it is necessary for you to rule over the renowned city of Jerusalem. Why do foreigners inherit it?" When Mahmet heard the speech of the Hebrews, he summoned Fat'ima his sister and Ali his brother-in-law, and said to Ali: "Behold, we learned today about the inheritance of our father Abraham. Arise, take my sister Fat'ima and all the host of your army, and I shall take my army and follow you, and I shall confirm your rule there."

Rising up, they gathered their battle-troops and came to Jerusalem; they entered and camped within. When the sons of the Emperor Heraclius reached Ramlay and heard that Mahmet was in Jerusalem with an army, they turned back in flight to Andiawk' [Antioch] with the Cross. When Mahmet and Ali heard, they pressed after them and made them flee. They travelled day and night until they reached the shore of the sea of Constantinople; having entered the city they were freed of worry.³²

Now why did Constantine and Theodosius flee to Constantinople [when] the Cross was with them ... [they] had decided to go to Constantinople because of the security of the place.

Then Mahmet returned and captured Darsis [Tarsus] in Cilicia, Adana, Msis, Asia, Antioch, and Melitene. After that he went to the land of Egypt, to the city of Alexandria which he named Msr, which in translation means place of rebels. Then he dominated the East and subjected Persia and Gund, which is Khorasan. He held the whole land as sole ruler and imposed his own commands on the whole world. He dominated the entire land and prospered.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

³² *Ibid.*, 190.

Then he returned to Baghdad. He summoned the people of Jerusalem, read the old writings, and learned everything. He spread everywhere circumcision and established confession in one God. He removed the faith of Nestorius and established a new faith, calling himself prophet to the nation of the Persians, and by fraud made everyone believe in him. The demon-possessed, false teacher Mahmet established his own tradition and laws. He converted the rich man, whose name was Apupak'r from the nation of the Persians, and Awmar [Omar]; and they became his heralds and spread word about him.

He united the whole land of Baghdad and of Egypt and came to attack the land of Persia. By force he seized all the great men of the country and all the nobles, and by compunction had himself named and confessed prophet. He turned to attack Armenia, and imposed tribute on all Armenia. Now Vahan, lord of the Mamikonian, was *sparapet*. And he [Mahmet] imposed his tax-collectors. The whole house of Armenia gave 1,000 *dahekans*, and the house of Vaspurakan 2,000 *dahekans*. Then he imposed tribute on all nations and returned to Baghdad. Having lived for sixty-eight years, he died. After Mahmet reigned Ibtad [?] Apubak'r; he held the throne for ten years and died. Then Amr ['Umar] reigned. When Amr was reigning in Baghdad, Heraclius the Roman emperor died. And in his place the Emperor Lewon [Leo] reigned. Amr, ruler of Baghdad, had a general [named] Ahmat, son of Mahmed, a fierce and warlike man, to whom he entrusted the whole empire. He gathered many troops and went to the land of the Cenk' [China?].³³

The lengthy episode of the mission of Sahak III, preceding events, the letter the ailing catholicos addressed to "Ahmat son of Mahmet" (Muḥammad Ibn Marwān), the commander in chief of the Umayyad armies are told in most epic terms.

Another year Ahmat, son of Mahmet, gathered many troops, intending to attack Armenia. On hearing of this the Armenian princes were struck with fear; they implored the holy patriarch Sahak, saying: "Holy lord, the destruction of Armenia and of the see of the Illuminator, our saint Grigor, has arrived. So have pity on the holy churches. Arise, go to meet him and take the letter of Mahmet his father and their legislator. Perhaps the Lord God will see our anxiety and through your labor will bring us to safety." He replied: "I am weak and feeble in body, yet although death approaches, I must go." They equipped Hamazasp from the house of Hamakar [?], gave him horses and garments, and sent him off with Sahak the holy patriarch of Armenia. They proceeded as far as Kharan, where illness overcame the holy patriarch Sahak. He wrote his last testament as follows: "This is a letter of my own hand, of Sahak patriarch of Armenia, to the Persian general Ahmat. I was sent by my nation to meet you; but he who is the gathering place of souls has called me to him. I did not have time to see your face. But I have the letter

³³ *Ibid.*, 191.

of Mahmet your father and your legislator which obliges my nation to pay you tribute and to serve loyally and to obey as is right [to obey] lords. On your part, you must accept the tribute and obedience, and not become angry or increase the dues of my nation like that of your enemies, since they are not at war with you. You must care for our land as [if it were] yours. And if anyone attacks my country, they will call on you and you will help them and extricate their land from the hands of their oppressors so that you and your army may enjoy in peace the tribute and taxes which they will give you, and you will be successful against your enemies. So if your heart is softened and you do what I ask of you, God will confirm the throne of your rule, and the blessing of your father Ismayel will come upon you, which God declared, saying: "This Ismayel will become a great nation and his hand³⁴ [will be] over his enemies like the punishing rod. His men [will be] lords and his women princesses, and you will eat the fat of the land." So, if you carry out my request, that same blessing will be confirmed for you. But if you are presumptuous in anger and dismiss my words, the Lord God will turn the hearts of your united warriors against you, and the paths of your feet will not succeed, and the Lord God will humiliate you in front of your enemies, and you will not be able to wage war. The hands of your warriors will slacken, their bows will shatter, their weapons will be powerless to wound your enemies, the horses of your army will lose their courage and be unable to go their way and take the booty which you seek. Such will be your condition. Choose the one of these [alternatives] which your heart prefers.

Having written this, he rendered up his holy ghost into God's hand. Then Hamazasp, who had accompanied him, and his disciples, holy men wearing hair shirts and very ascetic, made a coffin for him, embalmed his body, and placed it in the coffin. On the sixth day Ahmat arrived and entered Kharan with many troops. Hamazasp and some of his [Sahak's] disciples went to meet Mahmet. Ahmat saw them and learned that Sahak, the holy patriarch of Armenia, had died, he said. "If he were alive, he would have had to come to me. But now I must go to him". Reaching the spot where the saint of God lay, he descended from his carriage, sat down in front of the coffin, and ordered the letter to be read.

When he heard the bidding of the saint which had been written in the letter, he rose up, approached the coffin, and taking the patriarch's right hand, kissed it. He began to speak as if to a living man, saying: "I have recognized your wisdom from your message. For the wisdom of a man is known from his letter. You came as a good shepherd sent by your nation; you did not fear to oppose my arrogant heart. So if I fail in one item of your requests, your curse will come upon me. But if I carry out your commands, your blessing will be confirmed upon me."

He ordered golden robes and sweet oils to be brought; he embalmed the saint's body and prepared a golden carriage and white mules. Summoning Hamazasp before him, he said: "Do you see this vast army? If this honorable

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

and holy man had not come, I was intending to bring much destruction on Armenia. But now that I have heard the contents of his letter, the anger of my heart has been appeased, and I reckoned him as my father, the saint of God;³⁵ and I confirmed the deed of my legislator and father Mahmet. I have remitted the taxes of three years for Armenia because of this holy patriarch. He is a just and true servant of God.” He made peace and returned to the city of Baghdad.

Then Amr ruler of Baghdad [Caliph ‘Umar], died and his nephew Abu-Ali [?] reigned. Ahmat, being very old at that time, died.

Once more out of context, reference is made to the battles against the Tajiks led by T’ēodoros R̥shtuni, who died at least four decades earlier. The rest of the history deals with invasions, atrocities and injustice committed by the Arabs, also episodes in which the Armenian nobles were involved.

4. *Step’anos Taronets’i Asoghik*

The two major authors of the second half of the 10th century and the first of the next are Step’anos Taronets’i, a vardapet from Taron (west of Lake Van), and an erudite and haughty nobleman of Bjni, Byzantine appointed Duke of Vaspurakan, Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros.

Step’anos Taronets’i (c.935-1015) nicknamed *Asoghik* (reciter-singer) wrote his history by the order of Catholicos Sargis I Sewants’i (r. 992-1019). Titled *History of the Times*, or *Ashkharhapatum* (literally “stories of the world”), also known as *Universal* (*tiezerakan*), the book covered the period from the Creation to the year 1004/5.³⁶ Greenwood observes that judging from the style and composition of the book, “Step’anos emerges as someone who adopted a highly structured approach to the past.” This aspect of the book may be the reason for its accessibility and popularity among subsequent authors, at least in the East. Vardan Arewelts’i in the 13th century had the entire text at hand, for a significant part of his history is derived from Asoghik’s *History*. Previously, Samuēl Anets’i in the 12th century at Ani, and Kirakos Gandzakets’i, a classmate of Vardan, were familiar with this author.³⁷

In turn, Asoghik’s *History* is divided into three parts: the first covers the time from Adam to Arsacid King Tiridates III (287-330) and Grigor the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁶ Step’anos Taronets’i Asoghik, *History of Times* or *Ashkharhapatum*. Henceforth *Asoghik*, *Matenagirk’*. See 639-640 of *Matenagirk’* for all the editions.

³⁷ Greenwood, “Introduction, *Step’anos*”, 81-82.

Illuminator (d. c.331); the next ends at the rise of the Bagratuni Kingdom in 884, and the third continues to the year 1004/5. Obviously, the first two parts are collections from his predecessors, the third is original. Asoghik too claimed to be an eyewitness to the events he narrated to the year 1004. The title of this part is “Book of Step’annos Taronets’i speaking of the times” (*Step’annosi Taronets’woy Patmut’iwn Zhamanakats’ Ink’nakhawsut’ean*). It focuses mainly on the activities of the *ostikans*, the reign of some Bagratuni kings and rivalries between the *nakhharars*.

In Chapter 4 of Part II, titled “The Amir-al-Mumnik’s of the Tajiks and what they did to this day”,³⁸ Asoghik put the appearance of “Mahmet son of Abdla, the Prophet of the Tajiks” in the year 68 of the Armenian era, or 619.³⁹ He then has a brief account of the early stages of the advent of Islam by the involvement of and assistance of the Jews.

When the Jews, who had rebelled against the Greeks and fortified themselves at the city of Edessa, failed to resist the Greek armies, they departed to Tachkastan to the sons of Ismayel by twelve thousand people. Declaring their kinship, they asked for their assistance. Mahmet spoke to them saying “God promised you a land and no one may stand on your way by war.” Thus, the sons of Israel gathered at Evilay [?] and Sur all the way to Egypt. After reigning two years, Mahmet died (in 621), in the 11th year of the reign of Heraclius (610-641). He was succeeded by Apubakr, Ot’man and Amr for 38 years. [There is no mention of ‘Alī, and it is hard to make sense of the number 38.]⁴⁰

According to Asoghik, the first invasion of Armenia happened in the year 86 of the Armenian era (637), by the orders of “Omar *amiralmumnik*”, or ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who succeeded Mahmet. At the time, he says, T’ēodoros Rshuni was the prince (governor) of Armenia.⁴¹ In 641, he continues, the Tajiks carried out their first invasions into Dwin, Georgia and Albania, again by the orders of “*Umar amiralmumn*”. These locations,

³⁸ In Armenian: Ամիր-ալ-մումնիքին Տանկաց և որ ինչ յաուրս նոցա գործեցաւ:

³⁹ *Asoghik*, Matenagirk’, 715.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 715-716. Յայնժամ Հրէայք, որ ապստամբեալ էին ի Յունաց և ամրացեալ ի Բաղաբն Եդեսիա, յորժամ ոչ կարացին զդէմ ունել զաւրացն Յունաց, ելեալ զնացին ի Տանկաստան առ որդիսն Իսմայիլի ժԲԻ [12.000] մարդ, և ծանուցանեն նոցա զհարազատութիւն իւրեանց և կոչեն յազնականութիւն: Եւ զի խաւսեցեալ էր Մահմետի առ նոսա, երբ “Ջեզ խոստացեալ է Աստուած տալ զերկիր, և ոչ ոք կարէ կալ ընդդէմ ձեր պատերազմաւ:” Ժողովեցան որդիքն Իսրայէլի յԵւիլայ մինչև զՍուր և յանդիման Եզիպտոսի: Իսկ Մահմետ յետ երկու ամի (621) իշխանութեան իւրոյ մեռանի ի մետասաներորդ ամի շերակլէսի: Եւ փոխանորդէ զիշխանութիւն Աբուբակր, Որման և Ամր ամս ԼԸ (38):

⁴¹ *Asoghik*, Matenagirk’, 701.

he added, fell to the “armies of Ismayil” (*zawrn Ismayili*).⁴² In Armenia, T’ēodoros R̥shtuni failed to stop them and submitted to them. He talks of another invasion in the 646 (95 of the Armenian Era).

The other Mahmet, or general Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, whom he calls “Okbay” comes into the story in the year 701, when Umayyad Caliph “Abdīmelik” ordered another invasion into Armenia, following uprisings. The episode of Catholicos Sahak III Dzorap’orets’i is also mentioned in the narratives of battles and harsh reprisals by the Arabs.⁴³ The familiar semi-legendary encounter between the deceased Sahak and Okbay in 703, and the renewal of peace pact is told again, as cited below, in my translation:

The catholicos of the Armenians was taken captive by Abdla and kept as hostage in Damascus. Hearing the threats of Okbay, he asked to go to him, hoping to change his mind. He was allowed [to travel]. But when he arrived in Khaṛan, he fell ill, and wrote his last word to Okbay, reminding him of the death of multitudes and the breaking of hell [in Armenia]. He thus died out of his land, but he ordered to put the decree in his right hand for Okbay to take it himself.⁴⁴ When Okbay heard of the death of the patriarch, he ordered to keep him until his arrival. When he came and saw the man of God, he wavered his hand saying *salam alēk’*. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he [Sahak] moved his hand in response. When awe-struck, he [Okbay] took the letter and read it, he said, “your plea is done, O man of God.” He then sent away the body to Armenia with a letter of peace to Armenians, releasing them of their wrongdoing [or general amnesty to those who rose in rebellion].⁴⁵

This was the third “decree” (*hrovartak*) or “written word” of peace made between the Caliphate and the Armenians, as mentioned. Again, there is no mention of the first between T’ēodoros and Mu’āwīyah in 652, but Asoghik mentions the second made in 661 between Grigor Mamikonian

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 702.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 703.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 704. In Armenian: Իսկ կարողիկոսն հայոց Սահակ, գերեալն յԱբղլայէ, կայր ի պատուոյս ի Դամասկոս. լուեալ զպատուախն Ոկբայի՝ խնդրէր հրաժեւո՝ երբաւ առ նա, քերև կարասցէ դարձուծանել զնա: Եւ նորա հրամայեալ: Իսկ իբրև չոքաւ ի Խառան՝ հիւանդացաւ. և գրէ գլխիցին բանից իւրոց առ Ոկբայ յուս առնելով զհասարակաց մահն և զտարտարոս դժոխցն՝ դարձեալ և զատաման լինել իւր. և հրամայէ զհրովարտակն դնել յաջոյ ձեռին իւրոյ. Զի ինքն Ոկբայ եկեալ [*Asoghik*, *Matenagirk’*, 703.] առցէ: Իսկ Ոկբայ իբրև լուսա զմահ սրբոյ հայրապետին՝ հրամայէ պահել մինչև ցգալն իւր: Եւ երբ եկն և Էստեա զայրն Աստուծոյ, ձեռն նմա շարժեալ ողջունէր՝ Սալամ ալ էֆ ասելով: Եւ նորա ազգմամբ սուրբ Հոգւոյն շարժեաց զձեռնն ընդդէմ նորա յաղաչանա: Հնդ որ սասուցեալ առնու զնամակն և ընթերցեալ ասէ՝ “Այս խնդիրք քո կատարեալ է, այրդ Աստուծոյ,” և առաքեալ զմարմին նորա ի Հայս, և զիբ խաղաղութեան առաքէ ի Հայս՝ թողեալ զյանցանս նոցա: (*Asoghik*, *Matenagirk’*, 704.)

(appointed governor in that year) and the Arabs concerning the amount of a yearly tax of 500 *dahekans*. He also mentions Catholicos Nersēs too in the negotiations. This was the year the latter died, and Mu‘āwiyah became the first Umayyad caliph.⁴⁶

The persecutions and heavy taxations by both Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd caliphs are recurring themes.⁴⁷ The caliphs are called *amirapet* (head-amīr) or *amiralmumnin tachkats*.⁴⁸ In turn, Asoghik added an inaccurate list of the caliphs, also reminding that Mahmet appeared in the year 618.⁴⁹ At the end of Part Two, in Chapter 5, Asoghik repeats that Mahmet appeared in the year 68, the 8th year of the reign of Heraclius. The “kingdom” he established lasted to the year 915 (364 of the Armenian Era). The Tajiks, whom no one could defeat, were divided among themselves and fought each other, he wrote.⁵⁰ In this chapter, he uses the word *Kuran* in his narrative of commissioner Yūsuf’s atrocities and the “martyrs who fell in the city of Duin at the hands of lawless Yusup’ [Yūsuf] ... who persecuted many for their faith in Christ, and torturing them by questions and inquiries, he tried to convert them to the Kuran of Mahmet.”⁵¹

B. THE LAST AUTHORS OF THE ARAB PERIOD

1. *Aristakēs Lastivertts’i*

Aristakēs Lastivertts’i was from the province of Erzurum, or Karin, or Theodosiopolis (about 200 miles west of Yerevan). Often an eyewitness, he is one of the rare sources, next to Grigor Magistos, on T’ondrakian related unrest in the western provinces during the first half of the 11th century. He also wrote on the Seljuk incursions that began around 1025. His *History* stopped at the year 1078, two years before his death in 1080. He made almost no references to Islam and its founder. There is also a conspicuous absence of terms like Ismaelites, Hagarians, and *aylazgis*. He referred to the Muslims as “Persians” (*parsik, pars*) and sometimes

⁴⁶ *Asoghik*, *Matenagirk’*, 718-719. In Armenian: Եւ ապա զրեն հրովարտակ ի հայս՝ հարկել նոցա. և յանձն առին ի թխնին նախարարաւն և կարողիկոսն Ներսէս՝ Շ [500] դահեկան յամենայն ամի հատուցանել: Եւ Մաւիա գԳրիկոր ի թխն հաստատեաց Հայոց և Վրաց.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 720-728.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 709.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 729.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 729.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 745. In Armenian: ... յաղագս նահատակացն, որ ի Դուին քաղաքի կատարեցան յանաւրէն Յուսոփայ: Իսկ բազումս վասն առ ի Քրիստոս խոստովանութեանն ի հարց և ի փորձ տանջանաց արկեալ՝ ջանայր դարձուցանել ի Կուրանն Մահմետի.

as heathens (*het'anos*).⁵² The Islamic world is the “world of the Persians” (*ashkharhn parsits'*), and the “house of the Persians” (*tunn parsits'*), their armies were “*zōrn parsits'*.”⁵³ The word Tajik appears only once.⁵⁴ The early Turkic tribes are described as “armies from Turkestan” (*zork' i T'urk'astanē*),⁵⁵ the Seljuk *sultans*, such as Alp Arslān, as the “*amīr* of the Persians” (*parsits' amiray*),⁵⁶ the ‘Abbāsid caliph — whom only once he calls “*khalip'ay*.”⁵⁷ — as the “king of the Persians” (*t'agawor parsits'*).⁵⁸

2. Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros

Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros (c.990-1058/9) was one of the most erudite figures of the 11th century. He is known for his 88 *Epistles* (*T'ght'er*),⁵⁹ and for his *Magnalia Dei*, or *Aṙ Manuch'ē* “*Hazartoghean*” a biblical epic poem addressed to “Manuch'ē.” In one thousand lines (or *hazartoghean*) it summarized the Bible in complicated Byzantine style and heavily Hellenized Armenian.⁶⁰

The Pahlawuni house held large estates and claimed a connection to the family of Grigor the Illuminator and the royal Arsacid or the Arshakuni house. Grigor's father was the famous Vasak Sparapet (army commander, d. 1021) in Bagratid Ani. He himself held important military and political positions. He first supported then turned away from the last monarch Gagik II (r. 1042-45), who was forced by Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055) to hand over his kingdom in exchange for lands in Cappadocia. In turn, Magistros went to Constantinople, ceded his possessions, was appointed *dux* or duke of the province of Mesopotamia, hence the title Magistros.

⁵² Aristakēs Lastivertts'i, *Patmut'iwn Aristakeay Vardapeti Lastivertts'woy* [History of Vardapet Aristakēs Lastivertts'i]. (Venice, 1901), 67.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁹ Grigor Magistros, *Epistles*.

⁶⁰ van Lint, “Grigor Magistros”, 703. Also see the list of manuscripts in S. Mkhit'aryan, *The Life and Artistic Legacy of Grigor Magistros*, 41-44, 48-51; Alek'sanyan, “Correspondence”, 164-202. See Grigor Magistros, *Magnalia Dei*, ed./trans. Terian; Terian's critical edition is based on the collation of six relevant manuscripts: Jerusalem Ms 3333 (17th century), M98 (dated 1696-1698), M2079 (c.1622), M3172 (1695), M6045 (17th century), M6734 (1570). Others sampled: M1638, M3068, M4232, M6988, and M7257.

During 1048, Magistros was involved in military campaigns against the early waves of the Seljuks, but between 1051 and 1054, by orders of the Byzantine emperor, he had a mission to eradicate the syncretic-heretical factions, identified as the T'ondrakians (*T'ontrakets'ik'*). Like their predecessors known as the Paulicians, (*Pawghik'eank'*), also the Arewordik' ("children of the sun" or sun worshippers), they were known for their Islamic sympathies and alliances. Also himself concerned about these factions, and being a supporter of the Armenian Church, he drove these communities into to al-Shām, or *Asorik'*, as he put it. In two of his letters in particular, he provided very rare and valuable information about the T'ondrakian heresiarchs, doctrines, customs, locations, activities and his own campaigns against them.⁶¹ He was well-versed in theology, natural sciences mathematics, logic and Greek literature. He translated some of Plato's dialogues. He knew, as he claimed Arabic, Persian and Syriac and was familiar to these literatures.⁶² Magistros died in 1058-9, probably in a monastery.

Two letters, in response to questions by an Amīr Ibrāhīm (whose mother was Armenian), on faith and on philosophy, are of relevance to his perception of Islam.⁶³ The comments and explanations of Magistros about Islam, mostly gathered in two letters (numbers 70 and 71 in the edition of Kostanyants' of the *Epistles*, written probably around 1045), are basically apologies and only moderately polemical. According to him, Abraham was the root of all the faiths, and similar to Christianity and Judaism, Islam too was an Abrahamic religion and Mahmet was a Prophet of Islam.⁶⁴ However, he observed that what "Mahmet wrote in the *Kuran* was alien to and did not correspond to what the [biblical] prophets spoke of," and were not found in the Jewish scriptures either.⁶⁵

Seeing himself in a neo-Greek Classical context of sorts, an admirer of the Platonic dialogues, as well as Aristotelian peripatetic culture, Magistros deliberately chose to write in the question-answer and inquirer-master format. Throughout his discussions in the two letters, he implied that he

⁶¹ About this subject, see Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*, 54-69.

⁶² See Khach'eryan, *Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros*; Sen Arewshatyan, "Armenian Plato"; Chu'kasizyan, "Échos de légendes épiques iraniennes".

⁶³ "Letter to Amiray Ibrahim concerning faith by Grigor Son of Vasak [*Aṛ Ibrahim Amirayin Vasn Hawatots' Grigoroy Ordwoy Vasakay Asats'ead*], in Grigor Magistros, *Epistles*, 170-201: "The Response to Amiray Ibrahim who asked [questions] Concerning Philosophy and Faith" [*Pataskhani Ibrahimī amirayī zor khndreats' mi vasn imastasirut' ean ew mi vasn hawatoy*], *Epistles*, 201-208.

⁶⁴ Grigor Magistros, *Epistles*, 185.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

knew Arabic and had read the “*Kuran*”. Being fluent in Greek, he probably had easy access to the Greek translations, as well as the polemical texts of the Syrian Christians written much earlier. So-called Amīr Ibrāhīm, is a Muslim, but Armenian on his mother’s side, as per the text. In the first letter, Grigor answers Ibrāhīm questions on Christianity, and in the second he dwells upon more philosophical matters. Following the Byzantine rules of rhetoric and in complicated style, in this 30-page letter (number 70), the longest in the collection of 88 letters, Magistros is pleased and proud to provide information and guidance. He has twelve answers to twelve questions presumably addressed to the Christians by Amīr Ibrāhīm. The latter obviously has his own perceptions of Christianity from a Muslim’s perspective. The full title of this letter is in brief, “To *Amīray* Ibrahim from Grigor son of Vasak in response to his inquiries about matters related to philosophy and religion.”⁶⁶ The text is arranged in twelve “questions”, summed up and translated by T.M. van Lint:

1. Manifestations of Jesus’ divinity in his life on earth, and the part played by providence in the Incarnation. 2. If Jesus is God, how could he, in weakness, ask the Father to let the cup pass him by? 3. How could Jesus say that he who betrays him commits a great sin; that it is not for Jesus to decide who to place on the right or left of the Father, but for the Father who sent him; and that the Father is greater than he? 4. Concerning the passions of the body and the Father receiving Jesus’ spirit. 5. On Mount. Sinai, did Moses speak with God himself or with an angel? 6. Who were the angels who appeared before Abraham, warned Lot and destroyed Sodom? 7. Did Adam eat the fruit from the forbidden tree against God’s will if God saw fit that he would do so? 8. How can good and evil both be from God, if one says that evil is from Satan and good from God? 9. Does God have an image or form, or not? 10. Do the pagan philosophers say that God is one or a Trinity? 11. If Jesus is God, why does Paul call him “our intercessor”? 12. Did the 24 prophets describe things in the same way as Muḥammad?⁶⁷

Magistros rejected the Muslims’ accusation of the Christians for corrupting the Bible, meaning that the disciples changed Christ’s teaching, pointing to Christ’s words about false teachers/prophets, who would change his words. Also, they concealed the passages about the coming of Muḥammad. Both the Jews and the Christians, he argued, were witnesses of Christ, but the Muslims were not. He also dismissed the deniers of Christ’s crucifixion, because this was prophesied in the Old Testament, like God’s Incarnation

⁶⁶ Առ Իբրահիմն ամիրային վասն հաւատոց Գրիգորոյ որդւոյ Վասակայ ասացեալ պատասխանի Իբրահիմի ամիրայի, գոր խնդրեաց մի վասն իմաստասիրութեան և մի վասն հաւատոյ:

⁶⁷ van Lint, “Grigor Magistros”, 708.

in Christ. The most significant and moderately polemical part of this letter is about paradise and hell. Magistros naturally rejected the Islamic view of paradise, with its “*houris*” and rivers of wine. He invited Ibrāhīm to abandon these beliefs and embrace Christianity.⁶⁸

Letter 71 to Ibrāhīm is primarily philosophical, it is much shorter, but in more complex imagery and style. Pleased that his audience is interested in philosophy — for next to faith, wisdom is valued highest — Magistros seems to assume the position of a spiritual and wise guide through the true path of Christianity.

His *Magnalia Dei* or “The Mighty Acts of God”, written in 1045, just over 40 manuscript folios, addressed to “Manuch’ē”, or Naṣr al-Manāzī, is probably the first more or less formal apology of the Apostolic faith of the Armenian Church addressed to a Muslim audience. The framework is a dialogue with a Muslim, and probably the first in its kind written by a lay person. Conceived and composed in few days, it was to “demonstrate that the Bible was as [divinely] inspired as the Qur’ān, if not more so.”⁶⁹ It followed, as explained in its preface, an encounter in Constantinople between Magistros and ‘Abū Naṣr al-Manāzī, a vizier and emissary of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate (during the incumbency of Caliph al-Qā’im, r. 1031-1075), a theologian and poet, who frequently visited Constantinople (during the incumbency of Constantine IX Monomachos in 1042-1055) in search of Greek scientific manuscripts. Obviously, al-Manāzī claimed that since the Qur’ān was the result of Muḥammad’s divine inspiration, rather, a revelation to him during its composition, therefore it was unique and not imitable. In contrast, the Bible was a compilation in prose and by common individuals.⁷⁰

In order to demonstrate the divine inspiration of the Bible, and in only four days, using mono-rhyme, imitating the Arabic *qāfiyah*, he wrote a miniature Bible of one thousand verses. The lines have a fixed length “with seven syllables in the first hemistich, and eight in the second, divided by a caesura. He uses mono-rhyme in *-in*, in imitation of the *-n* ending of many Qur’ānic verses. Furthermore, in the opening part ... Magistros lists a variety of characteristics of God (by negation), possibly rivaling the Islamic invocation of the 99 names of God. Grigor gives credit to the Holy Spirit for the successful completion of his task, and al-Manāzī acknowledges that the God of the Christians is great.” The *Magnalia Dei*, says van Lint, “provided a

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 708-709.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 710.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

model for biblical and elegiac epic poetry — often bewailing the fall of cities or regions to Islam — that was followed into the 17th century. Its main significance lies in this provision to Armenian literature of a poetic model that became the standard for the twofold genre of biblical epic and the longer lament for some six centuries, inspiring among others the two epics of Magistros' great-grandson, Nersēs Shnorhali (r. 1166-73), 'Jesus the Son' [*Yisus Ordi*] and 'Elegy on the fall of Edessa' [*Oghb Edesioy*]."⁷¹

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 711.

PART TWO

THE THIRD PHASE AND THE COMPLETION OF
THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET”
THE SELJUK AND EARLY MONGOL PERIODS
(12th TO 13th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I

THE “ARMENIAN INTERMEZZO” AND THE GENERATION OF THE ARMENIAN EAST AND WEST (10th TO 12th CENTURIES)

After almost four centuries of mainly Arab rule, during the early decades of the 11th century the arrival of the Turkic tribes generated a new Muslim political order that still continues.

Always highlighting the ethnic background of the invaders, Armenian histories of the period placed these developments in religious frameworks as well. Soon in the literature, *t'urk* also meant Muslim. “Despite their differences in time and viewpoint”, says Beihammer, “Anna Komnene and the *Danishmend-Name* both present religious zeal as the main impetus for their protagonists’ course of action.”¹ On the other hand, some authors, like Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i (Matthew of Edessa, end of 11th early 12th centuries), and in contrast to his often negative and emotionally charged descriptions of the Turkish raids, praised some early Turkish-Muslim rulers of the 1080s. He presented Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh I (r. 1072-1092) not as a merciless Muslim conqueror, like his father Alp Arslān, but as a man full of “benevolence, gentleness, and compassion for the Christians ... showing fatherly affection for all.” Similarly, Aqsunqur of Aleppo was depicted as a “benefactor”, Ismā'īl Ibn Yāqūtī was in turn a “merciful man”, who, after being appointed governor of Armenia, protected the monasteries and made the land “prosper once again.”²

The Armenian renegade P'īlardos (in Armenian), Philaretos (in Greek), Filārdus (in Arabic), an Armenian ally of the Seljuks and a convert, was one of the major players in these times of transition. The career and the role of this Chalcedonian convert to Islam, the notorious “Neṙ” or Antichrist P'īlardos Varajnuni/Vrakhmios at a time when the political circumstances of the Armenians took unprecedented patterns, are more complicated than realized by the scholars of the period.³

Following the fall of Bagratid Ani in 1045, the Catholicosate was exiled too and to the end of the century and beyond, it was still searching for a location and a role for itself. Catholicos Grigor II Pahlawuni Martyrophil

¹ Beihammer, “Christian View”, 58.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

³ See Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians*, 75-80.

(*Vkayasēr*, r. 1066-1105, a son of Grigor Magistros) was moving between different locations in the newly formed Armenian West. Bishop (not “patriarch” or catholicos yet) Barsegh of Ani (r. 1081-1105, catholicos in 1105-1113), in 1090 set off for a mission to meet Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh accompanied by numerous dignitaries and bearing gifts. He wanted to establish friendly relations with the new Muslim rulers. Suffering under heavy tax exactions, Barsegh probably hoped to remind the Seljuks of previously made written commitments with Muslim authorities concerning the exemption of the religious institutions.⁴ He may have had other plans too to re-install the Catholicosate at Ani, as I suspect.

Byzantine defeats before the advancing Seljuks, Fāṭimid-Seljuk rivalries, the mushrooming of local lordships on the borderlands, including the Rubenids in Cilicia, and soon the arrival of the Crusaders were factors that shaped the destiny of the Armenians and their church. In addition to political and military uncertainties, geography was another complication for the church. Armenian clergy could not move between rival powers in order to visit the communities scattered over great distances. When Grigor II Martyrophil encountered difficulties to move his see to the “federal state” of Philaretus centered around Mar’ash — the only safe haven for the Armenians at the time — also scared of the “beast” (as Philaretus was known), he allowed another bishop to reside there as “catholicos.” As a consequence of prevailing chaos and surely the incompetence of Grigor II himself (then at Dzamndaw, east of Caesarea, on the road to Melitene), the institution of the catholicosate almost disintegrated. “At this time”, wrote Matthew, “there were six catholicoi [according to Ōrmanian, eight] in Armenia, two at Egypt, and four throughout the Armenian world.” Barsegh at Ani was in fact trying to promote his primacy at the Seljuks.⁵ Grigor II was in very good terms with the Ismā‘īlī Fātimids, the enemies of the incoming Sunnī Seljuks, who considered them, as most Sunnīs did, “heretics” (*rāfid*). Barsegh seems to have made the most of regional conflict and the distractions of Catholicos Grigor II. Already at Ani, at the time under the Seljuks, he probably tried to present himself as the sole spiritual leader of the Armenians endowed with the sultan’s support.

⁴ Beihammer, “Christian Views”, 64.

⁵ Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades*, trans. Dostourian, 2.92, 156-157. The reference in the *Chronicle*: Յայսմ ժամանակի եղև ազգիս հայոց կաթողիկոս վեց, յերկու յեզիպտոս, և չորս յամենայն աշխարհս հայոց: Matt’ēos Urhayets’i, *Chronicle*, ed. Bart’ikyan. 231; M. Ōrmanian, *National Narrative*, vol. II, 1311; Dadoyan, *The Fatimid*, 75-80, and 86-92 in particular.

Beihammer believes that Matthew's praise for Malik Shāh and other Turkish rulers may have been more than a "lip service to new political authorities or as evidence of the Christians' enthusiasm for liberal Muslim rule." On the other hand, these and similar statements made during the Seljuk, also the Mongol and Turkmen periods, did not necessarily reflect, as he believes, "successful integration of the old Byzantine-Armenian secular and ecclesiastical elite into the emerging structures of the Seljuk administration."⁶ The internal and external balance of powers among Armenian institutions of decision, both secular and ecclesiastical, was a factor shaping often contradictory political orientations.

After the middle of the 10th century, massive Byzantine moves toward the east and the southeast into al-Shām, the sharp decline of the Bagratids of Ani, and soon after the rise of Turkic-Seljuk principalities after the middle of the 11th century, caused large-scale migrations of Armenians into the west and south.

The Armenian habitat expanded drastically into the Islamic world. There were Armenians everywhere from the Caspian Sea to Cappadocia, and from the Black Sea to Cilicia, al-Shām and Egypt. The militant and dissident heterodox factions on the borderlands between Byzantium and the Islamic East, and elsewhere too, were the allies of the Muslim chieftains and territorial *amīrs* of all ethnic backgrounds. In the towns and cities, Armenians lived with Muslims. Interactions, also conversions and intermarriages, were part of daily life. Ani, the cosmopolitan capital of the Bagratunis of Shirak, had a mixed population, so were Duin and the urban centers of central and eastern Asia Minor.

The fall of Manzikert/Manazkert/Malazkert (in the north of Lake Van) in 1071 to Alp Aslān, at least symbolically, marked the end of the Arab Period, Byzantine presence in eastern Asia Minor and the beginning of the Turkish-Seljuk Period. Wandering militant and often heterodox Armenian factions soon found lands of their own within the Byzantine-Seljuk chaotic world. The Rubenid principality of Cilicia in 1080, was part of this regional stage at the time, and not a "divine reward" to Armenians, as believed, after their kingdom was taken away from them by Byzantium.⁷

I argue that the two centuries from 970s to the end of the 12th century, constituted a distinct phase in the entire region, an "Armenian Intermezzo",

⁶ Beihammer, "Christian Views", 64.

⁷ Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, II, 1-64.

as I call it,⁸ and must be studied as a singularity. This was a long period between the gradual loss of partial autonomy on the traditional land — after the consecutive falls of the Artsrunis, Bagratunis and Siwnis — and the rise of a new “Armenian land” in Cilicia in 1080, to become a kingdom in 1198.

Armenian military-political activity, both by the traditional-orthodox and the extra-establishment heterodox factions, took intriguing patterns and reached unprecedented levels. The period had seen a series of consecutive developments: Byzantine campaigns into eastern Asia Minor and some of al-Shām, Arab withdrawals, the fall of the Armenian dynastic territories and their annexation to Byzantium, the massive Armenian deportations and migrations into the west and south, the penetration of Turkic tribes, the fall of Manzikert and the rise of the Seljuk kingdoms, the arrival of the Crusaders and the rise of their kingdoms.

For the Armenians, the immediate and most obvious consequence of these changes was the creation of a new and vast habitat in the heart of the Islamic world. There were Armenians around the Euphrates and the Tigris, in Cilicia, al-Jazīrah, northern Mesopotamia, Antioch, the valley of the River Orontes, the entire al-Shām, Palestine, Egypt and further west in North Africa.

Territorial principalities and militant communities of all religious backgrounds appeared everywhere. One of the least studied aspects of this phase was the background of the protagonists. The lords of the new Armenian enclaves in the midst of the Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, and soon the Crusaders, did not come from the nobility, but from militant and heterodox backgrounds. On the social level this period was distinguished by the disruption of the earlier social structures and classes, and the development of new ones with different political cultures and manners of interaction with both the Muslims and Christians.

It has rarely been noticed that by the middle of 11th century, the Armenians interacted with their environment very closely, and often outside the traditional institutions of the church and nobility. Political power was also in the hands of extra-establishment figures and factions, such as the militant Paulician-T'ondrakians, and the free-lance remnants of the cavalry, the freemen (*azats*) of the *nakharars*, like the Rubenids. The aristocratic houses had either migrated, disappeared, or were greatly marginalized. There were also many Chalcedonian Armenians in the service of

⁸ See Dadoyan, “The Armenian Intermezzo”.

the Byzantines, such as Philaretus. They were left on their own on the borderlands, by the full knowledge and consent of Constantinople, as guards on the eastern frontiers. Practically, there happened a fragmentation and a breakdown of Armenian political-cultural energy into more dynamic and flexible patterns and institutions.

Furthermore, some of the least noticed aspects of this phase were the questions of legitimacy and identity. As extra-establishment and heterodox factions and figures acquired roles in Near Eastern politics, legitimacy became a relative matter. Dichotomies between orthodoxy and heresy were blurred. Because the institutions that defined these lines receded or were dismantled. New and shifting alliances were made with all sorts of Christians and Muslims and transitions into other religious-political cultures were inevitable and often beneficial. Alongside orthodox Armenians, there were Latin and Chalcedonian Armenians, just as there were Muslim and heterodox Armenians. The question of Armenian identity at this time still awaits serious analysis.

The most significant, also unnoticed, development was the phenomenon of Muslim Armenian power at this time. During the two decades between 1060 and 1080, and almost simultaneously, there appeared at least five Muslim-Armenian powers: the Dānishmandids in Cappadocia (originally from Georgia), the Bēnē Boghusaks in Sewawerak/Severek (just northeast of Samosata on the Euphrates), the “federal state” of Philaretus from Germanica to Antioch, the Nāwīqīs/Awāqīs in al-Shām and Palestine, and the Fāṭimid Armenians in Egypt. In addition, there were Armenian mercenaries and small enclaves in over a dozen fortress-towns. As mentioned, the appearance of the Rubenids in Cilicia was part of this phase and not an isolated Armenian episode.

Another major development during this Intermezzo, is what I call the “Medieval Armenian Diaspora”. It was a new condition that evolved and grew to become the permanent social-political-cultural condition of the Armenians on the regional and eventually on the international stages. For the past millennium, the majority of the Armenians do not live on the/a “native” land. They are citizens of the locations they live in, hence the parallel issue of hyphenated identities, in which at the time, Islam was often a component. Dissident-related, also camouflaged subjects, the mysterious and tabooed subject of Muslim or “Islamized” Armenians, and most importantly, Islamic-Armenian realpolitik during this period are just unstudied aspects of the Armenian condition in the Near East during the 11th and 12th centuries.

What may be called the “Armenian East” and the “Armenian West” with mobile borders, took shape during these few decades. The “Armenian West” was the vast region from Erzuka/Erzinjān in the north, along the western Euphrates, to Cappadocia and Erzurum west and east, Cilicia and further south and into north Syria. By the 16th and 17th centuries, the western parts of Asia Minor and Constantinople were in turn parts of the Armenian West. The River Araxes became the dividing line between the Persian Safavids and Ottoman Turks.

The Armenian East included the entire southern Caucasus, the mainland, Caucasian Albania or Aghuank', and parts of north western Iran. In all respects, these two Armenian worlds had different paths and patterns of development. The arrival of the Crusaders just before the end of the 11th century radically changed the circumstances in the West. Eventually, politics, geography, economy, folklore and social interactions took different paths of evolution and differences became conspicuous in Cilicia. During the 12th century the Armenian West generated the Silver Age of the culture and the literature (the Golden Age or the *Oskedar* was in the 5th century in the north east). One of the consequences, as well as manifestations of the East-West divide, was the 1441 Movement in the east, which created the See of Ējmiatsin, along Sis, after the location had become an iconic site over a millennium earlier. centuries of debates and disagreement on political, not doctrinal or administrative issues, Eastern Clergy (*arewelian vardapetk'*), took the initiative to break.⁹ At any rate, four centuries on the crossroads of religious and political cultures in Cilicia and the West in general, inevitably led western clergy in more ecumenical, liberal and reconciliatory paths, which however, were interpreted as “heretical” and “degenerate” by the Eastern Clergy. The relations with the Muslims and the accounts in the literature reflected these circumstances, as it shall be discussed below.

⁹ See Dadoyan, “The Move of the Armenian Catholicosate”.

CHAPTER II

THE THIRD PHASE IN THE SELJUK-MONGOL PERIOD IN THE EAST

A. NEW MATERIAL FOR THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET” — SAMUĒL ANETS‘I AND MKHIT‘AR ANETS‘I

Despite the odds, the Bagratuni capital Ani (about 75 miles in the north west of Yerevan), maintained its cultural and religious significance for almost to the 13th century. After the departure of both the last Bagratuni King Gagik II (r. 1042-1045) and Catholicos Petros I Getadardz (r. 1019-1058) in 1045, for the next two decades the city was nominally under Byzantium. In central Asia Minor, by the end of the 11th century the Seljuks established the Sultanate of Rūm around Konya. In 1064, the Seljuks invaded Armenia a third time and occupied Ani. In 1072, The Kurdish Shaddādids “bought” the city from Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslān and the city came under Kurdish rule, which continued with brief intermissions. Georgian King David IV (r. 1089-1125) occupied the city, then Georg III (r. 1156-1184) invaded it twice in 1161 and 1174. Every time, the Seljuk *amīrs* in the area responded by recovering the city. In 1199 Queen Tamar of Georgia (r. 1184-1213) sent two Georgian Chalcedonian Armenians, Ivanē Zakaryan, the *atabek* of the heir to the throne, and his brother Zak‘arē, the *amirsbasalar* (army commander), to Shirak. Ani became the center or capital of the Zak‘aryan principality under Georgian suzerainty.

The city had a golden age of sorts, and was called a metropolis (*glkhawor k‘aghak‘*). The aristocracy lived in the central fortified part inside the walls, the commoners and peasants on the outskirts and suburbs. Ani, the “City of 1001 churches”, as the Armenians called it, was sacked by the Mongols in 1236, and before the middle of the century, they defeated the Seljuks. After a devastating earthquake in 1319, Ani never recovered and was gradually deserted. Most of the Armenians of the city migrated to east European countries generating a large Armenian habitat there for some centuries.

The two major authors of the 12th century, Samuēl Anets‘i and Mkhit‘ar Anets‘i, were natives of Ani. The next three authors in the 13th century, Mkhit‘ar Gōsh, Vardan Arewelts‘i and Kirakos Gandzakets‘i were from the region of Gandzak in Karabagh. They studied and stayed in the monastic

schools and monasteries of Siwnik' (in the south of Lake Sewan) and Tavush (in the north of Lake Sewan) closely connected to Ani, and through the latter, to the Armenian Catholicosate and the monastic centers in Cilicia in the southwest.

1. *Samuēl Anets'i*

At Ani, and while the city was passing from Seljuk to Georgian rules and back, until the Zak'aryans settled there in 1199, Samuēl, a native of the city, hence Anets'i, the senior pastor or *erēts'* (married priest, presbyter) of the mother cathedral, wrote his *Chronicle* [*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*].

This was a novel genre in Armenian historical writing¹. He was commissioned by Catholicos Grigor III Pahlawuni (r. 1113-1166) at Hromkla. This was a fortress on a peninsula in the Euphrates, on the borders of Cilicia, which the Catholicosate bought and settled around 1150, hundreds of miles in the southwest of Ani on Muslim held land.

As Samuēl revealed in his Introduction, the catholicos asked him to make his narratives "briefest of brief" (*karch i karchoy*). In the same passage he added that, had it not been for Eusebius (of Caesarea), whose book (*Chronicon*) he had "ready at hand", he would not have been able to write his own history. In his book, he recorded the biography of his patron in detail, as one of the most competent personalities of his time.

Samuēl stopped writing his *Chronicle* in 1163, about 20 years before his death, no reason was given or found in the text. Otherwise, very little is known about his life too. Born probably around 1110, he was the senior

¹ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat'ewosyan, 80. The original title of the book was *Hawak'munk' i grots' patmagrats' yaghags giwti zhamanakats' ants'elots' minh'ew i nerkays tsayrak'agh arareal* (Selections made from the writings of the historians from the time of creation to the present). Also see *Selections made from the collection of the writings of the historians from the genesis to the present* [*Hawak'munk' i Grots' Patmagrats' Yaghags Giwti Zhamanakats' Ants'elots' minh'ew i Nerkays Tsayrak'agh Arareal*], ed. A. Hayrapetyan (Yerevan, 2011); Dadoyan, "Samuēl Anets'i and Continuators", 427-447. The critical edition of the *Chronicle* by A.S. Mat'ewosyan, used in this study, includes a list of the 20 major manuscripts that were used in the edition, their contents in brief, and the dates that each covers. (Mat'ewosyan, "Introduction, *Samuēl*", 55-73). There are 71 known manuscripts of varying lengths, in several locations. Most of the oldest copies were made at Ani and the monasteries nearby such as Karmradzor and Hořomos. Following the Mongol invasion of Ani in 1236, many manuscripts that were located in the cathedral were taken to Cilicia, and several copies of the *Chronicle* were among them. The 16th-18th-century copies were made in various Armenian communities, including some in East European Armenian centers, such as Lvov in Poland. The oldest and most important copies are M5619 (initial copy started at Karmradzor in 1176, ended at the year 1523), and M3613 (initial copy started at Hořomos in 1177, ended at the year 1400).

pastor of the mother cathedral and had access to its large library. He is mentioned as one of the promising students of his famous teacher, the director of the Seminary of Ani, Yovhannēs Sarkawag Imastasēr (deacon, philosopher).² Following the example of the latter, who was fond of calendars (*tomar*), Samuēl in turn studied various calendars and wrote a treatise in question-and-answer form entitled “*Interpretation of the Calendar by Pastor Samuēl at the Request of Step’anos Philosopher*” (*Meknut’iwn tumari zor arareal ē Samuēli k’ahanayi i khndroy Step’anosi imastasiri*). At the time, the *K’nnikon’* of Anania Shirakats’i (c.610-680) was the model. In 1165, two years after stopping work on the *Chronicle*, Samuēl wrote another study on calendars. He probably died in the early 1180s, leaving behind a generation of dedicated pastors.

The *Chronicle* of Samuēl, written in the format of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius of Caesarea (263-339), was a new and bold experiment. It was immediately adopted and chronological writing became popular among the Armenian authors for a long time.

What made the *Chronicle* unique was its “life” after Samuēl stopped writing in 1163. Almost immediately, the book started a life of its own at the hands of the continuators in different places and through the next 613 years. Only in the year 1776, it stopped again abruptly in the middle of a sentence. Over more than six centuries, almost twenty other authors added new material to their copies, thus updating it. Lewon Khach’ikyan called these spontaneous contributors “Samuēl continuators” (*Samuēl sharunakoghkner*). Those who left a signature of some sort are mentioned in the critical edition of Mat’ewosyan, who called the book *Samuēl Anets’i and Continuators* (*Samuēl Anets’i ew Sharunakoghner*).

A number of these continuators were eyewitnesses to the events in their locations and added valuable first-hand information. A continuator from the province of Taron, identified as “Ananun” (anonymous) Tarōnets’i, is noted by Mat’ewosyan for his direct and detailed information about the Shāh i-Armans of the Emirate of Akhlāt in the province of Taron during the late 12th century.³ Hayrapet Vardapet, a continuator of the early 13th century, in turn added new information about the events of his time and added footnotes into Samuēl’s own text.

² Later on, Yovhannēs became the director of the Seminary of Haghbat, north of Nor Getik-Gōshavank’ in the north of Lake Sevan, at Tavush where he died in 1129.

³ Mat’ewosyan, “Introduction, *Samuēl*”, 38.

Another important continuator is the famous Cilician Prince Het'um Korikosts'i Patmich', known as Hayton the Armenian, a nephew of King Het'um I, and travelling diplomat, who also wrote in French. He had access to privileged information and an advantage over the other continuators. Het'um's works in Armenian are collected in M1898, written by his secretary-scribe Vasil (Basil). This manuscript has a copy of Samuēl's *Chronicle*, that is heavily edited.⁴ Het'um also adjusted and corrected Samuēl's calendars, and most importantly, he added fresh information on Cilicia and the Crusaders.

Step'anos Ōrbelyan (c.1250-1305), the archbishop of Siwnik' from the prominent Ōrbelyan clan, and the author of the *History of the Sisakan House (Patmut'iwn Tann Sisakan)*⁵, is another famous continuator. In turn, he prepared a chronicle based on Samuēl's model, adding events that occurred between the years 1193 and 1290, both in Armenia and Cilicia.⁶ Ōrbelyan too edited and corrected Samuēl's text. It is this version that the next continuator added to during the 14th-15th centuries (M8481).

In the middle of the 14th century, Bishop Nat'anayēl Hawuts't'arets'i added a colophon at the end of his version (M3681). Sahak Erznkats'i is a less-known continuator of the 16th century (M1486). The last known continuator, patriarch Ep'rem Ghabants'i of Istanbul, had two copies and added to both (M7717 and M2965). He lived in exile in Adrianopolis, then went to Ējmiatsin taking both manuscripts with him.⁷

Perhaps the most interesting and intriguing continuator of Samuēl is an 18th century anonymous historian, whose copy of the *Chronicle* with the additions is in Jerusalem Ms 3701. He started his contributions at the events of 1242. He recorded and commented on the experiences of the Armenians over 534 years in the medieval and early modern Islamic worlds. He concluded the *Chronicle* with a sad episode about the treachery of the Armenians of the city of Melitene in the year 1776 against their own bishop. This was the final entry in 1776.

The *Chronicle* of Samuēl and Continuator covers a period of 613 years, in Mat'ewosyan's critical version, it is on 202 pages divided into three

⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵ Step'anos Ōrbelyan, *Step'annu Siwneats' Episkoposi Patmut'iwn Tann Sisakan* [The History of the Sisakan House by the Bishop Step'an of Siwnik']. Edited by M. Ēmin (Moscow, 1861). French translation: Stéphanos Orbélian, *Histoire de la Siounie*, trans. Brosset (St Petersburg, 1864).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷ *Ibid.* 53.

parts: the first from Adam to Christ (35 pages), the second from the birth of Christ to 1163, with additions and comments from the continuators (in different print, 146 pages), and a third part exclusively by the continuators.

Samuēl applied the Eusebian style in the second part. The text is arranged in two parallel side columns, while the five middle narrow columns are reserved for the various calendrical systems, including the Armenian. Information related to the respective dates is written in the corresponding lines in the two side columns. In addition to both Armenian and regional events, he has lists of monarchs, clergy, caliphs and others. His tables and accounts contain numerous inaccuracies. Samuēl modestly considered his work a “selection” taken from the histories of his predecessors, in addition to his eyewitness accounts at the city of Ani.

Concerning his sources, the following should sum them up: for the pre-Islamic period, Samuēl specifically mentions Agat'angeghos (4th-5th centuries), Eghishē (5th century), Ghazar P'arpets'i (5th-6th centuries), P'awstos Buzand (5th century), Movsēs Khorenats'i (5th or 8th centuries) and, of course, Eusebius (4th century). For the 7th century to his own time, he mentions Sebēos (7th century), Ghewond (8th century), Shapuh Bagratuni (9-10th century) Yovhannēs Draskhanakertts'i (9th-10th centuries), and Step'anos Taronets'i-Asoghik (11th century). He also made extensive use of the papers of his teacher Yovhannēs Sarkawag Imastasēr. Strangely, he makes no mention of three other authors, Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i - Movsēs Daskhurants'i (10th century), Aristakēs Lastivertts'i and Grigor Magistros (11th century).

A comment made by Samuēl elucidates Catholicos Grigor III's reasons for requiring very brief and continuous reports on the developments at Ani and the region caught between the Georgians, Shaddādid and the Seljuks. According to Samuēl, in 1120 the catholicos was working on a secret plan to return the headquarters of the church back to Ani from Tsovk', near Dlūk in northern Syria, where it had settled temporarily in 1116. Previously, around 1080, Ruben (r. c. 1080-95) and his fellow cavalymen (from the *azats* back in Armenia) occupied the fortress of Vahka and established an independent enclave in eastern Cilicia, to the west of which were the Het'umids, the Byzantine-appointed guards on the mountain passes of the Taurus. Finding the region completely devoid of stability, and with no hope of forging alliances with fellow Christians — Syriac, Byzantine and Latin — Grigor III negotiated with the Muslims, particularly with the Kurdish Shaddādid *amīr* of Dwin, Abū'l-Aswār, who at the time also controlled Ani, which he bought from Seljuk Alp Arslān.

Samuēl explained that “the holy patriarch ... had an oath of love and friendship with *Abisuwar* concerning moving his see back here [Ani] with his consent.”⁸ According to Cilician Smbat Sparapet Patmich’ (1208-76), an older brother of King Het’um I (1226-70), the move was delayed because of the Georgian occupation of Ani around 1124/5. A second failed attempt was made just before 1149/50.⁹ In that year, probably convinced that finding a location close to Cilicia was the only alternative, Grigor III bought the fortress of Hromkla or Rumkalē/Qal’at al-Rūm (a peninsula on the Euphrates), from the widow of Count Joscelin of Edessa (r. 1118-1131), after the fall of the city to the Zankīs in 1144. This fortress was on the peripheries of Cilicia, about 20 miles in the north east of Ayntāb, always on Muslim-held land. Despite centuries of debates and pressures for church union with Byzantine-Chalcedonian, as well as Latin sides, Grigor III seems to have given priority to developing good relations with the Muslim side, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. It is not clear exactly when he commissioned Samuēl to write a “briefest of brief” Eusebian-style history, but he was in constant contact with Grigor III for updates on the situation in Armenia.

Until the rise of the Georgian-Armenian Zak’aryan dynasty under Georgian suzerainty (1099/1201-c.1350), Ani oscillated between the equally oppressive rules of the Georgians, Shaddādids and Seljuks, or the “Scythians of Khorasan” as Samuēl identified them. There are eyewitness accounts of the consecutive devastations of his city during 1161-1163, by the Georgians, the Shāh-i-Armans, and finally Seljuk Alp Arslān. The latter literally “sold” the city to the Kurdish Shaddādids.¹⁰ Samuēl stopped at this point, a year later, in 1164, anonymous authors began adding entries to the year 1173, after which the book was made available for copying.

In the *Chronicle* there are many references to the Muslims. At Ani, and at the library of the cathedral, Samuēl had access to most of the sources he mentioned. Together, these texts covered the period from the first Arab invasions to his time. However, he surprises the reader with a first very brief entry about the arrival of the Arab armies in Armenia, without any reference to Islam or the Prophet Muḥammad. In 639, he wrote, “the Tajiks invaded Armenia where T’ēodoros [R̥shtuni] was presiding as

⁸ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat’ewosyan, 208.

⁹ Mat’ewosyan, *Ani*, 61-62.

¹⁰ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat’ewosyan, 218.

the prince [governor] of Armenia.”¹¹ Het‘um Patmich‘ added, but for the year 621/2: “In this year appeared Mahmēt, the leader of the Tajiks, and [thus] started the calendar of the Tajiks.”¹² Obviously he confused the first year of the Hijrah with the appearance of the Prophet. Otherwise too, his knowledge about Islam and Mahmet is negligible. A much less informed anonymous contributor noted for the year 611: “Reign of Mahmēt and the domination of the *Arapkats*”, or the Arabs.¹³ Het‘um intervened again for the year 644: [in this year] “Mawi [Mu‘āwiyah] the prince of the Tajiks, invaded Cyprus, committed atrocities and desecrated the churches.”¹⁴

Samuēl wrote his first, and most significant, comment on the Prophet Muḥammad and his “laws” in his entry for the year 646 (in my translation):

At this time [in 646] appeared the false prophet of the Saracens, [he was] from the heretics of Cerinthus and the Arians, his name was Mahmēt, from the race of Ismayel, a son of Hagar. He became a disciple of a monk called Bkhira [Baḥīrā], from the sect of the Arians, [residing] in the desert of Sinai, where [much earlier] the descendants of Hagar had taken refuge after being chased away by Sarah. The first to rule the people of Ismayel was someone called K‘aghart‘, who spoke of the divine word, and satisfied the people with the blood spilled by his sword ... K‘ēghērt‘ [different spelling] reached Damascus, then Mesopotamia and the city of Amit [Amida, Tigranakert]. He dispatched his men in all directions and conquered many places. This prince of the Tajiks found an advisor called Mahmēt, the head of the Egyptian merchants, who was familiar with some of the laws of Moses, but in fact he was a follower of Arius and Cerinthus. He taught that paradise was physical, there was food and marriage there, and spoke of laws that contradicted both the Old and New Laws and were worthless and shameful. Thus, teaching perversities, he defamed the Abrahamic oath. He ordered the circumcision of women as well, on the eighth day. In addition to many ludicrous and senseless practices, and as a sign of his repulsive covenant, instead of baptism he ordered constant washing with water. He [somehow] obtained the status of lawmaker and [divine] messenger, and [became army] general as well. They [his followers] invaded Bznuni and Aghiovit [in Armenia]. This Mahmēt prevented [the use of] the sword, and by counselling and advice made most of the world obey him. By a firm oath, he signed a pact with the Armenians to maintain their Christianity and sold them their faith by taking from each house four *dirhams*, three *marzans* of barley, one rope [of hair] and one towel. The clergy, the nobility and cavalry were exempted from paying taxes ... Those who ruled the world after him [Muḥammad] were called *amīrmumnīk*‘ [*amīr*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹² M1898, *Ibid.*, 146.

¹³ M7261, M10202, *Ibid.*

¹⁴ M1898, *Ibid.*

al-mu'minān]. Twenty years after him ruled Apupak'r [Abū Bakr], Awt'man [ʿUthmān], and Amr [ʿUmar] for 38 years.¹⁵

Obviously, Samuēl confused two pacts/oaths granted by two “Mahmet”s, the Prophet and Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, as it shall be discussed in Part Three. The last passage is about an initial covenant made by “Mahmet” the Prophet.

This is the first mention of an alleged covenant by the Prophet to the Armenians, it came to be known as the “Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians” and was recorded by most later authors. This passage has great significance as the first record in Armenian literature of a typical protocol between the Muslim state and a *dhimmī* people under its rule, in accordance to which peace and freedom of worship is promised explicitly in return to specific taxes and their equivalents in goods. The exemption of the clergy and the church was an essential issue in all these documents. Even though this particular passage was cited verbatim by subsequent authors, Kīrakos Gandzakets'i (c.1201-71) and Grigor Tat'ewats'i (d. 1410/11), Samuēl, the original source, was never mentioned by anyone. Samuēl himself gave no references, and as far I am aware, the passage is not found in the previous histories.

Mkhit'ar Anets'i (d. end of 12th century), a younger contemporary and co-citizen, also a continuator of Samuēl, wrote in the entry for the year 646: “This profane Mahmēt was forty years old when he launched his false laws. He reigned [despotically] for 23 years, and at 63, descending to hell, he paid for his deplorable life.”¹⁶

In his entry for the year 648, Samuēl continues his discussion of the Tajiks. He tells that they are of four groups/divisions, “*Shafehi, Hanifi, Hambali, Malek'i*.”¹⁷ In that year he adds, “the Sasanian dynasty fell after 418 years. This was the 48th year of the dictatorship of Kēghērt' and Mahmēt. The Sasanians were replaced by the Ismaelites, [then came] Apupak'r, Awt'man and Amr [no mention of 'Alī].”¹⁸ A continuator (M1899) adds to this paragraph, again with many inaccuracies, the names of all the caliphs, or as he says, the “successors of Mahmēt”, up to 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Amīn (r. 809-13), whom he calls “Jap'r.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, 149-150.

¹⁶ M3613. *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* The four major traditional Sunnī schools of jurisprudence: *Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

In a different passage, Samuēl speaks of the invasions of Muḥammad Ibn Marwān into the region of Lake Sewan in 702, but with inaccuracies and unaware of the fact that it was this “Mahmet” who granted a peace pact following the rebellions during 701-703.²⁰ He also briefly recounts the visit of the “holy philosopher Yohan” (Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i) to Damascus by the invitation of the “Amirmumni Omar”. However, he makes no mention of the pact made during this visit in 719.²¹ Among the events listed for the year 751, one continuator mentions the founding of Baghdad (M1899), followed by a list of Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd caliphs and their reigns, again with numerous inaccuracies²²

In his entry for the year 848, Samuēl dedicated a very long passage to the religious persecutions carried out by the *ostikans* of Caliph “Jap‘r” (al-Mutawakkil), whom he describes as the “criminal *amirapet* [head-emir] of the Ismaelite people.”²³

Samuēl is one of the very few authors who mentions the famous Armenian ‘Abbāsīd general and governor of Egypt and Armenia, ‘Alī Ibn Yahyā al-Armanī, whom he calls “Ali Armni”, without any reference to his ethnicity, probably because he was a Muslim. He wrote that in 853, “Ali brought a crown from the caliph [who is none other than al-Mutawakkil, the “criminal *amirapet* Jabr”] to the Bagratuni “prince Ashot son of Smbat and granted him the title of “Prince of Princes” [*ishkhanats‘ ishkhan*].”²⁴

With the exception of the names of some caliphs, commissioners and emperors, Samuēl wrote nothing more on the topic of the Muslims and their activities until the arrival of Alp Arslān in 1042 and the occupation of Ani.²⁵ He put the beginning of “Scythian” or Seljuk penetration from “Khurasan” into Asia Minor in the year 901.²⁶ The next long passage is devoted to the annexation of Ani by Byzantium and the end of the Bagratuni dynasty in 1045.²⁷

Among the Georgian-Armenian events listed for the year 1082, the anonymous continuator (Venice Ms 511) added “[in this year] Libarid became a Muslim” (*Libaridn tachik eghew*).²⁸ Seemingly trivial this fragment

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

²² *Ibid.*, 158.

²³ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 166; see Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, I, 95-96, 100, 152.

²⁵ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, 185.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

— with an error in the date — establishes the Georgian-Armenian provenance of the Baghwasi-Libarideans, the ancestors of the Dānishmandids of Cappadocia, named after their ancestor-founder Tilu-Daylu Libarid, a tutor of Alp Arslān's children, hence *dānishmand* or knowledgeable person. This "Seljuk-Turkish" dynasty lasted approximately to 1178. The Dānishmandids were part of the Seljuk cluster of sultanates during the 11th and 12th centuries.

For the following year, 1087, Samuēl briefly wrote about the fall of Antioch to the Seljuks. At the time, the city was under "Filartu", the "convert to Islam",²⁹ as he wrote. Philaretus was an ally of the Dānishmandids and all the other Muslim Armenian political converts in the region. As mentioned, these warlords managed to enroll in the Seljuk advance, and secured enclaves of their own in eastern Asia Minor, north Syria and even Palestine.³⁰ The Armenians who were dispersed in the entire region, often chose to settle in these enclaves, under the protection of the renegade Armenians.

Samuēl spoke highly of "Mlek'shāh" (Malik Shāh), the "Scythian sultan of Khurasan." He praised him for his "love of the Christians."³¹ But he had little to tell about the two decades until 1113, the year his patron Grigor III was elected.³² The next and final entries describe the taking of Ani by King Georg of Georgia in 1161. This was followed by another Seljuk invasion in 1163 and extensive devastation and slaughter. At this point it seems that Samuēl did not find enough moral strength to continue and stopped writing.

The first continuator incorrectly placed the assassination of the Cilician Great Prince Mleh in the year 1164, rather than 1175, but the error seems to be a copying error. This author is knowledgeable about the events related to "Salahatin" (Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn) and the "Frangs" (Franks, Crusaders).³³ Another continuator, who first appears in the entry for the year 1179, praised Samuēl for his "fact-writing" (*stugagrut'iwn*), a term rarely used at this time or later. He also wrote that from the year 1179, in addition to the calendar "which starts at the birth of Christ", the Armenian calendar (which starts at 551) will be marked too.³⁴

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁰ Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, II, 33-64.

³¹ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat'ewosyan, 198-199.

³² *Ibid.*, 203-204.

³³ In M1899, *Ibid.*, 220.

³⁴ In M5619, *Ibid.*, 223.

The anonymous continuator, Ananun Tarōnets'i (M9796) described the sacking and burning of the Armenian churches and property in Taron in 1185, and the Church of St. Karapet of Mush (*Mshoy Surb Karapet*), a major pilgrimage site, by joint Kurdish and Turkish factions, who, he added, often allied against the Armenians.³⁵ Another continuator (M1486) told the conversion of a Tajik guard at the fortress of Edessa in 1186. When he caught sight of a miraculous column of light leading to the bottom of a well, he followed it and saw there the Holy Virgin on a throne, clad in red and holding Christ the Child. On his way out, he blessed her and Christ, and instantly converted to Christianity.³⁶

The fall of Jerusalem to Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's "Tajik armies" in 1187 and the defeat of the "*fṛang* princes" are related as major events. The "evil prince Salahatin", wrote the continuator, "tortured the Christian people" of the city.³⁷ There is no mention of Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's famous Oath to the Christians and Armenians of Jerusalem.³⁸ Describing the fall of Acre to the Ayyūbids in 1190, the continuator wrote that "the lawless/faithless [Muslims] took Ak'k'ay from the Christians." This continuator also placed the first "Turkmēn" attacks on Cilicia in the year 1190. After the fall of Jerusalem, he wrote, "the house of the *Fṛangs* shook."³⁹

Bishop Step'anos Ōrbelyan of Siwnik' (d. 1305) decided to continue the *Chronicle* from the events of 1193 onwards (M8481). He explained that finding everything written by Samuēl "accurately expounded" (*chshitiw sahmaneal*), he decided to continue the text up to his own time.⁴⁰ Ōrbelyan provided a detail that deserves further study within the context of the Cilician-Zankī relations during 1170s. He wrote that Grigor Apirat was supposed to succeed Catholicos Nersēs IV Shnorhali in 1173, but the adolescent/young Grigor IV, nicknamed "Tghay" or adolescent, (r. 1173-1193) rose to the throne at the hands of Prince Mleh and under the orders and influence of Nūr ed-Dīn *amiray*. "Grigor IV ousted Apirat and occupied the chair."⁴¹ Known for his pragmatic and pro-Muslim politics, Grigor IV corresponded with Nūr ed-Dīn Zankī (the Oghuz Turkish ruler of Syria, r. 1146-1174). When the Georgian-Armenian Zak'aryans entered Ani in

³⁵ In M9796, *Ibid.*, 224-225.

³⁶ In M1486, *Ibid.*, 227-228.

³⁷ In M1899, *Ibid.*, 228.

³⁸ Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, II, 168-172.

³⁹ In M1899, *Ibid.*, 230-231.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

1199 and established their semi-independent state, Orbēlyan wrote: “Zak‘arē took Ani from the Tajiks (*i tachkēn ēar zAni*), he then cleansed Dwin [of them] in 1201.”⁴² In 1217, he continued, the “bloodthirsty beast of the nation of the arrow-men Ch‘ankz Ghan arrived.”⁴³ Rarely if at all does the term Mongol appear in medieval Armenian literature, they are the *tat‘ars* of Khorasan or Khurasan.

The continuators of most manuscripts from these periods put the beginning of “Ottoman” rule, or the *Ōsmants‘ik‘* (after their leader Osman) in 1241.⁴⁴ The Anonymous continuator (Jerusalem Ms 3701) started his entry for the 1242 with a single ominous sentence: “The t‘at‘ar dominated the world” (*tireats‘ t‘at‘arn ashkharhin*).

Het‘um Korikosts‘i Patmich‘ (M1898), added the journey of the Cilician King Het‘um I (r. 1226-1269) to Qaraqorum in 1253 to meet “Manko Khan” (Möngke Khan, r. 1251-1259), and his return three years later in 1256. The description implied that the king implicitly represented the Christians of the Near East facing the threats of the Muslims, then the enemies of the Mongols. Het‘um also mentioned the capture of the Fortress of Alamut in Iran, from the “*hashishets‘i*” (Assassins, *Hashshāshūn*), and Baghdad (in 1258) from the “*khalifay*”, without elaborating or specifying any dates.⁴⁵

Another continuator (M1899) added the news of the “*msrts‘ik‘*”, or the Egyptian Mamlūks, in 1266, with the story of the first large-scale invasion of Cilicia.⁴⁶ The word *Msr*, or Egypt is used in Venice Ms 1253 too. The Mamlūk sultan is referred to as the “*msray sultan*” or the Sultan of Egypt. Speaking of these times, Ōrbelyan simply used the word Tajik to refer to the Seljuks (M8481). He wrote: “The great archbishop [also ruler] of Erzuka [Erzinjān] Sargis and his son were murdered by the Tajiks in the year 1276.”⁴⁷ Describing the same event, another continuator wrote that the “lawless/faithless (*anawrēn*) Hagarians killed Sargis.” He referred to the Seljuks of Iconium, or Rūm Seljuks, as the “Turks of Hořom.”⁴⁸ The capture and sacking of the catholicos fortress of Hřomkla in 1292/3 by the Mamluks is recorded in two manuscripts. In MS Jerusalem 3701, we read, “They took Hřomkla and drove the catholicos Lord Step‘anos as a slave to Egypt.” The fate of the catholicos is in fact obscure. M1899

⁴² *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁴ In M7261 and M10202, *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 249-250.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁸ Venice Ms 1253, *Ibid.*, 256.

described how “in the year 1293, the sultan of Msr, Melik‘ Ashraf arrived at the head of his troops at Hromkla, besieged it for many days until he took it and captured the catholicos Lord Step‘anos and the right hand [relic] of the Holy Illuminator and took them to Msr [Egypt], together with many bishops, priests and populace. He [Step‘anos] remained there for a year then died.”⁴⁹

The Mamlūk invasions of Cilicia, the persecutions of the Christians and the precarious condition of the Armenians in the midst of the Greeks, Crusaders, Mongols, Seljuks, and Arabs are subsequent themes. The continuator in M3701 focused on the conversion of the Mongol leaders to Islam. Het‘um Patmich‘ elaborated the diplomatic and military aspects of Christian-Muslim conflict at the time, mentioning the visit of King Het‘um II (r.s 1289-1296, 1299-1301) to Damascus to meet Ghāzān Khan in 1301. For 1304, the Anonymous continuator noted:

In this year *satakets‘aw* [a word used to describe the death of animals and evil creatures] Khan Ghazan, who denied Christ, while his ancestors and people were Christians of the Nestorian faith, according to Vardan [Areweltsi, 1198-1271].⁵⁰

He also discussed in some detail the radical measures and persecution of Christians by Ghāzān’s successor Khar Banda Khan, the Il-Khan Kharbanda, or Khūdabanda, Muḥammad (r. 1304-1316), brother of Ghāzān. The passage in my translation:

Kharbanday Khan of the nation of the arrow-men [Mongols], who deeply hated the Christians, was fascinated by the dark magic of sorcerers and heretics and collaborated with the devil. They [the Mongols] began attacking Christ’s faith. They issued a decree for the Christians in the entire world under their control to either convert into the erroneous faith of Mahmēt, or pay the *kharj* [*kharāj*, must be *jizya*] head-toll of eight *dahekan* [*dirham*], to be slapped and spat in the face, to have their beard cut off and to carry a black patch on the right shoulder, all to offend Christ. His evil emissaries attacked the Christians everywhere like bloodthirsty beasts ... but the rational subjects [*banawor hotk‘*] remained patient and accepted all hardship, giving him all he wanted. When the lawless and impious Khar Banda Khan saw that he could not take over the Christians, he increased his blows, and proclaimed that the Christians had either to accept being castrated and/or give away one eye, or convert to the religion of Mahmēt. Thus, thousands perished in the name of Christ and rejected their [the Mongols’] faith.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

The “black patch on the right shoulder” is the first *ghiyār* stipulation that appears in Armenian literature in Mongol times. I have not found references to the “honey-colored” cloths the *dhimmīs* were required to wear by the “Edict” of al-Mutawakkil previously in ‘Abbāsīd times.

The continuator of M1899 provided a brief account of the journey of Catholicos Kosdantin IV Lambronats‘i (r. 1322/3-1326) to Egypt in 1323. King Lewon IV (r. 1320-1342), was an adolescent at the time, and the catholicos took over some of his duties. He signed a fifteen-year pact of “love and peace” with the Mamlūk “Sultan Nasr” (Nāṣir ed-Dīn Muḥammad, during his third reign, 1310-41). In 1333, the Mamluks “imposed blue ensigns on the Christians”⁵² and the peace agreement was forgotten. He describes the Mamluk-instigated raid on Cilicia in 1335 by the governor of Aleppo.⁵³ In 1336, the “Ismaelite people” invaded Cilicia, he reports with obvious irony, while the king had gone to the “assistance of the Frangs.”⁵⁴ The “blue insigns” are in turn *ghiyār* stipulations on the *dhimmīs*. These themes are discussed in Part Three.

The fall of the royal fortress in the Cilician capital Sis to the “sultan of *Msr*” is told in M7261 and M10202. The Anonymous continuator wrote for the year 1374/5: “This year the *tajkunk’* [a colloquial form of plural of Tajik] took Sis and killed Vardapet Kech‘eghak [magpie], who was a student of Scriptures.”⁵⁵ He also wrote that, after the arrival of Tamerlane in 1384, the “*t’urk’mns* replaced the *t’at’ars*.” The brutal assassination of Catholicos Zak‘aria of Aght‘amar in the city of Vostan in Vaspurakan, east of Lake Van, is recounted in detail in several manuscripts.

M726 has a very rare piece of information for the year 1413, less than four decades after the fall of the kingdom in 1375. It concerns a mass exodus by sea of almost 30,000 Christian “houses” (families) from Cilicia to “Frankstan” (literally “country of Franks”).⁵⁶

The “kingdom of the *Ōsmanis*” or “*Ōsmants’ik’*” was established in 1449, and in 1453 *Stampōl* or Constantinople was taken by “sultan Mahmat.”⁵⁷

In 1441, a continuator tells that a new see was established at Ējmiatsin, then under Ottoman rule, which to that time was an iconic site in ruins.

⁵² Jerusalem Ms. 3701, *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁵⁷ In M5889, *Ibid.*, 292.

He explains that the position of catholicos there was based on bribes and had to be “purchased” (*ghapal*) from the Ottoman, and later on from the Persian authorities, as the Anonymous Continuator added (Jerusalem Ms. 3701).⁵⁸ He also related that in 1461, in order to defend the city and the churches, “Catholicos Karapet” (Karapet I Ewdokats‘i, r. 1446-1477) in Sis formed an alliance with the Tajiks of the city against the Turkmens, but without much success.⁵⁹ Sis remained a target for their consecutive attacks. He also told the story of a Tajik, who witnessed the gathering of hundreds of Christian male children in a field in 1464, compelled by the “king of the Tajiks” or Turks. Despite interventions at the sultan’s court, these children were dispatched to Istanbul to be converted and recruited.⁶⁰

Most continuators liked to insert news of the world as well, such as the discovery of “Amerikay” (America) in 1495, the building of the Forty Martyrs Cathedral in Aleppo in 1500, even the launching of the “heresy of Mart‘in Lut‘er” in 1515, as told by the Anonymous Continuator (always in Jerusalem Ms 3701).⁶¹ In 1605, as well as earlier and later, the great deportation or *surku* (Turkish for forced expulsion) of almost half a million Armenians from Julfa, Vaspurakan, and other locations into Isfahan, and the establishment of New Julfa are also recorded.⁶² As some continuators wrote, it seems that Safavid Shāh Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) made several attempts through various channels to move the Catholicosate from Ējmiatsin to Isfahan, where it would be under his immediate control. In 1614, he even ordered that the relic of the right hand of the Illuminator, as well as some “holy stones” from Ējmiatsin, be brought there.⁶³ In M7261, we find the exact date of the death of Step‘anos Lehats‘i, the first translator of the Qur‘ān, recorded as 1689. This continuator also said that he also “translated many books in the language of the *frangs* [Latin] into Armenian.”⁶⁴ This is completely new information, that is almost impossible to establish. The translation of the Qur‘ān is discussed in Part Three.

The Anonymous Continuator concluded the *Chronicle*, unknowingly, with four stories. For the year 1725, he wrote: “In this year the *ōsmants‘i*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 302, 303, 306.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 325-326.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 347.

people gained great power and devastated many places ... A certain *aylazgi* Turk witnessed the slaughter of Christian children and told us.”⁶⁵ For the year he wrote: “In this year at Caesarea a certain *aylazgi* Tajik converted to the faith of Christ, the Son of God, and all the Tajiks [of the city] said that he was deranged. They took him to the fortress and put him in prison for a while. Despite pleas and threats, they failed to convert him back [to Islam] and cease his witness. They then issued a death sentence, strangled him at the fortress and got rid of the body, so that they [the Christians] would not honor his remains.”⁶⁶

The next story is about the conversion of the Church of St. James (*Surb Yakob*) at Sis into a mosque by a certain Tajik called Yonuz.⁶⁷ The last story became the final paragraph of the *Chronicle*: “In the year 1776, the impious Armenians, who were the inhabitants of Melitinē [Melitene], bribed the [Turkish] despot of their city to assassinate their prelate. The latter agreed, and just like P’iladus [Pontius Pilate], he hanged the *vardapet* on a pole [like Christ], his name was Step’anos and was a native of the city, [this was] in the month ...” The sentence is left unfinished.⁶⁸

From a purely methodological perspective, the *Chronicle* established the importance of chronology and the systematic contextualization of all events within their local and regional circumstances, also spatial and temporal frameworks. Most subsequent authors referred to and praised Samuēl’s style and at least partially applied it. Indeed, the *Chronicle* transformed the way in which events and other elements were organized and presented in chronological terms. Moreover, the straightforward, almost impersonal style of reporting inspired many continuators, who preferred to remain anonymous, possibly due to the nature of the information in their histories. The Anonymous Continuator (Jerusalem Ms 3701), who meticulously and diligently covered 534 years of history, is a paradigm case. Otherwise, the *Chronicle* stands as the record of whatever seemed important at given times and places. It brought historical writing closer to contemporary journalism and reporting. To the 17th century, no significant historical texts were produced in the entire Armenian habitat.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 351-352.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 357.

2. *Mkhit'ar Anets'i*

Mkhit'ar Anets'i (d. end of the 12th century), a co-citizen and younger contemporary of Samuēl introduced the most novel and longest narrative of Mahmet, since T'ovma's in his history. As it shall be shown, the story was borrowed verbatim from a *karshuni/garshuni* (Syriac text in Arabic script) transliterated in Armenian as *K'ashun*, which remained undetected for over eight centuries.⁶⁹ In early 1900s, Papgēn Gulēsērian (r. 1930-1936, coadjutor to Sahak II [r. 1902-1939) accidentally found the Armenian *K'ashun* that was the source of Mkhit'ar's account. He came to this conclusion after discovering this text at the library of St. Yakob/James Monastery of Jerusalem in manuscript 1288, fols 231b-238a, dated 1273. The copy was restored in 1624 by order of Grigor Vardapet Kamakhets'i-Daranaghts'i at Rodosto/Tekirdagh (on the northern shores of the Sea of Marmara, in the European part of Turkey), by Astuatsatur Erēts' and Sargis Abeghay. According to Gulēsērian, the larger collection in which this *K'ashun* must have been, was the *Book of Questions of Vardan Vanakan Vardapet (Girk' Harts'mants' Vanakan Vardapeti Vardanay)*. The section on Mahmet was titled "Selections from the *K'ashun*." This text may have been available in similar versions in the monastic schools.

In 1930, Gulēsērian published this *K'ashun* and Mkhit'ar's narrative on opposite pages in his *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*.⁷⁰ Lack of research in the subject of Islam and the Prophet in medieval Armenian texts, led Gulēsērian to conclude that from the beginning Armenian authors had this particular *K'ashun* as their reference. As it is clear in this study, prior to Mkhit'ar, even in Samuēl's *Chronicle*, there are indications that it was available and in use. There can be no doubt that Mkhit'ar was the first to have access. He borrowed it with no omissions but slight additions, and no mention of his source.

The Jerusalem manuscript of the *K'ashun*, as copied and cited by Gulēsērian, and Mkhit'ar's account, both in full, are below in my literal translation. The introductory paragraph of the *K'ashun* seems to be an addition at a later period. It does not appear in Mkhit'ar's text, which otherwise follows it literally. Gulēsērian however, does not seem to have noticed this discrepancy.

⁶⁹ Mkhit'ar, *Book of Epic Events*, ed. Margaryan. This is the edition used in this study. Also see Mkhit'ar, *History*, ed. Patkanyan.

⁷⁰ Gulēsērian, *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*, 189-193.

Together with Samuēl's account, Mkhīt'ar's inclusion of an entire *K'ashun*, instantly inflated the Armenian Mahmet and completed the figure. Subsequent authors considered it a credible account well into the Modern Period. As mentioned, at no point any *K'ashun* was mentioned or suspected. If it were not for Gulēsērian's discovery, it would have gone undetected.

Mkhīt'ar was born at Ani probably around 1130, and lived in the city and the vicinity to the end of the century. He was the claviger/custodian (*p'akakal*) of the mother cathedral of Ani.⁷¹ His history, entitled *Book of Epic Events in the World* was written in 1180 by the order of Abbot Grigor of the Monastery of Harich (north west of Yerevan). As indicated in the first part of the text, his narrative started at Adam and ended at the year 1193. The manuscript survived in very fragmentary form, some sections were lost, others extensively damaged, and the remaining parts randomly reassembled. In the present form, the text is divided (by the editors) into three parts, an introductory section, a very brief middle section in table format, similar to the *Chronicle* of Samuēl Anets'i, and a last part, described as "familiar stories" or "stories known" to Mkhīt'ar, meaning that he was an eyewitness to the events related in that part. He mentions the histories of Ghewond and Draskhanakertts'i, as his main sources for the Arab invasions.⁷² In Margaryan's critical edition Mkhīt'ar's *History* is only 62 pages (59-122). The chapters dedicated to the story of Mahmet are on 12 pages (93-104), about one fifth of the entire text. In order to make both the *K'ashun* and Mkhīt'ar's copy readily available, I have both texts below, in my literal translation:

"Selections from the *K'ashun* entitled 'Concerning Mahmet' [*I K'ashunē K'aghatsu — Vasn Mahmeti*]."

[The introductory passage below does not appear in Mkhīt'ar's text, it is a later addition.]

At the time of Mahmet, there arrived to us a righteous man who left us a writing about the beginning of the faith of Mahmet. He said that since I was with Mahmet and went around with him, I saw with my own eyes what I narrate verily. I wished to write [this] for you to learn [the truth] and not believe his words, and if they [Muslims] constantly mention God, not to think that they are pious. The clan that is called Kurēsh, descends from Abraham all the way to Mahmet ... Abraham is the father of all. Now Mahmet was born in the city called Madina, near Mak'ay, a two-day journey away. He

⁷¹ Margaryan, "Introduction, *Mkhīt'ar*", 5-7.

⁷² *Ibid.* 24

also died in the same city. Many believed in Christ our God⁷³ and stood fast by their faith up to our time. Others did not and gave away their faith and stayed at the deep desert to the time of king Heracles [Heraclius] of the Greeks and Khosrow, called Apruegh [?], the king of the Persians. Now concerning the time. 5198 years have passed since Adam ... during the incumbency of Heracles and Khosrow, there appeared the false prophet Mahmet. It was the year 65 of the Armenian era [616], some say that it was during the incumbency of the grandson of Heracles [Constans II].⁷⁴

[Mkhit'ar's account starts this point, the actual beginning of the *K'ashun*]

There was a man whose name was Mahmet, from the clan called Kurēsh, that descended from Ketar [Khēdr], the second son of Ismayel. Coming to Mount Sinai, he became the disciple of a hermit, called Sargis *Arianos* [Arian], who knew the language of the Tajiks [*tachkerēn*, or Arabic]. He [Sargis] took him and wished to instruct him in all things, and the beginning of all the creatures. He read him of the Book of Genesis and other ancient writings,⁷⁵ also the New Testament, and the book called the Childhood of Christ. While he was listening to the divine scriptures without much comprehension, he had to go into the deep desert for some matter, and never returned to his vardapet. But he was not inclined to accept anything about Christianity and wished to know about the faith of the Jews. He met a Jewish merchant and was informed about the customs and the faith of the Jews, even though he despised them and conceived a faith of his own, which was contrary to truth and fact. And he despised all other worship, like the Pseudo-Christ [?] and insisted only on his own. He traveled ... [to] Mak'ay, which is at the extreme depth of the desert, beyond Yet'ep' Madianay [Yathrib Medīnah] which is their [Jews'] city. There he preached them forcefully and with enthusiasm, saying that the ancestral house, or the temple for snake worship, was the house of God. He considered it the House of Abraham and called it al-K'abay. He falsely related that in the past, when Ismayel took a wife, he lived in that house. When Abraham missed his son and wished to see him, he told Sarah "let me go see my son." But Sarah was afraid that he would again approach the servant Hagar. She made him swear by God that⁷⁶ he would not descend from his mount, but see his son while mounted, and return. And he [Abraham] arrived [in Mecca] but did not meet Ismayel, for he was away. He asked his wife about Ismayel's whereabouts, and she said "you senile and deranged old man, why do you bother my man [husband]." And he said, "tell your man that the doors of your house are not in good condition, change them and take new ones." When Ismayel came back from his hunt, his wife ignored Abraham's order/message. But Ismayel took his father's odor, and asked

⁷³ *K'ashun*, in Gulēsērian, *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*, 194.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

if anyone had been there, and she said “yes, an old man.” “And what did he say?” asked Ismayel. He understood that the message was about his wife and [indeed] left her. The same thing happened to his second, and third wife, all the way to the seventh. This [last] one told Abraham “Good father, get down your mount and let me anoint your head.” He declined, but the woman begged. Then Abraham did descend but not completely, he put one foot on the stone [threshold] and the other kept on the mount. The stone caved in and bore his footprint. This is what Mahmet narrated in falsehood, and ordered to worship that house, by running around it ... He left the other entrance to the snakes [that lived there]. Around the outer threshold, where Abraham’s footprint is,⁷⁷ they [Muslims] skip on one foot shouting “lbayk‘, lbayk‘”. As tough responding to “what are you saying”, they say “yay, yay”, or “here I am.” Also, they cross the valley called Vodn [Wādī?] al-Hamam, where they slaughter animals and mounted they flee to the hill [‘Arafāt?] near Mak‘ay. During their flight, if someone’s shirt or anything else falls off, they do not turn back to pick it up, if their mount stumbles and someone is injured, his friends do not come to his assistance. They then walk between two large rocks called Sap‘ay and Emra [Şafā and Marwah] as fast and as far as they can. They then go to a place called Mak‘alhasay [?] and seven times throw stones. They do not know the reason and say that this is what Mahmet did and advised us to do the same, also Abraham did the same. All is told falsely by Mahmet ... In that place they do not kill⁷⁸ insects, reptiles and beasts, and that’s the reason why these live freely among people. They do not harm their own for they are *muslimans*, or believers, they wrap this house [al-Ka‘bah] with seven draperies which they kiss and put on their eyes. Now is it not clear to you their mindless charlatanism, of which many [of us] are not aware? They see these people busy in worship and prayer, talking ceaselessly of God, and believe that they verily are pious. Therefore, it is important to reveal their deceit and scandalize them.

The house which they call Abraham’s, has never been visited by Abraham nor Ismayel, as they say. It is a house for the worship of idols and snakes ... where they reside to this day. The idols were stolen from the Egyptians during the time of Trayanos [Trajan], they were made in copper and placed at Alexandria. The Tajiks found the idols of Damascus [?], those of Rīman thrown in the desert, for [the people] had converted into Christianity. Afraid that they may be destroyed by the Christians, two pagan priests took these idols to the deep desert. They were found by the heathen Tajiks [Arabs?] and taken to Mak‘ay ... to the house [al-Ka‘bah].⁷⁹ But the priests of the temple of snakes did not accept the idols, for the snakes would refuse having other idols in their house. Thus, they placed the idols outside the temple on one foot saying that this is how Rāman looked. [Eventually, the narrator

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

continues, the idol of Raman was stolen by Ethiopian merchants causing a long war] This is the footprint on the stone, which Mahmet said is Abraham's. This is why the Tajiks skip on one foot, imitating Raman. Bowing down and kissing the ground they shout, unaware of what they are doing, also not knowing why Abraham would run or why he would put one foot on the stone. They do not know why they slaughter animals⁸⁰ or why they throw stones, and who are they running from. However, we learned that [once] Mahmet withdrew from people into this valley and called in the demons who appeared to him in human shape, but he was terrified and fled. This is the reason they [Muslims] slaughter [sacrifice] animals and flee. Concerning their running back and forth between two rocks, [the truth is that] these rocks are the ancient idols they used to worship, similar to the one on the threshold of that house [of snakes]. The spirits of these two rocks required Mahmet to run between them, so he made this a law. Again, [once] a wild dog chased him to his house and attacked him, and Mahmet threw stones and drove it away. He required the same thing on his followers, holding Abraham as pretext. He said that Abraham visited [that house] five times, on the sixth he did not dismount and on the seventh stepped on the stone. Abstinence from killing reptiles and beasts, is because they used to worship them in the past ... All this narrated to us a disciple of Mahmet, who was an eyewitness to all that happened. Scared of the appearance of the demons, he had fled⁸¹ to the Island of Crete and there converted to Christianity and believed in Christ.

We shall tell another tale that is ludicrous. When they shrouded Mahmet [upon his death], they did not entomb him, believing that he would resurrect on the third day, just like Christ. When his disciples were in slumber, dogs came in and mauled the face of the deceased. The disciples found out the next morning. And now they [Muslims] have a law of killing dogs.

I am aware that you will find all this even more ridiculous by what I told you [so far] about his laws and precepts. According to them, just as the Jews predicted the coming of Christ, so they did about the coming of Mahmet as a prophet on a camel and Jesus on a donkey. They crudely misinterpreted the vision of Isaiah about two mounted men, one on a donkey and the other one a camel.

Once, he [Mahmet] was in his city of Madinay, called Madiam. He was sitting in the crowded marketplace, and while he was speaking, he suddenly disappeared for a while, causing great surprise. Then, while everyone was wondering, he came back amongst them and greeted saying, "Peace be upon you⁸² and the grace of God" [*al-salamu 'alaykum wa-rahmat u'llāh*]. Surprised and scared they asked him, "where do you come from and what is this greeting and of what gods do you bring grace and compassion?" He replied saying that "while I was talking to you, I was snatched by the divine

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 210.

angel to Mak'ay into the house of our father Abraham and Ismayel. He built the house as a legacy to us, his heirs, just as he built [the house] as per the prophets, at Jerusalem for the sons of Israel. He had heard about Ambakum [Jehoiakim] being snatched from Jerusalem to Babylon, according to Daniel, so he told the same about himself, but in falsehood. He was never at Mak'ay, nor anyone saw him there. He told them of places and buildings [of Mecca] that were landmarks, for indeed he was a native and had grown up there. It is not certain if he was into the art of magic then or he just conceived of all this. But everyone was astonished and said he was a prophet indeed. He dared to preach and told to be witness [of one God] and say that "There is no God but one God, he has no companion and Mahmet is his servant, messenger and prophet." Thus, he philosophized as he wished, saying that there is one God, as in the Jewish faith.⁸³ By saying that He [God] has no companion, he thereby separated the Son and the Spirit from the Father. Thus, he taught them that the God, whom our fathers and the prophets worshipped, I am [now] preaching to you. Thereby he persuaded the people. Furthermore, he distinguished them from the Jews, who said that Christ was only a man and the son of Joseph and crucified by them. Instead, he called Jesus the Word of God and the Spirit, sent from God to Mary, and took a body in human fashion. And he adduced the Word of God as testimony, saying "Thus said God, that we have sent our Spirit to her, who took the form of a man." And he said that the Jews did not crucify him, but He [Christ] counterfeited [himself] to them. And he did not reckon them able to crucify the Word of God or [for him] to be crucified by them. And He was not subject to death but remained alive and will come to the world in the latter times. And he [Mahmet] praised Christians and accepted the Gospel and the prophets, he anathematized the Jews, because they denied Christ and abjured him, and killed the prophets. Now Mahmet made his legislation from the old laws and the gospel, but changed as he wished, and laid down by himself — not taken from anyone else — whatever he legislated for his people.⁸⁴

Let me tell you [more] of his deceptions. Once he called upon a tree in the forest to come to him, and the latter did, he then ordered it to go back and it did. Similarly, he made people believe that he moved mountains, and made water flow out of his fingers. They say that they wanted to poison him by a roasted goat, but the latter spoke to him saying "Do not eat me, for a fatal poison is in me for you." Thus, they say that he performed miracles, but it has not been established whether he only temporarily made appearances. Once there was an attempt [by burglars] on his caravan that was camped in a flat plane. Mahmet made a sea [seem to] surround them, thus the burglars could not approach the caravan for three days. This [miracle] was in fact performed by his [paternal] uncle, from whom he learned such things. Many did not believe in his miracles and said they were just sorcery and deception. It is also told that he made it seem that he divided the moon

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

into four [parts]⁸⁵ and put the pieces back together into a circle. There is another tale about the throwing of stones, that they [Muslims] do not know. When God drove Adam out of paradise to reside in the world, he saw the devil — on the spot where they throw stones now — and knew that he was the cause of his expulsion and threw stones at him. This is what they [Muslims] do now. He [Mahmet] and others say that “There is no other God but one, and Mahmet is His messenger.”

When they [his people] asked him to write down laws, he promised to ask God about His commands. [In the meantime] he found a heifer which had just given birth, took away the calf and put it among the crowd. He then randomly wrote whatever he wished on a piece of paper, attached it on the horn of the heifer, of which he had taken away the calf, and sent it away by some of his faithful servants into the desert. He ordered them to let the animal loose at dawn. In the morning he gathered the people where he had separated the heifer and the calf. Angry and in dismay, the heifer hurried where the calf was.⁸⁶ Mahmet arrived, removed the paper from its horns, kissed it and said that it was sent by God. This is the first part of the Kuran, and is called *surat’ alpakaray* [al-Baqarah], meaning sermon of the cow. He then opened and read the paper to the crowd and made them believe that the heifer was sent from the heaven with the laws. He [Mahmet] ordered to pray seven times a day, [but first] to wash the face, hands, and feet, in the morning and evening, and instead of the Jewish custom of sounding lyres during service, or our [Christians’] chimes of the church bells, he ordered to build a high *mniray* [*manārah*] in the city. He then found someone with a loud voice, called him *modin* [*mu’adhdhin*] or faith-enforcer [*hawata-dir*] and ordered⁸⁷ him to climb (to a high place). This is what God ordered us, he said, to get in a high place, and cry out loud to the evangelists of Jerusalem “Oh evangelists of Zion”, he ordered to do this thrice a day.

Oh honorable readers, when you read the tales of the false prophet Mahmet, curse him and glorify God. To me, the worthless scribe Mkhith’ar and my parents, consider worthy of remembrance in the Last Day, Amen.⁸⁸

Mkhith’ar, the name of the scribe as he recorded in his colophon of the text prepared in 1273, may be a pure coincidence. However, there is a good possibility that this *K’ashun* was a copy made by Mkhith’ar Anets’i himself in the previous century as just “notes” for his own *History*. In 1273, he was only a vardapet in his early thirties, and he was known for making copies of manuscripts. The *K’ashun* found at Jerusalem Ms 1288, fols 231b-238a, dated 1273, may well have been a copy from Mkhith’ar’s own.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

The following is Mkhit'ar's rendition of the *K'ashun* in my translation:

Chapter 18. Concerning the legends/fables [araspel] of Mahmet and his falsity, which his disciple revealed/scandalized.

[The following introductory paragraph in Mkhit'ar's text is not found in the *K'ashun*.]

Having arrived at the point [in his text] where we should narrate about impious Mahmet, let us set out the multitude of his aberrations so that you may completely despise him and flee his name, O Christ-loving person. To this day they [Muslims] still ignorantly go on *hēch* [hajj, pilgrimage] to Mak'ay [Mecca], bring offerings to demons, and mindlessly perform the rites of ancient devil-worship taking it for God-worship.

From this point on, Mkhit'ar's account is almost identical with the *K'ashun* but in a more ornate style:

There was at that time a man, he said, [the narrator of the *K'ashun*] called Mahmet from the tribe called Kurēsh [Quraysh], the descendants of K'edar [Khēḍr] of the twelve tribes of Ismayel. Coming to the holy mountain of Sinai, he studied with a certain hermit who knew the Ismaelite tongue [Tajik language in the *K'ashun*], also Persian. He was called Bkhiray. Welcoming him, he wished to inform him about everything, from the creation of the creatures. Gradually, he read [to Mahmet] the book of Genesis and others [from the Bible] in proper order up to the New Testament and the book called *Childhood of Jesus*.⁸⁹

While he was listening to the divinely inspired Scriptures, but without much comprehension, he had reason [business] to return to the innermost desert. Thereafter he never returned to his vardapet [Bkhiray]. Inwardly, he was inclined toward Christianity, but he wished to know about Judaism [as well]. Meeting a certain Jewish merchant, he learned from him their rites and beliefs. But he despised them too and conceiving a new faith of his own, [which was] a falsity contrary to the truth. Similar to the Neṛ [Antichrist], he scorned all faiths and imposed his own laws. Coming to the village of Mak'ay [Mecca], which is beyond *Ep'itsrep'* [Yathrib] Madinay, which is their [Tajiks ?] capital, he preached in accordance with his own whim and pleasure, proclaiming the house of their tribal gathering, that was for the cult of snakes, the house of God and the house of Abraham. He called it *al-k'aaba*. And he said that Ismayel took a wife and this was his house. When Abraham longed to see his son, he said to Sarah, "Let me go to see my son", but Sarah suspected that he might approach the handmaiden [Hagar]. She required an oath by God, "Do not descend from your mount but stay on it, see your son and return." When he arrived, he did not find Ismayel because he had gone hunting, so he

⁸⁹ Mkhit'ar, in Gulēsērian, *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*, 197. Also see Thomson, "Muḥammad", 846-853. For the Armenian version of the *Infancy Gospel*, see *Ankanon Girk' II*, 1-312.

asked his wife, “Where has your husband gone?” She scornfully insulted him, saying “Oh senile and deranged old man,⁹⁰ why do you ask about my husband?”, and he replied, “Tell your husband that the doors of your house are not in good state, change them and take new ones.” When Ismayel came back from his hunt, his wife ignored Abraham’s order/message. But Ismayel took his father’s odor, and asked, “Did anyone come today?” and she said, “An old man.” “What did he say?” asked Ismayel, and she told him. Ismayel understood that it [the message] was about his wife and dismissed her. The same thing happened to his second, and third wife all the way to the seventh. This [last] one told Abraham, “Welcome father, come down from your beast that I may anoint your head.” But he said, “I do not consent.” When she entreated him, Abraham descended, not to the ground because of his oath to Sarah. He put one foot on the rock [threshold] and kept the other astride. The rock caved in under his foot and showed the imprint. Teaching these fables, he [Mahmet] also ordered his people to come from every region to offer worship to that stone and house ... he ordered them to worship as they circle the stone, which is the other stone and a hole for their feet. Furthermore, he ordered them to circle the stone where Abraham’s footprint is⁹¹ skipping on one foot and saying “*lbayk’, lbayk’*” as if replying to someone, “*Yay, yay, awas, awas.*”

[During Ḥajj] They [Muslims] then cross the valley called Vodn al-Hamarn [?] where they slaughter animals and flee on their mounts to the hill near Mak’ay. Riding a beast, in their flight on, if a shirt falls off or anything else, they do not go back to pick it up. If their mount stumbles and someone is injured, his friends do not come to his assistance. They then walk between two large rocks called Sap’ay and Emran [Ṣafā and Marwah] as fast and as far as they can. They then go to a place called Mak’a al-Has [?] and seven times throw stones, not knowing at whom. They only say that that this is what Mahmet did and ordered us to do the same, for Abraham did likewise. This was said imprudently by him, for he had [previously] said that Abraham did not descend from his mount, he then said that he ran and threw stones.⁹²

They [Muslims] do not slaughter reptiles and other crawling animals in that spot, because of the snakes which dwell in the house, mingling with the humans but not harming any of those they call *Muslims*, that is believers. They cover the house with seven drapes, kiss and put the cloth on their eyes. Now is it not their mindless charlatanism obvious to you? Many are not aware of these things, they see these people [Muslims] busy in worship and prayer, talking ceaselessly of God, and think that verily they are pious, this is why we deemed it important to reveal and scandalize their deceit.

The house which they call Abraham’s, has never been visited by Abraham nor Ismayel, as they say. It is a house for the worship of idols and snakes. It was dedicated to raising of the snakes to this day. The idols were stolen from the Egyptians during the time of *Turiyanos* [Trayanos in the *K’ashun*,

⁹⁰ Mkhit’ar, in Gulēsērian, *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*, 199.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 203.

or Trajan], they were made in copper, and used to be at Alexandria. The Tajiks found the idols of *Dimascus Riman* thrown in the desert, for the people had converted to Christianity. Afraid that they may be destroyed by the Christians, two pagan priests took these idols to the innermost desert. They were found by the heathen Tajiks [Arabs] and taken to Mak'ay with the priests to the house [al-Ka'bah].⁹³ But the priests of the temple of the snakes could not accept the idols, for the snakes would refuse having other idols in their own house. Thus, they placed the idols outside the temple on one foot saying that this is how Raman looked. [Eventually] the idol of Raman was stolen by Ethiopian merchants, thus causing a long war. This is the [story of the] footprint on the stone, which Mahmet said is Abraham's. This is why the Tajiks skip on one foot imitating Raman, bow down, kiss the ground and shout, unaware of what they are doing, not even knowing whether Abraham could run, or why he would put one foot on the stone. They do not know why they slaughter animals or why they throw stones, and who are they running from. We learned that Mahmet withdrew⁹⁴ from people into this valley and called in the demons who appeared to him in human shape but fled terrified. This is why they [Muslims] slaughter [sacrifice] animals and flee. Concerning their running between two rocks, these rocks are the ancient idols they used to worship, similar to the one on the threshold of that house [al-Ka'bah]. The spirits around these two rocks required Mahmet to run between them, and he made this into a law. Again, [once] a wild dog chased him to his house and attacked him, and Mahmet threw stones and drove it away. He imposed the same thing on his followers. They say that Abraham visited [that house] seven times, but they lie. Abstention from killing reptiles and beasts, is because similar to the snakes, they used to worship them in the past. [Not found in the *K'ashun*] This was similar to Yazkert, [Yazdegerd] who asked the Armenians not to kill reptiles, for they were gods and must be worshipped. All this the blessed man who had come from the Island of Crete, revealed and made known.⁹⁵

Chapter 19. Now we shall tell of his death, truly worthy of derision

When Mahmet died, they shrouded and placed him in his garden, they did not entomb him because he had promised that on the third day he would rise, like Christ. And when the guards were asleep, dogs came in and mauled the face of the corpse. Consequently, his disciples prescribed to kill dogs in that month. Observing this custom up to the present day, they kill dogs in that month.

And there is more for me to say about his religion, rites and laws, all full of folly. He made his followers believe that just as the prophets had foretold about Christ, they had also foreseen the coming of Mahmet, indicating to the prophesy about Jesus on an ass and he on a camel. He took as testimony the vision of Isaiah, who said, "I saw one riding a donkey and another

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

riding a camel.” This he [Mahmet] said in his city of Madina, while sitting on a crowded square. While he was speaking, he [suddenly] disappeared from sight for a while and great astonishment seized everyone. Then, while they were conversing, he stood among them and greeted them saying, “Peace be with you, and mercy and grace.”⁹⁶ Awestruck and in wonder, they asked, “Where have you come from and what is this greeting of yours, and from what gods have you brought such a saying of mercy and grace?” He replied, “Behold, while I was speaking to you, I was snatched by an angel and found myself in Mak‘ay, in the house of our fathers Abraham and Ismayel, which they built as a house of God and as an inheritance for us, just as once the Jews and the prophets built Jerusalem as a dwelling for the sons of Israel.” Mahmet had heard of the snatching of Ambakum [Jehoiakim] from Jerusalem to Babylon to Daniel [?], and attributed the same to himself. But his words were never true. He hid from them that he had seen Mak‘ay and told them the description of the place, of the sites and buildings, and all the distinguishing features of the region he reported to them by magic as though he had known them from his youth. They were all astonished and said that he was a prophet. When he heard this from their mouths he was emboldened to preach and said, “Bear witness that there is no God except He, He has no companion, and Mahmet is his servant and apostle.” In such fashion, he taught and proclaimed the one God, as that of the Jews.⁹⁷

By saying that He [God] has no companion, he thereby separated the Son and the Spirit from the Father. Thus, he taught them that what God, whom our fathers and the prophets worshipped, is preaching to them now, thereby persuaded the people [of his truthfulness]. Furthermore, he stood apart from the Jews, who said that Christ was only a man and the son of Joseph and was crucified by themselves. Instead, he called Jesus the Word of God and the Spirit, and that He was sent from God to Mary, and took a body in human fashion. And he adduced the Word of God as testimony, saying “Thus said God, that we have sent our Spirit to her, who took the form of a man.” And he said that the Jews did not crucify him, but He [Christ] counterfeited [himself] to them. And he did not reckon them able to crucify the Word of God or to be crucified by them. And He was not subject to death but remained alive and will come to the world in the latter times. And Mahmet praised the Christians and accepted the Gospel and the prophets. And he anathematized the Jews, since they denied Christ and abjured him, and killed the prophets. Now Mahmet made his legislation from the old laws and the Gospel but changed as he wished and laid down new ones not taking from anyone else, and thus legislated for his people.⁹⁸

He [also] performed in front of the people what appeared to be miracles, as the manifestations of the Neṛ, of whose coming our Lord Jesus Christ warned. As the precursor of the Antichrist, he prepared a path for him. At

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

that time, he called a tree from the forest by name, and departing from the midst of other trees, it came walking and stood before them, then ordered it to go back to its place. He made people believe seeing mountains move. Raising his hands, he made a stream flow from his fingers, as he made it appear. A mortal poison they say, was prepared for him in a roasted goat-kid and set before him, but the kid spoke to him in the hearing of many, "Do not eat of me, for a fatal poison has been prepared for you in me." [Once] robbers fell upon him in a caravan ... camped in a dry plain. He made a sea encircle them. The robbers were held at the edge of the sea, and after three days went away empty-handed ... This [miracle] they say his uncle did, and learning [sorcery] from him, he (Mahmet) did likewise. However, many of his people did not believe his fictitious nonsense. They also say that he [once] divided the moon into four parts,⁹⁹ then gathered them back into one full circle. Concerning the throwing of stones, which we mentioned previously, they told that when God expelled Adam from Paradise, he settled him in this world. When he saw Satan in that spot — where they throw stones now — he recognized that he was the one who deprived us of [eternal] life and taking stones he threw them at him. This is the reason why they do the same.

Now, when he [Mahmet] told [his people] what he meant by proclaiming himself messenger, they begged him to lay down laws for them. He promised them to ask God the next day what He might command and dismissed them. He then found a heifer that had just given birth, brought to the public square and kept the calf. He wrote down whatever he himself wished and fixed it on the heifer's horn, then led it to the desert. Then at the time of the assembly, he ordered the heifer to be released. He and the assembly awaited its arrival, as if for some visitation from above. When the heifer appeared making an uproar, he offered thanks.¹⁰⁰ Then taking the writing he read it with veneration and ceremony, as laws that had come from heaven.

At this point, Mkhitar'ar departs from the *K'ashun*, which continues and ends with a different conclusion (as cited above). The following paragraph concludes Chapter 19. References to Mahmet continue in the following two chapters.

All this his disciple revealed to us, unmasking the deceit of those heretical fables. He came and was baptized on the Island of Crete by the inspiration of the providential will of God. And we wrote down his fable and obscene deceit for the information and warning of fearers of Christ, that they might flee and detest that despiser of God.¹⁰¹

Here I return to Margaryan's edition of Mkhitar'ar's *History* for the next two extensive sections about Mahmet. The following sections are most

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

confused accounts of the early incursions, the revolt of the Armenian *nakharars*, the harsh retaliation of the Umayyads, and the episode of Catholicos Sahak III in 703. Even though, Margaryan makes no comment, judging by the style, sequence of the events and extreme lack of order, it seems to me that these chapters are by another and less informed and educated person. They are simply collated to Mkhit'ar's history.

Chapter 20. Concerning Mahmet again

When they [Muslims] heard of the death of the king of the Greeks, they dared to move into Syria and Palestine, which were under the control of Heracles. The leaders of the Jews incited the Ismaelites saying, "God promised to give us a land, but because of our sins he exiled us. You are brothers to us as children/descendants of Ismayel [son of Hagar] of Abraham. Rise and God will keep his promise." Thus incited [by the Jews] they moved to Syria and Palestine, destroyed the armies of the Hromayets'ik' [Rūm, Byzantines] and raised Umar as the first sultan of the Ismaelites. K'aghrt' [succeeded him for] nine years, Emran twelve years, Mahmet nine years, Bubak'r, the son in law of Mahmet, eight years. Omar, who was sultan for ten years, occupied the world. To the rise of K'aghrt' thirty eight years elapsed, as the historian Ghewond related. He also said that in the 38th year of his reign, they [Muslims] moved into Asorik' [Syria] and Palestine, the next year into Persia and Armenia, they toppled Yazdegard Shāhriarian and entered Armenia from the Persian side. They took Marastan [north west of Iran], Goght'n [in Vaspurakan, on the left side of the River Araxes], and Nakhijewan [south west of modern Armenia]. They killed and enslaved the people, drove them across the river Araxes into Julfa and spread in the province of Artaz. T'ēodoros R̄shtuni went against them but his front troops were destroyed. In the first year of [the reign] of Mawiyah [Mu'āwiyah], his armies invaded Armenia and imposed a tax of 500 *dahekan* [*dirhams*]. They took Grigor Mamikonian and Smbat Bagratuni as hostages to Mawiyah.¹⁰² Two years later, divine grace bestowed compassion upon Mawiyah, and he released Grigor and appointed him prince [governor] of Armenia.¹⁰³

Ch. 21. "The Appearance of the heretical/sectarian (aghandawor) and false prophet Mahmet, who is assuredly the Ner, in the [Armenian] year 95 [646]

"In tears, pain and discontent we narrated the events of those times" [says the author in this last chapter, who without doubt is a different person of much less education and information than Mkhit'ar.] "We are again under attack by the Hagarians, moved by the self-serving and devious Mahmet, who planted the seeds of Cerinthus, which he received from Bkhiray, the Arian monk."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Mkhit'ar, *Book of Epic Events*, ed. Margaryan, 100.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

The Islamic lunar calendar and the differences due to the lunar months are subjects for the next sections. A totally unrelated and different account of Islam follows. It also includes the “Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians” in Samuēl’s *Chronicle*:

The leader and head of the first armies of the Ismaelites was a certain man called K‘aghr̥t̥, who moved to Palestine and Damascus with innumerable troops. He found the devious Mahmet, who was the head of the merchants of Egypt, and was pleased by his laws and acted in accordance to them. He [Mahmet] advised K‘aghr̥t̥ to put aside the sword and [instead] impose taxes on the Christians. From the common people and the farmers, he was not supposed to ask excessive amounts. They had to pay a *kharaj* [must be *jizya*] of four *drams* [*dirham*], barley, a horse bag, a rope, and a towel. The pastors [of churches] and the monks of the monasteries, the freemen and the cavalry were exempted of all [taxes]. All the laws he [Mahmet] laid down were by the broad-easy paths. He inspired false hopes among the people, and those who consented to his laws, he set them free to commit crimes and extort the Christians, promising them to easily deserve the corporeal paradise. Contrary to Christ, who said that after resurrection there will be no encounters between men and women, and that all will be chaste like the angels. Mahmet however, stealing from the old and new, allowed the passions of the mind and body to break loose, thus preaching he bewitched the feeble-minded, fools and idiots.¹⁰⁵ [A very confused section follows about the conquests of K‘aghr̥t̥, the succession of Rāshidūn, Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, or the “princes” of Hagarians, without distinguishing the three caliphates.

The “Turkish Sarch‘uk’s” [Seljuks], wrote the author of these last sections, “took over and rose to the throne as *khalifays* to this day.”¹⁰⁶

B. QĀḌĪ BURHĀN AL-DĪN ABŪ NAṢR IBN MAṢṢŪR AL-ANAWĪ (*ANETS‘I*)
A CONTEMPORARY AND ADVERSARY — AN “ANTI-ARMENIAN POLEMICS”
IN HIS *ANĪS AL-QULŪB*

A very peculiar and intriguing case, “discovered” (as far this study is concerned) by A.C.S. Peacock, gives this section on the literary scene at Ani in the 12th century a dramatic chiaro-scuro, a contrast next to two *anets‘is*, Samuēl and Mkhit‘ar.

The surprise “*anets‘i*” is Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Abū Naṣr Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Anawī (b. 1128), a native of Ani (*al-anawī* is *anets‘i* in Arabic), the author of an anti-Armenian polemic entitled *Anīs al-Qulūb* (Hearts’ Companion). This very long text in rhyme is one of the rare and precious Muslim sources

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

of that period in eastern Asia Minor. As Peacock indicates, it seems that the literature of these times is much richer on the Christian side.¹⁰⁷

Al-Anawī was born in 1128 and died shortly after 1222. In *Anīs al-Qulūb* he talks about the circumstances that followed the fall of Ani, the settling of Muslims, like his ancestors, in the city, in particular after it fell to Seljuk Alp Arslān in 1064. Al-Anawī's father was Turkish and his mother Kurdish. During his youth he studied both the Old and New Testaments, as he says, and learned the languages of the other ethnic groups, or *millats*, as he put it, such as Armenians, Persians and Georgians.¹⁰⁸ His major work is *Anīs al-Qulūb*, which in 1211, he tells, he presented to the Seljuk Sultan of Anatolia, 'Izz ed-Dīn Kaykāwus I (r. 1211-1220), on the occasion of his accession. Predictably, he inserted several praises of the sultan throughout the manuscript (e.g. fols 67b, 69b, 132a, 259a).¹⁰⁹ He was rewarded with a state appointment as *qāḏī*.¹¹⁰

Anīs al-Qulūb is on 428 folios and in 24,000 *bayts* or verses. It took al-Anawī 46 years to complete the work, which he began in 1166-67 at the age of 24.¹¹¹ Basically a universal history in verse, in the style of the medieval authors, the book starts at the creation of Adam and ends at the Seljuk occupation of Ani and the conquests of Alp Arslān. Al-Anawī prepares an appropriate stage for his polemical initiatives. First he claims to have reading-writing fluency in the languages of the Christians at Ani. He also claims to be familiar with the different trends of Christianity, which he openly despised, except one. "There are Christians in the world who are Nestorians", he wrote. "They are more honorable than the others."¹¹² The least "honorable" were the Armenians, who, he wrote, are:

... the filthiest, most unclean and ill-fated of all the Christians. There is a reason why this nation is drunk with ignorance. [It is] from their ancestors, who were wise, they were capable in knowledge. They played tricks, and two hundred such things which I have already related. There was among them a deceitful man, an enchanter, a magician, they called him Tiyatus [the Apostle Taddeus] by name, he was a master of tricks and boldness.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Peacock, "An Interfaith Polemic", 234. His major work, *Anīs al-Qulūb* [Hearts' Companion] is held in the Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya Ms 2984, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul.

¹⁰⁸ Peacock, "An Interfaith Polemic", 238.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 236. Ayasofya Ms 2984, fol. 4.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 239. Ayasofya Ms 2984, fol. 254b.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 240. Ayasofya Ms 2984, fol. 254a.

He then launched a very harsh attack against the beliefs of the Armenians. The objective was to discredit them in the eyes of the Seljuk Sultan. As Peacock indicates, “despite the polemical nature of the passage, it is clear that al-Anawī does draw on a corpus of Armenian material.” He uses phrases that may come from Armenian sources, such as the description of Ani as the city of “thousand and one churches.”¹¹⁴

The anti-Armenian polemic would please the Sultan, who however had concerns, not about Ani, at the time under Georgian-Armenian control, but Cilicia in his south.¹¹⁵ The Ayyūbid-Seljukid alliance failed after the death of Salāḥ ed-Dīn in 1193. The Seljuks of Iconium could not tolerate a powerful Latin-Armenian territory on their borders. *Anīs al-Qulūb* presented to the Seljuk Sultan “may have been intended as warning” to the latter against entering into any alliances with the “filthy” and untrustworthy Armenians.¹¹⁶ In his Conclusion, Peacock wrote:

Clearly an anti-Armenian polemic would have been appropriate for the circumstances in which ‘Izz al-Dīn Kaykāus [1211-1220] found himself at the time between Prince soon to become king Lewon of Cilicia, his rival and brother Kaykubād [1220-1237], and the Crusaders. There would be little point in an elaborate denunciation of Armenian beliefs ... There were certainly avenues by which the sultan might have been informed about Cilician and Armenian affairs. There was a significant Armenian community in Kayseri and Konya and plenty of Armenians in Seljuk service, and it has been suggested there was an Armenian-language section of the Seljuk chancery which was responsible for dealings with Cilician Armenia ... Despite growing up among Armenians, apparently knowing their language and reading their scriptures, interfaith harmony seems far from al-Anawī’s mind. The only Christians deemed acceptable are those who are basically Muslims, according to his description, the Nestorians, while the Christians he knows best, the Armenians among whom he grew up, and with whom he must have had dealings in Tabriz and as servant of the Shāh-i Arman of Akhlāt, are denounced in vitriolic terms.”¹¹⁷

C. SUNNĪ LAW AS MOTIVE FOR ARMENIAN CANON LAW: BOOK OF JUDGMENT (*DATASTANAGIRK’*) BY MKHIT‘AR GÖSH

Mkhit‘ar Gösh¹¹⁸ was born most probably at Gandzak in Karabagh in 1120s, and died in 1213 at the Monastery of Göshavank‘ (named after him)

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 251.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 253.

¹¹⁸ *Gōsh*, *keusē* in Turkish, means “clear-bearded”, “scarce-haired.”

previously Getik, then Nor Getik, in the province of Tavush, about a hundred miles in the east of Ani. He was an exact contemporary of Mkhit'ar Anets'i. The latter was a residing pastor at Ani, and Gōsh a shrewd scholar wandering between monasteries from Armenia to Cilicia and back. Each in his own style responded to Islam in completely different manners. While Mkhit'ar continued the tradition of polemical depictions of the Prophet, bringing the Armenian Mahmet to completion through the adoption of a *K'ashun*, a more creative author, Gōsh looked into the practical problems the Armenians encountered in a mixed society, where they had no laws of their own and basically were *dhimmīs*. He took an unprecedented initiative in Armenian social sciences and law in particular, and put together a *Book of Judgment* (*Datastanagirk'*), a legal manual of sorts, for the Armenians, using three sources: the legal aspects of Sunnī Islam, its practices and judicial institutions; the existing canons issued and accepted by the Armenian Church; and the *Assizes of Antioch*, practically applied in Cilicia, where he obtained a second degree as vardapet, and spent some time.

Gōsh put forward a system of justice for not just the Armenians but an Armenian-Muslim mixed society. Completed around 1200, he called the book not *Kanonagirk'* or “book of laws”, after Yovhan II Ōdznets'i in the 8th century, nor *Ōrinagirk'* or “book of canons”, used by Smbat Sparapet in the 13th century, but *Book of Judgment of the Armenians*, or *Datastanagirk' Hayots'* (not exactly a “Lawcode”, as it is often referred to).¹¹⁹

Basic information about Gōsh comes from his own works. His indirect biographer is Kirakos Gandzakets'i (d. c.1280-90), who knew of him through his teacher, Vanakan Vardapet (b. 1180). The latter had been a student of Gōsh at the Monastery of Nor Getik. According to Kirakos, Gōsh was a native of Gandzak in Aghuank'. Probably sometime in his late youth, and after becoming a vardapet at Nor Getik, he traveled to Cilicia. He was at the famous Monastery-retreat of Black Mountain (*Seaw Ler'*). Situated just outside the city of Antioch, in its south west, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, this institution became a center of monasticism in the area. It was famous for its library. Once part of the Greek Orthodox See of Seleukeia Pieria, after 1098, it was placed under the direct control of

¹¹⁹ Editions and translations: Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Book of Judgment*, ed. Bastamyants' (Ējmiatsin, 1880). A Russian version of the text of Bastamyants' was published by Papovyan (Yerevan, 1954); *Datastanagirk'*. Critical edition of Recension A: Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Girk' Datastani*, ed. T'orosyan (Yerevan, 1975); Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Datastanagirk'*, ed. Oskanyan; Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Lawcode*, trans. Thomson (translated from T'orosyan's edition of 1975). This is the version used in this study.

the patriarch of Antioch. Greek, Georgian, Syrian, and Armenian monks gathered there. Nersēs Lambronats'i is said to have found there Greek and Latin texts that were not available in Armenian translation and took them to Cilicia.¹²⁰ Concealing his rank as vardapet he obtained back in Armenia, he managed to qualify a second time at Cilicia. The extended visit to and study at Cilicia, granted Gōsh wider perspectives and a more liberal disposition. His works range from strictly biblical writings to popular parables (*arak*) and his magnum opus, *Datastanagirk'*. However, he is more popular for his parables.¹²¹

It is not clear how long Gōsh stayed in Cilicia, but when back in Armenia, he was already a famous figure. He moved to Khach'en, south of Gandzak just north east of Lake Sewan. An old friend from Karin/Erzurum called K'urt' joined him, and he was welcome by Prince Vakhtang, the lord of the fortress of Haterk' and his brothers. The abbot of the Monastery of Getik in the province of Tavush, Yovhannēs Sarkawag happened to be an old student of his, and Gōsh settled there for a long time. At the end of the 1180s the monastery and the church were damaged in an earthquake. Gōsh is said to have stopped the monks from scattering and sought sponsorship to rebuild the monastery. He turned to Ivanē Mxargrjeli, one of the nephews of his friend K'urt'.¹²² In 1193 the foundations of the new Monastery and Church of Getik were laid, just east of Dilijan. It was called Nor Getik, also Gōshavank', after him. In a brief colophon in Chapter 11 of his Preface to the book, Gōsh wrote that he began the *Datastanagirk'* in 1184, prior to moving to Getik. He spoke of the support of Catholicos Step'anos III of Aghuank' (r. 1155-1195), and the assistance of two "brothers" (monks) at the monastery, Poghos and Yovsēp'. Gōsh died in 1213 and was buried at the monastery he built.¹²³

To the end of the 12th century there were no civic laws also civilian courts in Armenia and Cilicia. For their personal matters, the Armenians often resorted to the judgment of Muslim judges and their courts. Gōsh and others were very much aware of the urgency of developing some sort of legal system and laws. As an institution, the church was governed by

¹²⁰ Thomson, "Introduction, *Lawcode*", 21-22.

¹²¹ They were first printed in 1790 and 1854 at Venice, in 1951 and 1986 at Yerevan. The other master of parables was Vardan Aygekts'i (d. 1250) from Marat'a in the Province of Dlūk east of Cilicia, north Syria. He studied and settled at the Monastery of Aygek in Cilicia.

¹²² Thomson, "Introduction, *Lawcode*", 18.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 105; See Bastamyants', "Introduction, *Datastanagirk'*", 85-98.

canons that emerged from periodic councils as well as others ascribed to the great figures or “saints” of the church (as of its founder Grigor the Enlightener). Through these canons the Armenian Church became a “court of justice” (*metsi dataworut‘ean*) of sorts. Furthermore, as Arzoumanian says, “this function bestowed on the person of the catholicos the power of magistrate.”¹²⁴ Like other scholars too, Gōsh believed that the condition was a consequence of loss of national sovereignty for very long periods of time. In view of four historical factors, this observation is questionable.

The first factor is the absolute and arbitrary authority of the Armenian feudal and local lords on the communities under their jurisdiction, even beyond the late Middle Ages. In addition, traditionally, secular authorities often had the support and the alliance of the church and the clergy. Objectivity and fairness based on humane laws was the demand and the need of a class that had no rights anyway, hence the absence of civic laws.

Next, the presence or absence of central or sovereign governments made no difference. Cilicia is the most prominent and relatively recent case. The condition of the peasantry was not any different from other locations in Armenia. Himself from the aristocracy as well as the clergy, Nersēs Lambronats‘i (1153-1198), the Bishop of Tarsus and a nephew of Catholicos Nersēs IV Shnorhali (r. 1166-1173), complained about the condition of the common people and the peasants. He condemned the arbitrary and harsh treatment they received from their masters also the clergy. Decades after the *Datastanagirk‘* of Gōsh, in 1265, at the instructions of King Lewon III (1236-1289), Smbat Sparapet Constable (1208-1276) a brother of King Hetum I, prepared a compilation based on a translation of the *Assizes of Antioch*, also the *Datastanagirk‘* of Gōsh, in addition to existing traditions, practices and literature.

Third, from the time of Grigor the Enlightener, the existing laws concerned the church, its theology, internal order, the clergy and the like. Secular and civic matters remained pending and largely dependent on the local authorities, both religious and secular.

The last and most significant yet little noticed real factor was Islamic rule over most Armenians as of the 7th century. Cilicia was an exception. Everywhere, the Muslim authorities, be they Arabs, Turks, Persians and Mongols (after their adoption of Islam around 1300s), allowed, also required, that

¹²⁴ Arzoumanian, *The Book of Canon Law*, 8.

internal, or as it is called “personal matters” (*aḥwāl shakhṣiyyah*) be dealt with by the religious authorities in each *dhimmī* community, and not by the *Sharī‘ah* in Islamic courts. This arrangement simply faced the church with the chronic problem of the absence of civic laws. The judicial function of the church was supposed to be based on the Christian moral system, again as perceived and implemented by the religious authorities at the time and the location.

I therefore strongly suggest, and as Thomson wrote too, that it was precisely this situation that drove Armenians to seek justice in the courts of the Muslims.

Only when Armenian communities found themselves under foreign, more especially Muslim control did the absence of a secular code suddenly become a serious drawback ... In the absence of a legal code, disputes had to be adjudicated in Muslim courts. It was precisely to prevent this practice, which some Armenians abused to personal advantage, that Mkhit‘ar undertook the task of compiling a lawcode ... His work, in many later adaptations, formed the basis for an Armenian legal tradition both in Armenia itself” and elsewhere.¹²⁵

In the Preface, and in several passages of the *Datastanagirk‘*, Gōsh wrote that there was an urgency to develop Armenian-Christian civic laws, or what he called a “book of judgment”, to prevent Armenians from resorting to the judgment of the *aylazgis* or the Muslims, who at the time were Persians, Turks and Arabs. Indeed, he uses Arabic and Persian terms, but betrays no fluency in any of these languages, and no direct knowledge about the Qur‘ān and the *Ḥadīth*.

The only book of laws available at the time was the first compilation made in 720s at Duin, by Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i. It was called *Book of Armenian Canons* or *Kanonagirk‘ Hayots‘*.¹²⁶ In addition to canons issued at church councils or accepted by them, Ōdznets‘i brought together canons ascribed to catholicos Grigor the Illuminator (r. 301-325), Nersēs I the Great (r. 353-373), Sahak I Part‘ew (r. 386/7-439), Yovsēp‘ I Hoghitsmets‘i (r. 440-452), Yovhan I Mandakuni (r. 478-490), Mesrop Mashtots‘ (362-440) and others.

A first code of civic laws appeared four centuries later by Vardapet Dawit‘ Alawkay Ordi (Dawit‘ Son of Alawik, c.1070s - 1140) from Gandzak, an immediate predecessor and senior contemporary of Gōsh. He wrote a *Canonical Code* (*Kanonakan Orēnsdrut‘iwn*). It had 97 articles

¹²⁵ Thomson, “Introduction, *Lawcode*”, 13-14.

¹²⁶ Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i, *Book of Armenian Canons*, ed. Yakobyan.

related to marriage, labor, crime, education, finance and the like. Gōsh made direct quotes from Dawit's "*Penitential*", as Thomson calls it.¹²⁷

After the *Datastanagirk'*, over a century later a third translation-compilation appeared in Cilicia. It was "discovered" by Y. Kahanay Mkrian, in *Oragir* of Istanbul (#34, 1870), as an "unknown" book of laws or *Ōrinagirk'* by Smbat Sparapet Constable (1208-1276), a brother of king Hetum I (1226-1269) of Cilicia. Mkryan believed that it was just a translation of the *Assizes of Antioch*,¹²⁸ transliterated as *Ansiz Antak'oy*. It was commissioned by King Lewon III, as mentioned. In the colophon, Smbat wrote that it was a translation based on all that was available at Antioch, concerning the Assizes (*assize* means judicial inquest). The manuscript with illuminations was made in 1331. The scribe was none other than the great Cilician painter Sargis Pitsak (active 1319-1358). This manuscript and another copy made in 1618 at Istanbul, are now at St. Lazar, Venice.

The *Ōrinagirk'* of Smbat has 17 articles about the rights and obligations of liege and serfs, and 21 articles dealing with civilians. In 1876 the entire manuscript was published at Venice, with the French version on facing pages.¹²⁹ The book is deliberately written in vernacular in order to make it accessible to the public. Despite the impression it leaves as just a rendering of the *Assizes of Antioch*, the *Ōrinagirk'* was in turn a compilation. Smpat borrowed extensively and sometimes verbatim, from the *Datastanagirk'* of Gōsh, as well as the *Kanonagirk'* of Ōdznets'i, church canons, including apocryphal ones. The book is both "*Ansiz Andak'oy*" and "*Ansiz Hayots'*", says Bastamyants'.¹³⁰

The first publication of the *Datastanagirk'* was from a manuscript in 1880 at Ējmiatsin, edited by Bastamyants' from a secondary recension. "Even though this edition was from a secondary recension, with its detailed commentary it naturally attracted a good deal of attention in Armenian scholarly circles; for Mkhitar had been the first to compile a legal code that included secular as well as canonical precepts."¹³¹ In 1905, much of Mkhitar's book became available in German through Josef Karst's edition and translation of the 13th century Code of Smbat the Constable.

¹²⁷ Thomson, "Introduction, *Lawcode*", 27. A *penitential* is a book or set of church rules concerning the Christian sacrament of penance, *apashkharhut'iwn*.

¹²⁸ See Bastamyants', "Introduction, *Datastanagirk' Hayots'*", 59-60

¹²⁹ Kurdian, "Assizes of Antioch", 134.

¹³⁰ Bastamyants', "Introduction, *Datastanagirk'*", 61.

¹³¹ Thomson, "Introduction, *Lawcode*", 11.

The *Datastanagirk'* of Gōsh is divided into 251 chapters of varying length, and the topics discussed are not arranged in any apparent order. The same topic may appear more than once. It has a very elaborate preface or *Nakhadrut'iwn*, in which Gōsh writes about the circumstances of the project for a book of laws. He specifically says that he began his work in the year 1184 (633 of the Armenian era, which starts on February 4, 1184), probably shortly after his return from Cilicia and just before settling at the Monastery of Getik. The initiative seems to be his, but he also gratefully acknowledges the encouragement and the support of Poghos and Yovsēp'. He is also grateful for the support of Catholicos Step'anos of Aghuank'. He talks at some length about the reasons for writing the book, the main one being the absence of an Armenian code of laws. The "seventh" reason (of twelve) that he discusses in the Preface, is the following: "In the absence of courts, they [Armenians] went to the courts of the Muslims resorting to the judgment of the Prophet in absentia." He adds that this practice was like going to the cast-metal idols and asking their judgment, explicitly considering Islam a pagan religion.¹³²

Obviously, "believers in Christ" cannot go to the tribunal of "non-believers in Christ" as he says, because of the great difference between the two sides.¹³³ Like most of his predecessors, Gōsh uses the word *aylazgi* for Muslims, elsewhere he uses *aylaseṛ* or "of another genus-kind." The translation of both these words as "foreign", as Thomson and others do, is misleading. Foreign is literally *awtar* or *ōtar*. The ninth reason for writing the book is (in Thomson's translation):

... our created nature is forever forgetful of the good in accordance with the various afflictions of soul and body ... we have composed this lawcode for the sake of remembrance [of the good]. What at that moment we cannot recall, on taking it into our hands we shall recall; and we shall indicate to foreign races that we live by a lawcode, so that being put to silence thereby, they may not become reproachful of us.¹³⁴

Mkhit'ar's main motive was to prevent Christian Armenians from having recourse to Muslim courts. His appreciation of the Muslim legal mind is obvious. However, he does not hesitate to comment on the negative elements in Islam and the practices of the Muslims. "Some of Mkhit'ar's

¹³² Եւթներորդի՛ զի մի՛ վասն ոչ գոլոյ զատաստան երբիցեն առ այլազգիս ի զատաստան, ըստ ամբաստանելոյ մարգարէին առ ի չգոյէ: Bastamyants', *Datastanagirk'*, 11. The text starts by a new pagination after the Introduction, 11; Thomson, "Introduction, *Lawcode*", 22.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

comments fall into the category of traditional Armenian anti-Muslim insults, but others are of greater interest as possible reflections of 12th century relationships between the two communities”, says Thomson.¹³⁵

Mkhit'ar simply wanted to stop the practice of Christians having recourse to Muslim courts hoping to win their case. “We see many of the believers rushing there, when they see that by going to the Muslims their case is carried out victoriously ... But it is not right for the sake of avarice and victory for believers to go to the unbelievers, but to the believers, even if the case is lost.”¹³⁶

The sources of Mkhit'ar's creative and surprisingly original compilation of laws are diverse. The most unpredictable and novel are the Islamic legal traditions and practices. In Chapter 10 of his Preface he wrote:

From which books then we are going to compile the details of the code, and from which nations, whereby our truth is confirmed; and how the text of the code is encompassed. It is necessary to indicate the books and nations from which he who will hand down in writing the details of the code will take them, in order that the truth may be manifest, and no one may stumble and be guided by some imaginary argument. Now first and foremost we reckon it reliable to take from the natural laws by which the heathens lived, because they learned to condemn thieves and murderers and all malefactors. Second, the Muslims have accepted what pertains to the natural laws; and we accept [that, but] not what has been written by them, because it is not theirs, as was indicated previously. For we accept what is¹³⁷ special to our own laws, but we reject the vicious conjunctions thereto, though sometimes we accept what is lawful as the fulfilment of the Gospel. Third, we must collect from all nations which believe in the Lord, as from relatives, what we have heard and seen. That is, from all [nations] we must bring together whatever may be appropriate for our own needs.

Now, from written texts: First, from Exodus, Deuteronomy, and the other books, which is a true God-given code? For in many places it reminds us, saying: “These are commandments and testimonies and judgments which the Lord has commanded you.” Second, from the canonical prescriptions, because there too are found not only the ability to select a statute potentially, but also the individual details of the code. Third, from all the books of the Old and New [Testaments] one must take the sense and advice. For what are all the testaments, if not advice for judgment? So, such a collection makes our truth manifest by a double model.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, 47.

¹³⁶ Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Lawcode*, trans. Thomson, 138.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

In sum, the sources of *Gōsh* are:

- The laws of other Christian peoples, such as Byzantine and Syriac
- Islamic laws and practices, but not the Qur’ān directly
- The Old Testament, and in particular the *Pentateuch*,¹³⁹ and the New Testament
- Canons issued by church councils, also those adopted by the church from various sources
- The “natural” [rational] laws¹⁴⁰

The identifiable quotations are usually stated more or less verbatim in the context of discussions. They are from three main sources: the Old Testament, the *Kanonagirk’* (of *Ōdznets’i*), and the early 12th century *Kanonakan Orēnsdrut’iwn* or *Pentitential* by Dawit’ Alawkay Ordi.¹⁴¹ “Several important questions remain”, says Thomson. “The most significant is whether Mkhit’ar, when not quoting a previous source, is describing an oral tradition (and he refers frequently to the varieties of local practice) or is prescribing a new rule of his own.”¹⁴²

Already in his Preface, *Gōsh* prepares the reader to see that it is important and beneficial to learn from and apply the laws of not just other Christians but the Muslims as well, to whose courts the Armenians have been resorting anyway.

Gōsh shows no interest in the life and teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad. Only once he uses the term *awrēnsdir* or lawmaker, legislator for him. “The passage occurs in his list of reasons for composing a law-code in the context of blame both from infidels and from Christians that a code would not be in complete conformity with the Gospel. Mkhit’ar blames this attitude partly on the ‘legislator’s [Muḥammad] lack of understanding and partly on Christians being ignorant of the divine will as expressed in the Gospel. The argument is rather tortuous and unclear. But the passage gives no details about any specific Muslim tradition.”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ The *Pentateuch*, literally “five books” in Greek — is the law of God, as revealed to Moses and recorded in the first five books of the Bible. It is also known as the Torah. These books are the Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (“second law”). They contain some of the oldest and most famous stories in the Bible, including those of Adam and Eve, Jacob and his brothers, Moses, the Ten Commandments.

¹⁴⁰ See Bastanyants’, Introduction *Datastanagirk’*, 99.

¹⁴¹ Thomson, Introduction *Lawcode*, 27.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, Appendix 4, 49.

Only once Gōsh refers indirectly to Mahmet as the “leader” (*aṙajnord*) of the Muslims and twice by name. Otherwise, Mahmet as a definable figure does not appear in the *Datastanagirkʻ*.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Gōsh shows no interest in and knowledge of Mahmet in Armenian literature. His only concern is the law. He says that the Muslims have their code from the Law of Moses, which however they altered. They have also accepted what pertains to the natural law, for even the pagans had learned to condemn thieves, murderers and evildoers. The Christians may adopt whatever is good and reject whatever they wish in their code.¹⁴⁵

Concerning the subjects of resurrection, according to him the Muslims confess a resurrection, but they concede no grace to the soul. They believe that there is a kingdom with women, and a paradise for fornicators. They also say that there is retribution for deeds, and they adorn tombs. Furthermore, they certainly believe in prognostication. In their foolish philosophy they speak of the stars as indicating the child, i.e. as foretelling its fate.¹⁴⁶ Concerning practices, he observes that the Muslims commit all sorts of evil, reckoning ablution as a purification of the soul and the body. Furthermore, they honor the pleasures of the body. They prohibit wine, yet they all drink.

In all cases, as far as the Armenians are concerned, equity in their courts of justice is impossible. “How can equity according to our religion be found in the court of those whose way of life is so alien and whose faith is crooked?”, asks Gōsh.¹⁴⁷ As a reminder, he puts down a general statement about the superiority of Christianity:

We confess the holy Trinity as one godhead and power and glory, and the true Son of God who became true man, indissoluble in unity and eternal. And we are zealous for good works. Even if we are somewhat deceived in the desires of the world, we are not hypocrites; but we confess and believe in forgiveness. We love each other and grant forgiveness to transgressors. We desire purity and we abominate sinners. We observe fasts and prayer. We die for the faith and resurrection and retribution, and we expect the kingdom.¹⁴⁸

Thomson discusses the connections between the various aspects and stipulations of the *Datastanagirkʻ* with Islam and Muslims under the following

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-51; Mkhitʻar Gōsh, *Girkʻ Datastani*, ed. Tʻorosyan, 23.

¹⁴⁶ Thomson, Introduction *Lawcode*, Appendix 4, 51.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

subjects/headings: unbelievers (*anhawat*), schismatics (*herdzuatsoghk'*), sectarians (*aghandawork'*), Mahmet, God, resurrection, practices, Muslim courts, witnesses, oaths, inheritance, marriage with Muslims, tax, sales to Muslims, servants, blood money, fines, execution, control over appointments, apostasy.

In order to give the reader an idea about the style and approach of Gōsh to the laws and their applications in a mixed society, the following are passages where the term *aylazgi/aylaser* or Muslim appears directly, in Thomson's translation.¹⁴⁹

As for a thief of royal treasure, if he is an *aylazgi*, let him be punished in the eyes or hands, and his wife and children and inheritance be confiscated to the royal court and he proscribed. But if he is a Christian, after seizing the plunder and selling the person and his wife and children to relatives or Christians, [the king] may release him. But if this does not happen, let him be punished in the eyes or hands, and [then] released.¹⁵⁰

If an *aylazgi* kill a Christian deliberately, let him be killed in his stead; but if without premeditation, let him be punished in his hands, and let him pay the blood price.¹⁵¹

Speaking of blood price ... for *aylazgis* let it be a third, in that they do not have the grace of reason [irrational] or of Christianity.¹⁵²

If a Christian kill an *aylazgi* deliberately, let him pay the blood price according to the example shown; and if without premeditation, half of the price. And the price shall go to the royal court, but one third shall be given to his own people.¹⁵³

It is not legal for princes to tax believers whom *aylazgis* tax; because it is right to take tax from *aylazgis*, but not from the former, as the Georgians do to those subject to them.¹⁵⁴

When a wife discovers her husband's evil passion for sodomy or bestiality, or his pollution with *aylazgis*, let her be authorized to leave him.¹⁵⁵

If [adultery] is committed by *aylazgis* and they are under our control, it is legal to castrate them.¹⁵⁶

It is not allowed for a bishop to involve himself in worldly concerns, but he must be occupied with ecclesiastical needs; otherwise let him be deposed, because no one can serve two masters, according to the Lord's saying. "We must not understand this only with regard to being concerned with the affairs

¹⁴⁹ Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Lawcode*, trans. Thomson, 109-304.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

of princes, but also whether by agreement he received his diocese from *aylazgis*.¹⁵⁷

If a Christian kidnaps a Christian and sells him to *aylazgis* and the wicked deed becomes known, for the sake of his attaining penance let him not die but be thrown into prison.¹⁵⁸

If anyone strikes his servant or his maidservant with a rod and they die at his hand ... whether they are *aylazgis* or Christians, for this let them be fined the blood price.¹⁵⁹

If a bull hurts a man or woman and they die, let the bull be stoned; let its meat not be eaten, and the owner of the bull will not be guilty ... Let slaughtering the bull replace stoning it; and after selling the meat to *aylazgis*, let them give the money to the poor.¹⁶⁰

[Still in the subject of the bull, the initial statute taken from Exodus, and modified by Gōsh, he says] Let there be a distinction between Christian and *aylazgi*.¹⁶¹

Any man who will curse God will incur sin because he cursed the name of the Lord. Let him die; let the whole people stone him by throwing stones. Whether he is a foreigner or a native, for his naming the name of the Lord let him be killed.¹⁶²

Now if an *aylazgi* happens to be condemned to death, it is not outside the law, for the sake of honoring our nature, to command him to be buried on whatever day it might be.¹⁶³

[Concerning the statutes for those who mingle with foreigners through marriage] It is not allowed that those who are of our church should join their sons or daughters in irregular or lewd marriages with *aylazgis* to marry into them or take a wife from them. Let this be the statute for such persons in accordance with the will of the canons. If they give [sons or daughters] to heathen foreigners and they are [thus] deprived of communion, let the givers also be deprived of their communion. And if [they give sons or daughters] to schismatics (*aghadowor*) with whom we do not communicate, let the parents who give in marriage with them pay sentence of remorse.¹⁶⁴

I have heard concerning this statute that it is not right to kill for one's own [safety], but it is legitimate to kill for the sake of one's companions when the brigands are foreigners. To preserve priesthood or not, let that be examined by vardapets according to the circumstances.¹⁶⁵

There is again voluntary and involuntary. When someone shoots an arrow at game or a wild beast, or in some other fashion, and it hits an enemy, at

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

which he rejoices — that is a combination of the two. In that regard, in the statutes for kings, when an *aylazgi* kills a Christian involuntarily, we have laid down the sentence as for a voluntary [murder],¹⁶⁶ because it is natural for them to rejoice at our death.¹⁶⁶

But let us give an example of the statute. As was written in the statutes for kings, although a foreigner may kill a Christian involuntarily, in that he rejoices he is to be judged as a voluntary [murderer] for the blood price. But a Christian killing a Christian is voluntary.¹⁶⁷

[Concerning raving animals] If [the animal] is not healed, let them slaughter it and sell it to the foreigners let it not be sold alive, nor back to Christians. As for the inedible [unclean] animals, if they are incurable let them sell them to foreigners; and if they are healed, to Christians. The [rule of] restitution will be the same.¹⁶⁸

So those who come to the Mystery are not to be with the thoughtless among the foreigners; but if they presume, let the bishop depose them from their rank. The deceivers are to be totally expelled, who come in the guise of religious and dwell in the sites of vows and cause much stumbling to the simple-minded.¹⁶⁹

In Armenian literature, the *Book of Judgment*, practically an innovation and an original compendium, was a singular phenomenon in many respects. It defined both religious and ethnic Armenian identity in the context of Muslim-Armenian interactions. In Europe, “canon law”, as Christian religious law is called, was one of several legal systems simultaneously operative within medieval Europe. The Jews and Muslims are peoples of different laws. Armenians referred to Islam as the “Laws of Mahmet.” The “concept of legal identity” is central to these processes, both in the East and the West. Thus, in the canons themselves, written in mixed societies, there were also laws for the *aylazgis* or the Muslims.¹⁷⁰

In the Catholic Church, canon laws published from the late 12th through late 15th centuries, more or less coincided with the Crusader periods and their aftermath, also in Spain, they regularly included a section titled “On Jews and Saracens and their [Christian] servants.”¹⁷¹ In general, the “impact of Muslim law on its Christian counterpart has been studied, but “the place of Muslims themselves within Eastern canon law has not previously been examined,” says Friedenreich. In his article “Muslims in Eastern Canon Law, 1000-1500”, he surveys the references to the Muslims

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁷⁰ See Friedenreich, “Muslims in Western Canon Law”, 42.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

and others within the normative literature of the Armenian, Coptic, Syrian Orthodox, and Church of the East traditions, contrasting these references with those found in Western canon law.¹⁷² Among others, the work of Gōsh is part of the basic material of his research.

The most important works in the period from the 10th to the 15th centuries are compendiums, which “preserve earlier norms, many of which predate the rise of Islam.” The *Datastanagirk*‘ is one of the important Christian manual of civic laws. The other major authors in this area are Abū’l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Ṭayyib (q.v.), secretary of the catholicos of the Church of the East (d. 1043);¹⁷³ Gregory Barhebraeus (Latin Abulpharagius, Syriac Mor Gregorios Bar Ebraya, the *maḥrrian-catholicos*, chief bishop the Syriac Orthodox Church in the 13th century, d. 1286);¹⁷⁴ ‘Abdisho’ Bar Brikhā of Nisibis, metropolitan of the Church of the East (d. 1318).¹⁷⁵ There is the Synodicon of the Syrian Orthodox Church (1204), a chronological compendium of legal material, whose concluding sections date from the 11th and 12th centuries.¹⁷⁶

Even though, says Freidenreich, none of these works addresses the traditional comments about the Muslim “aggressors, they also make no effort to establish a legal framework to regulate other interactions such as military, commercial or personal legal matters with the Muslims.”¹⁷⁷ It must be noted here that each of the Christian groups in the East referred to Muslims differently. The Armenian references were cited previously and will be discussed in the next chapters. The Syriac speaking referred to them as “gentiles” (*ḥanpē*), that is, non-Christian non-Jews,¹⁷⁸ remotely similar to the Armenian *aylazgi* or of another nation/people.

In general, Western and Eastern canon laws are very different in their approaches to canon laws, depending on the “scope and tenor of their laws regarding Muslims.” One of the sources on the eastern side was precisely the Islamic Law, says Freidenreich. “The pervasive influence of Islamic Law on its Eastern Christian counterparts is evident within the content

¹⁷² Freidenreich, “Muslims in Eastern Canon Law”, 45.

¹⁷³ Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Fiqh al-Naṣrāniyya*, 167-68.

¹⁷⁴ Barhebraeus, *Nomocanon*, ed. P. Bedjan (1898).

¹⁷⁵ *The Nomocanon of Metropolitan Abdisho of Nisibis. A facsimile edition of Ms 64 from the collection of the Church of the East in Thrissur*, ed. I. Perczel (Piscataway NJ, 2005). The *Nomocanons* of ‘Abdisho’ and Barhebraeus were published in Latin translation by Angelo Mai, *Scriptorumveterum nova collectio e Vaticani codicibus*, vol. 10 (Rome, 1838).

¹⁷⁶ Freidenreich, “Muslims in Eastern Canon Law”, 46.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

and structure of many Eastern law codes.” Inheritance laws are instances. Even though Barhebraeus dedicated no section to the Muslims, he nevertheless employed “a code by the Shāfi‘ī jurist Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) (q.v.), albeit without acknowledgment of this source.”¹⁷⁹

In all cases, the canon laws were collections that successfully made syntheses of the old and new practices and guidelines but within a primarily Christian moral system. The manner in which the community and the political environment were envisioned in each case made the critical difference.

Always regarding Christian laws superior, Gōsh nevertheless learned from the worthwhile aspects of Islamic laws. Similar to other clergy in the region, under the overwhelming presence of the Muslim social-legal-political system, he too realized that “without a uniform and detailed civil legislation of their own”, the Christians “risked losing control over their communities.”¹⁸⁰

Laws routinely forbid recourse by Christians to Muslim courts.¹⁸¹ We find echoes of the same grave concerns of Gōsh concerning the Islamic legal system and courts of justice in Barhebraeus over half a century later. He held similar positions as Gōsh. Some Islamic rituals, such as weddings and funerals, proved to be attractive and the church had to develop a strategy to limit their influence. References to this issue are very common in medieval Armenian literature from early times. Freidenreich says that, taking up a position about wedding, among others, ‘Abdisho’ of Nisibis emphasized that the wedding ritual serves to distinguish Christians from Jews and gentiles, condemning other practices and forbidding Christians from engaging in practices of Muslims.¹⁸²

Following the pre-Islamic regulations, Eastern Churches prevented Christians from participating in pagan (*hanpē*) festivals and consuming the food associated with such occasions. The same position was held toward Muslim holidays as well. Gōsh, however, seems to have no interest in these matters.

Butchering and consuming meat by both sides proved to be problematic. It was first brought up in the polemical treatise of Grigor Tat‘ewats‘i. Much earlier, Gōsh had a clause about special cases of selling the meat of an animal that had gored a person, but the problem seems to have become an issue under Shī‘ī Law at the end of the 14th century.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 52.

There are regulations about the sacraments and rituals for children of mixed marriages and converts, and conversions in Syriac and Armenian canons. Gōsh speaks of the Muslims who blaspheme Baptism, churches, priests, the Cross and Christ. Such people are to be stoned to death, he says.¹⁸³

In order to maintain the family as a thoroughly Christian domain, employing Jewish or gentile wet nurses was prohibited, in addition to marriage with Muslims and non-Christians. Adultery with an *aylazgi* was more problematic than otherwise, according to Gōsh.¹⁸⁴ He too forbade marriage to foreigners,¹⁸⁵ living with a spouse who apostatized,¹⁸⁶ and other circumstances related to inter-faith practical matters. Similar to the other authors and clergy in the Eastern as well as Western Christian communities, Gōsh too was waging a battle through his *Book of Judgment*.

As we follow the literature, after the 10th century, the loyalty of the Christian Armenians to their faith, rituals and practices living under Muslim rule was an absolute primacy for the church. In addition to forced or circumstantial conversions, acculturation, integration and deliberate apostasy were facts on the ground.

D. MAHMET AT THE END OF AN ERA IN ARMENIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY — VARDAN AREWELTS'Ī, KIRAKOS GANDZAKETS'Ī

By the end of the 13th century, two authors from Gandzak (northern Karabagh), Vardan Arewelts'ī and his classmate Kirakos Gandzakets'ī adopted the “Armenian Mahmet” previously brought to completion by Samuēl and Mkhit'ar.

1. *Vardan Mets Arewelts'ī*

Born probably in 1200, very little is known about the early life of Vardan Mets Arewelts'ī (“great”, “easterner”). By the time he entered the monastic schools, both Mkhit'ars, Anets'ī and Gōsh, had passed away. Together with Kirakos Gandzakets'ī, he studied under Yovhannēs Vardapet. In 1240, he was in Cilicia on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and carried an encyclical letter from Catholicos Costandin I

¹⁸³ Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Lawcode*, trans. Thomson, 175.

¹⁸⁴ Freidenreich, “Muslims in Eastern Canon Law”, 55.

¹⁸⁵ Mkhit'ar Gōsh, *Lawcode*, trans. Thomson, 163

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 139.

Bardzrberdts'i (r. 1221-1267) at Sis, to various regions in Armenia.¹⁸⁷ He made a second journey to Cilicia in 1248 and stayed at the catholicos' fortress of Hromkla. According to Alishan, prior to his return to Ayrarat around 1251, he was given a copy of the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian in Syriac. He translated it with the assistance of a Syrian priest called Ishokh.¹⁸⁸ In 1264/5 he was invited to Tabriz by Doghuz Khat'un, the Christian wife of Mongol Ilkhan Hulawu/Hulaku/Hulagu, and spent some time in the palace. He had great praise for Hulaku for his "benevolence" toward the Christians.

The *History* is Vardan's major and last work, the full title is *Historical Compilation Expounded by Vardan Vardapet, (Havak'umn Patmut'ean Vardanay Vardapeti Lusabaneal)*, it is also called *Universal History (Tiez-erakan Patmut'iwn)*.¹⁸⁹ It is written at Khor Virap (about 20 miles south of Yerevan, on the border with Turkey). This institution was established by his own initiative, between 1260 and 1270. Vardan taught in several monasteries before settling at Khor Virap. In 1260, he copied works by Gregory of Nyssa and during the next year he composed a *Commentary on the Pentateuch*. In 1265 he was at Haghbat in the north, where he wrote commentaries on the *Song of Songs* and the *Psalms*. In 1267 he was again at Khor Virap, where he wrote a commentary on Daniel. Vardan was also

¹⁸⁷ Thomson, "Vardan Arevelts'i", 443.

¹⁸⁸ See Dadoyan, "The Chronicle of Michael the Syrian". Concerning the subject of the two versions of the Armenian translation of the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, extensive research has been done and a critical edition is in process by Prof. Andrea Schmidt (UCLouvain). See A. Schmidt, "Die armenische Weltchronik des Michael Syrus. Identifikation der zwei Hauptversionen", in: R.B. Finazzi – F. Forte – C. Milani – M. Moriggi (eds.), *Circolazione di testi e superamento delle barriere linguistiche e culturali nella tradizione orientale*, Milano: Centro Ambrosiano, 2020 (*Orientalia Ambrosiana*, 7), 3-20. The article deals with the two Armenian versions of the *Chronicle*. She explains: "They have been extant in Armenian translation since the end of the 13th century and present two different compilations of the original Armenian translation from Syriac. The article examines the origin and historical context of the two versions. It shows that the earliest witness of transmission of Version I must be located in Siwnik'. The version is closely related to the cultural sponsorship of Step'anos and John Örbelyan. The oldest manuscript of version I (Nor Jugha 525, ante 1302 AD) contains a deed of donation by John Örbelyan for Verin Noravank'. Version II of the Armenian translation seems to have been transmitted exclusively in Cilicia. It is argued that the version has its origin in the Cilician Monastery of Drazark. Only few manuscripts are preserved. The oldest witness (Jerusalem 32, 1273 AD) was written by Grigor of Akants' at the Monastery of Akn. Finally, the article gives a tabular overview of the general structure of the two versions."

¹⁸⁹ Vardan Arewelts'i, *Universal History*, trans. T'osunyan. Attached by different pagination is the original version in Alishan's edition in classical Armenian. *Historical Compilation Expounded by Vardan Vardapet [Havak'umn Patmut'ean Vardanay Vardapeti Lusabaneal]*. Edited and introduction by Ghewond Alishan. Venice, 1862. This is the edition in classical Armenian used in this study.

at the Monastery and School of Gladzor (south east of Yerevan, in Siwnik'). In addition to biblical commentaries, he composed a brief *Geography*, the only known medieval Armenian work of this kind other than the more extensive *Geography* by the 7th century polymath Anania Shirakats'i (influenced by Ptolemy). He died at Khor Virap in 1270 and was buried there. Colophons of manuscripts contain information about his work and life.¹⁹⁰

As it was customary in universal histories, his *History* started at the "beginning of time", in biblical terms, and ended at the events of the year 1268. With the exception of his accounts of the Mongol attacks in his own lifetime, Vardan's history is basically a compilation from previous histories. Predictably, his references to Mahmet and his laws were unfavorable. He considered any alliance with the Muslim side, such as the one made by Vard, a son of T'ëodoros R̥shtuni, a "betrayal" of the Christians. He found the Byzantine invasions at the time, between 650s and 660s, justifiable, because "the Armenians obeyed the Hagarians."¹⁹¹ There is no mention of the famous peace treaty in 652 between Mu'āwiyah and T'ëodoros R̥shtuni. He referred at some length to the correspondence between Caliph 'Umar II and Emperor Leo. According to his narrative, it was by "orders" of 'Umar that Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets'i traveled to Damascus, and as a result, he carried out persecutions against the Paulician heretics and the Chalcedonians, the allies of Byzantium.¹⁹²

The Crusaders, or the "*p'rang*"s, as he calls them, are in turn depicted in negative terms. The Seljuks are the *sk'iwat's'ik'* (Scythians) or *Turk's*, the Muslim Arabs are Tajiks or Ismaelites or simply Hagarians. The Mongols are the *t'at'ars*. Once again, the word "Ismayel" is an umbrella term for the body politic of the Arab Muslims. He mentioned the Dānishmandids, or the "*danshmans*", who he says, are "said to be from the Armenian nation."¹⁹³ Vardan's history stops at the year 1268. He too has a story of Mahmet, the success of the Islamic state, rites and practices. Basically, his narrative is a short version of Mkhitar Anets'i's. At the time, he seems to have had access to the same *K'ashun* or Mkhitar's text. The following is his account, in my literal translation from the original version in classical Armenian from Alishan's edition:

¹⁹⁰ See Mat'ewosyan, *Colophons*.

¹⁹¹ Vardan Arewelts'i, *Historical Compilation*, ed. Alishan, 75.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 116

At that time there was a man from the sons of Ismayel, whose name was merchant Mahamat'. He was born in the city of Madina, a two-days' journey from Mak'a, in the tribe called Korēsh, [he was] the son of Abdlay, who died leaving him an orphan. [later on] He joined a certain merchant and excelled [in his work] at his house, when the merchant died, he became master of the house and married his [widowed] wife. He used to travel to Egypt with his [caravan of] camels, and there he met a certain hermit named Sargis, of the sect of Arius and Cerinthus, who taught him about God from ancient books and [taught him] of the writings about the childhood of our Lord [Jesus].¹⁹⁴ Upon his return home, he preached what he had heard, but his clan persecuted him, and he went to the desert of P'āran [Mecca]. When the twelve thousand Jews arrived there, using them as bait, he preached to the sons of Ismayel, about the God of Abraham and that if they worship him [Mahmet] they would inherit the land that God granted to Abraham [their ancestor].¹⁹⁵

Vardan briefly describes the successes of "the army of Mahmet" against the Byzantines, the failure of a large Greek counterattack into "Arabia", and the arrogance of the Muslims as a result. He continues:

In the year 67 of our era [618], upon the success of Mahmet, his followers asked him to put down laws. He [then] called the temple of snakes, which were [still] worshipped, al-K'ayuba [al-Ka'bah], which means "gate of God" and called his native city the "house of Abraham."¹⁹⁶ [Previously] when Christianity spread and prospered, the idol of Remana, who is in fact that of lame Hep'estos [Hephaistos], was taken from Damascus and thrown into the desert. The Arabs who found it brought it to the temple of snakes. But the temple priests refused to place it there, taking it outside, they made a site for one of its feet on a rock and set it there. The Ethiopian merchants stole it for the gold that the Ismaelites had cast it in. [As a consequence] There was war between the two peoples and lasted to oblivion. About this site he [Mahmet] said that it was the footprint of Abraham [carved there] when he came to visit his son. Since Ismayel was out hunting, he asked his wife, "Where is your husband?" and she said, "Go away, you deranged old man." Then Abraham replied, "When he comes home, tell him to change the door of his house." When Ismayel returned, he sensed the odor of his father, he questioned his wife, and she told him what she was told. On hearing this, Ismayel divorced his wife, and took another and another as far as a seventh. This [last] one begged Abraham to descend from his donkey so she might anoint his feet. Mahmet said that Abraham put down only one foot on the threshold and the rock yielded to his feet. He did not put down his other foot from his mount, [because] he had sworn to Sarah that he would not dismount, as she feared that he might [again] be with Hagar. This is the fable of Mahmet. He ordered that they [the Muslims] should come there [al-Ka'bah] from every region to

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

worship, and said [that] they should go around the rock [skipping] on one foot shouting “*lbayk‘, lbayk‘*”, and as though responding to someone, “*ay, ay, awas, awas.*” Also, crossing a valley they [were told to] slaughter an animal, then mounting a beast, flee as far as the hill of Mak‘ay, and if in their flight some clothing fell or was entangled, no one was allowed to look back. [Thus] Running between the two rocks which they call Safa and Emra, they go from rock to rock seven times, throwing stones and without pausing. They say that Mahmet did so and taught them to do the same. Skipping on one foot refers to the single footprint on the rock and the slaying of an animal in the valley and the fleeing, they say, are such because [previously] Mahmet offered sacrifice to all the demons so that they might show him [demonic] visions. However, when they [actually] appeared to him he fled [in fear]. Running around the two rocks and throwing stones [are because] these rocks were previously worshipped as idols.¹⁹⁷ Once, while Mahmet was praying according to his custom, a raged dog attacked him, and he threw stones at it. He ordered [his followers] to do the same. Snakes and serpents are not killed because they were [previously] worshipped. The slaughter of dogs, they say, is because when Mahmet died they did not wish to bury him, expecting that he would rise on the third day like our Lord Jesus Christ ... but dogs mauled his face. When they found out, they slew the dogs, and ordered the same to be done on the same month [of each year]. He taught (his followers) to say, “God is one and that no one is companion to him, and Mahmet is his servant.” As for those who say, based on what some Jew said, that the prophets spoke about Mahmet as they did about Christ, and that Isaiah saw two people riding [one] on a donkey and [the other] on a camel. And one day, suddenly Mahmet disappeared and soon reappeared saying, “Peace be upon you and the mercy and grace of God.” When people asked him in astonishment, “Whence do you come from, and what is this new greeting of yours, and which god’s grace did you bring to us?”, he said, “God took me to Mak‘ay, to the house of my father Abraham, and revealed his wishes. Tomorrow he will send us laws.” Taking a heifer, that had just given birth, on the public square he separated it from the calf. He then wrote whatever he fancied, fixed it to its horns, and sent it to the desert with [trusted] friends. He ordered it to be released the next day, while he himself remained [behind] and gathered a crowd. When the cow arrived mooing, sweating and bursting into the crowd, seeking the calf, he ordered it to be seized. Taking the piece of paper, he kissed it and said that it came from God. To this day it is written about this at the beginning of the *Ghuran, Surat al-Bak‘aray*, which means “laws of the cow.” Mahmet ordered to pray five times [a day] with ablutions, and instead of trumpets of Israel[ites], [he ordered] to summon [the faithful] from a high place, referring to “Go up on the mountain of Sion, oh evangelist.” And they call the one who cries [from this high point] *modin*, which means “he who bears [witness] to the faith.” Putting the fingers on the ears, means that one hears with the ear, willy-nilly. And he [Mahmet] called Christ the Word and Spirit. And they say

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

that he performed a miracle, by bringing the moon down, then after dividing it into four parts, putting the pieces back together and sending the moon back to heaven.¹⁹⁸ [Repeating the story of *K'aghrt'*, Vardan wrote] Previously, the prince of Ismayel ... found Mahmet and agreed to all he said ... Together, when they gained more power, they conquered Palestine and sacked Jerusalem. The Christians had to take the Holy Cross of Christ to Constantinople. The Muslims then spread into Egypt, Rūm [Byzantine lands] and Syria. During the reign of T'ēodoros R̥shtuni, wrote Vardan, they invaded Dwin, killed many and took 35.000 slaves.¹⁹⁹

An identical copy of Vardan's history reappeared in another manuscript, attributed to a Cilician author known as Vardan Bardzrberdts'i. It was published in 1861, as *The Universal History of Vardan Bardzrberdts'i* [Vardan Bardzrberdts'woy Patmut'iwn Tiezerakan], in Moscow.²⁰⁰

2. *Kirakos Gandzakets'i*

Born in 1203, also at Gandzak and identified as Arewelts'i or "easterner", Kirakos was the more talented compatriot and classmate of Vardan. He is the author of *Concise History from St. Grigor to this Day*.²⁰¹

Colophons in the *History* of Kirakos, as well as other works, provided information about various phases of his life and education, first at the Monastery of Nor Getik-Gōshavank', then at Khoranashat. He also has valuable information about some of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries. He succeeded his teacher Vanakan at Gōshavank', after the latter's death in 1251. In 1225/6 he fell captive to the Ilkhanid Mongols, for a short while worked as clerk, and gained rudimentary knowledge of Turkish, then managed to escape after six months. As a native of the province of Gandzak, where Armenians lived with Persians, he also knew some Persian.²⁰² In contacts and negotiations to relieve the region from taxes, his knowledge of the languages of the region was an advantage.

Kirakos believed that the Armenians had to develop "greater doctrinal and liturgical conformity with the Latin practices on the basis of the

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁰⁰ Vardan Bardzrberdts'i, *Universal History* (1861).

²⁰¹ *Kirakosi Vardapeti Gandzaket'woy Hamaṛot Patmut'iwn i Srbyun Grigorē Yawurs iwr Lusabaneal* [Concise History of Kirakos Vardapet Gandzakets'i from St. Grigor to his Day]. Editions and translations: Kirakos, *History*, Venice, 1865; Kirakos, *History*, ed. Melik'-Ōhanjanyan (critical edition (1961); Kirakos, *Istoriya Armenii* (trans. into Russian, 1976); Kirakos, *History*, trans. Aṛak'elyan (trans. in Eastern Armenian, Yerevan, 1982).

²⁰² Arzoumanian, in *Studies*, 40.

Armenian union with Rome in the 1190s” at Cilicia. He took part in preparing a positive response to the letter of Pope Innocent IV in 1250.²⁰³ In 1255, Kirakos met with Cilician King Het‘um I at the village of Vardenis in Aragatsotn (in the south east of Lake Sewan) while the latter was on his way back from Qaraqorum (or Karakorum, Kharkhorum, Qara Qorum, the capital of the Mongol Empire). This famous journey from 1253 to 1255/6 into the Far East and the meeting with Mongol Manku Khan was probably the most dramatic episode in Cilician history. Kirakos dedicated a section in the last parts of his *History* entitled “Concerning the travel of pious King Het‘um to Badu Ghan”.²⁰⁴ He wrote that on his way back, the king who must have stayed in Armenia for a while, “used to tell us many strange and unfamiliar things about barbaric peoples whom he had seen and heard about” in the East. Kirakos understood from the king that only an alliance with the Mongols could save Cilicia and his people. Het‘um thus justified his controversial initiative to travel so far to meet Manku, and make alliances against the Muslim Seljuks, Kurds, Mamlūks and Arabs that surrounded and threatened Cilicia.²⁰⁵

Following this meeting, it was probably at the invitation of the king that Kirakos visited Cilicia. While at Sis, he prepared an expanded version of the Armenian *Menologium* (*Yaysmawurk’*, service-book), which he completed in 1269 (at the age of 66). He wrote in the colophon, cited in the *Hayapatum* of Alishan:

With Hope in God and by the love towards His saints, I, humble soul Kirakos Vardapet Arewelts‘i, compiled the feasts of God’s saints, according to the commemoration of each saint’s day. I also wrote their history, which was not found in the [older] *Yaysmawurk’* and added to the original [text]. I beg of you, celebrators [of these feasts] to write these down ... This [book] was done in the year ԶԺԸ [1269] in Cilicia and the capital Sis, during the incumbency of Het‘um, and in the first year of the reign of his son Lewon, on the ԿԶ [66] year of our life, when [the *Yaysmawurk’*] was completed for

²⁰³ Concerning the involvement and the role of Kirakos in church union debates and negotiations between the Armenian Church and Rome at the time, see: P. Halfter – A. Schmidt, “Der römische Stuhl und die armenische Christenheit zur Zeit Papst Innozenz IV. Die Mission des Franziskaners Dominikus von Aragon nach Sis und Hromkla und das Lehrbekenntnis des Katholikos Konstantin I. Bardzrberts‘i”, in *Le Muséon*, 116 (2003), 91–135. The article concerns the letter of Kirakos to Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243–1254).

²⁰⁴ In Armenian: Վասն երբալոյ բարեպաւտ արքային Հերմոյ առ Բարու Ղանն.

²⁰⁵ In Armenian: Բազում իրս զարմանալիս և անճանօր պատմէր մեզ զբարբարոս ազգաց՝ զոր տեսեալ էր և լուեալ: Kirakos, *History*, ed. Venice, 211–217, spec. 216; Kirakos, *History*, ed. Melik‘-Öhanjanyan, 333.

the glory of God, for eternity, amen. The number of the [new] treatises which we added to the old, was hundred and seventy. In the name of God, amen.²⁰⁶

Begun in 1241 and completed it in 1265/6, the *History* of Kirakos in 65 chapters covers almost a millennium (from 301 to 1265). As in all so-called universal histories, the first part is a collection from past sources, mainly Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates Scholasticus, Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i, Samuēl Anets'i, Mkhit'ar Anets'i and his teacher Vanakan Vardapet. The latter sections of the history are contemporary events in Mongol times in the region. The first chapter of Part Two is about the events he witnessed between the years 1241 and 1265 (including the death of Mongol Hulaku). In chapter 10, Kirakos "presents the martyrdom of Grigor, an Armenian nobleman from the eastern region of Khach'en, against the complex background of inter-ethnic and religious tension in southern Caucasasia at a pivotal transitional point between Georgian and Mongol suzerainty in the 1220s."²⁰⁷ In his brief accounts of the early Arab invasions into eastern Asia Minor and Armenia, Kirakos makes no mention of Islam or Muslims. He does however, include a concise narrative about Mahmet and his teachings, borrowed from Samuēl and Mkhit'ar Anets'i. He also includes the so-called "Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians", originally cited by Samuēl. The following is the story of the Armenian Mahmet by Kirakos, from the Venice edition in classical Armenian, in my literal translation:

In the year 618 of the Lord and 67 of the Armenian era, there appeared a certain prophet among the heathens [*het'anos*], who was from the sects of Cerinthus and the Arians. His name was Mahmet and was from the Ismaelites [who are] the descendants of Hagar. He [often] traveled to Egypt as a merchant and there he met a hermit called Sargis Bkhiray from the Arian sect at the Sinai desert. This man taught Mahmet ... all that concerns God and praised the Old Testament of Moses and told him that if you take my words you will become the leader of your people. Mahmet went his way, but suddenly a spirit penetrated him ... he fell unconscious in seizures, when he regained

²⁰⁶ In Armenian: Յուսովն Աստուծոյ և սիրով սրբոց նորա, նուստ ոգի Կիրակոս վարդապետ Արեւելցի, ի միասին հաւաքեցի զսոց Սրբոցս Աստուծոյ՝ ըստ իւրաքանչիւր յիշատակի աւուրց: Գրեցի և պատմութիւնս նոցա որոց ոչ էր եղեալ ի զիրս Յայսմատուրցն և խառնեցի ընդ նախկարգսն: Եւ աղաչեմ զսոցնողո՞ղ՝ գրել և գայս յիշատակ բանի, զի և զուք գրեսցիք ի զիրն կենաց. և որ բառնայ զմերս՝ ջնջեսցի և ինքն ի դպրութենէ կենաց: Եւ եղև իրականութիւնս այս ի թուիս ԶԺԸ [1269], յաշխարհիս Կիլիկեցոց և Սիս մայրաքաղաքի, ի թագաւորութիւն Հերմոյ, և յառաջին ամի ի յօշանութեան որդւոյ նորին Լեւոնի. ԿԶ [66] ամի կենաց պանդխտութեան մերոյ, յորում աւարտն եղև ի փառս Աստուծոյ. յախտեան ամէն: Եւ նաոք որ յաւելաք մեք ընդ ինն խառնեալ՝ հարիւր եօթանասուն. Անուանքն և շնորհոքն Աստուծոյ, ամէն: *Ghewond* Alishan, *Hayapatum* (Venice: St. Lazar, 1901), section no. 829, 472.

²⁰⁷ Cowe, "Kirakos Gandzakets'i or Arewelts'i", 439.

some of his consciousness ... he told his companions that an angel had entered him and sent him as [divine] messenger to his people. He then went to his city and began preaching what the false Christian [Bkhiray] had taught him. But his uncles [elders of Mecca] threatened to kill him if he pursued his activities. He then withdrew to his house in deep sadness. When Ali, who was his cousin and in-law, visited him and asked about his whereabouts, he explained that he was threatened for teaching people about God. Ali was a strong/brave man and encouraged him to continue his mission and resort to the sword, if necessary.²⁰⁸ When [together] they resumed preaching, they caused great conflict and war. Mahmet's side lost and they escaped to Madiam [Medīnah], where twelve thousand Jews had gathered after being driven away by Emperor Constantine. When the Jews saw that Mahmet killed all those who had followed him, they chose him as their leader and adhered to him forming a large army. They marched over the Persians, killed Yazdegard and ended their kingdom, then they conquered the Romans [Byzantines] ... The Madians [people of Medīnah] accepted him and asked laws from him. Mahmet did [indeed] give them laws [book of laws, or scriptures of sorts] ... He was thus a messenger and lawgiver for seven years ... [later on, his followers] invaded Bznuni, Aghiovid and Taron [in Armenia]. This Mahmet prevented the sword and by his words and counsels, made the greater part of the world obey him. By a permanent oath he sealed a compact with the Armenian world to hold their Christian faith openly/freely, [thus] he sold them their own faith [by] requiring from each household four²⁰⁹ *dirhams* and three *khormal* which is wheat, and one horse-bag [*tziatoprak*], a rope, and a towel. He ordered to exempt the clergy and the freemen of taxes. His successors and rulers of the world came to be called *amirmumnik*'. At the twentieth year of Mahmet [or his death after 20 years in power], reigned Abu Bakr, Ot'man and Amr for 38 years.²¹⁰

3. *Step'anos Ōrbelyan*

The last historian of the 13th century was Step'anos Ōrbelyan (c.1250-1305), the bishop of Siwnik' from the ruling House of the Ōrbelyans. He was ordained at Hromkla in 1286, spent three years in Cilicia as a guest of King Lewon III (1269-1289). Step'anos is a very unique and important source on sectarian or "peasant" unrest and violent episodes in the province of Siwnik', from the perspective of almost reactionary aristocracy of the time and location. Concerning Islam, he mentioned the "lawless Mahmet" (*anōrēn Mahmet*) only once, in his *History of the House of Siwnik'* (the Ōrbelyans).²¹¹ Step'anos referred to the Seljuks as the "Scythian Turks",

²⁰⁸ Kirakos, *History*, Venice, 32.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹¹ Step'anos Ōrbelyan, *History of the Sisakan House* (1861), 125.

and to the Muslims as “Ismayel”, or “sons of Ismael” (*ordik’ Ismayeli*), Hagarians and *aylazgis*. Concerning Arab-Armenian history, also Islam, he provided nothing of significance. He was also silent about the faith of the Hagarians and its founder. However, he was probably one of the very few authors, who explicitly acknowledged the role of the Caliphate in the rise of the major Armenian dynastic territories, the Bagratuni, the Artsruni and the Siwni.²¹²

²¹² *Ibid.*, 219.

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD PHASE IN THE SELJUK-MONGOL PERIOD IN THE WEST AND CILICIA (12th TO 13th CENTURIES)

A. MAHMET “IN THE WINGS”: MATT‘ĒOS URĤAYETS‘I,
SMBAT SPARAPET, HET‘UM PATMICH‘

Cilicia, also many areas in eastern Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia were always part of the Armenian habitat as of the Roman, then the Byzantine times. Often referred to “Lesser” or “Little” Armenia”, it was a fertile and beautiful crescent in the north eastern corner of the Mediterranean, enclosed by the Amanus in the east and the Taurus in the west. Following the capture of the Fortress of Vahka in the north east of Cilicia by Ruben and his associates in 1080, gradually a body politic began developing outside the historic land, to become a pro-Latin Armenian principality and a sovereign kingdom in 1198.

By the end of the 11th century, the only Christian land in the region, Cilicia had to find terms of coexistence with the Chalcedonian Byzantines, the Syrian Christians, the Latin Crusaders, in addition to the Muslim Seljuks, Ayyūbids, Mongols, and Mamlūks.

After the death of the first King, Lewon I (Leo), surnamed the Magnificent (r. 1199-1219), the Shamanist Mongols were penetrating into the region. Their leader, Genghis Khan died in 1227, and within few decades his Empire spread over almost the entire Near East, in addition to the vast areas in Asia and the Far East. Egypt became an exception, where the Mamlūks, the most powerful rivals of the Mongols, had established their sultanate in 1250 (which fell to the Ottomans in 1517).¹

Faced with dwindling European interest in the Levant, also caught between Muslim powers and the incoming Mongols, King Het‘um concluded an Armenian-Mongol alliance in 1254 during his visit to Qaraqorum, as mentioned. Hoping to find allies, also compelled, the Armenians and the Georgians joined the non-Muslim Mongols in their Syrian invasions, thus deepening the hatred of their already antagonistic neighbors. Baghdad fell to Hulaku in 1258, but in 1260 Mongol advances in Syria — often assisted

¹ See Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, II; Mutfian, *Le royaume arménien de Cilicie*; Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom*; Cowe, “The Armenians in the era of the crusades”.

by the Cilician armies — were halted by the Mamlūks at the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, north of Jerusalem. The Muslims looked at Cilicia as a pro-Latin enemy state. Previously, if it were not for his illness and death in 1193, Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn would have seriously threatened Cilicia, which at the time did not have the full support of the Crusaders.

The Mamlūks always targeted Cilicia. Sultan Baybars (r. 1260-1277) was the first to initiate a series of invasions and random taxations. He could not tolerate the Cilician-Mongol alliance either, and did not hesitate to deploy the Crusaders against Cilicians. In 1292/3, the catholicosial fortress of Hromkla was sacked, the fate of Catholicos Stepʿanos IV Hromklayetsʿi (r. 1290-1292/3) is obscure. It was during these Mongol invasions on Cilicia and Hromkla, that Yovhanēs Erznkatsʿi, who had sought refuge there, perished too. Later on, his remains were taken to his hometown Erznka.

The Cilician monarchs had no choice but renew their alliance with the Mongols. In 1299, King Hetʿum II (r. with intervals, 1289-1307) joined Ghāzān Khan (r. 1299-1304) in the Battle of Wādī al-Khaznadar, near Homs in 1299, and defeated the Mamlūks. Previously, in 1295, Ghāzān had officially converted to Islam, shortly before ascending the throne. But he kept his alliances with the Armenians, the Crusaders, even the Pope. Following the defeat of the Mongols at the Battle of Marj al-Ṣuffār, south of Damascus, in April 1303, the Cilicians were left with no allies and became prime targets for the Mamlūks.² After 1300, Cilicia somehow managed to survive as a barely sovereign land, still surrounded by powerful Muslim powers.

In 1341/2, the crown passed to Costandin III, a member of the House of Lusignan, the ruling dynasty of Cyprus, whose members claimed the title of King of Jerusalem. Costandin III did not concern himself with the matters of the state and his people. Two years later descendants of the Hetʿumids took over for a while, in 1373, after the death of Constantine V, besieged on all sides by the Mamluks, the Armenians called in another Lusignan, still hoping to get Latin assistance. In 1375, the Mamlūks captured the fortress of Sis, drove Lewon V, the last king, and Catholios Pōghos I Ssetsʿi (r. 1374-1382) to Cairo. The king ended up in Europe, he died in Paris in 1393.

Even though already in the 12th century Cilicia developed the Silver Age of Armenian intellectual culture, the concerns in a sovereign pro-Latin Armenian land in a hostile environment, did not seem to allow a margin

² Teule, “Christian-Muslim Religious Interaction”, 2-3.

for responses to Islam, at least in the literature. By their circumstances on the crossroads of powers, cultures and peoples, the Cilicians were more diplomatic and conspicuously more liberal and ecumenical in their dispositions than the Armenians in the East. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, already in the 10th century major differences developed and grew in time between the Armenian East and the Armenian West, long before the fall of Cilicia in 1375.

In Cilicia the Muslims were not the rulers, but adversaries and potentially dangerous enemies. Mahmet and his “laws” were in almost silent presence “in the wings”, so to speak. The Cilician authors granted Islam as the faith of the dominant powers and peoples in their region. Elsewhere in the Armenian West, in Edessa east of Cilicia, Taron in its north west, Cappadocia and further north in the province of Erzinjān/Erznka, authors reacted differently. In turn, they rarely explicitly attacked Islam and its founder, as we shall see below

1. *Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i*

During the 12th century, the only historian of what I call the Armenian West was Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, also known as Matthew of Edessa or Uṙha/Urfā (d. c.1140-1044). Edessa or Urfā is east of Ayntāb, near the northwestern borders of Syria. Despite its flaws, his *Chronicle* (*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*) is one of the most important Christian sources for Seljuk, Crusader and Armenian times in the 11th and 12th centuries.³

Uṙhayets'i stopped writing in 1137, at the events of the year 1128/9 (577 of the Armenian Era). The continuator, a certain Grigor Erēts' from the town of K'esun, continued to the year 1162/3. The book is divided into three parts (by editors). Part one covers the period from 952/3 to 1051/2, the decades and events that preceded and led to the annexation of the Bagratuni kingdom to Byzantium. Two prophecies by Yovhannēs Vardapet Kozern (from the province of Taron, active in the first part of the 11th century) set the stage for the rest of the book. The next part covers the period from 1053/4 to 1101/2, when Armenia was devastated by the Seljuks, in addition to the Chalcedonian persecutions. The first three decades of Crusader expansion, often at the expense of the Armenians, seem to establish

³ Editions: Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, *Chronicle* (Jerusalem, 1869); Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, *History*, ed. Melik-Adamyān and Tēr-Mik'ayēlyan (Ējmiatsin, 1898); Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, *Chronicle*, ed. Bart'ikyan (Yerevan, 1973, 1991). English translation: Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades*, trans. Dostourian; Andrews, “Matthew of Edessa”; Andrews, *Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i and his Chronicle*.

the prophecies of Kozeṛn. The third part was written in 1130s. The narratives start at the year 1101/2 and end earlier than intended, in 1128/29, during the incumbency of Catholicos Grigor III Pawlawuni 1113-1166, and Cilician Great Prince T'oros I (1100-1129).

Almost nothing is known about Uṛhayets'i. This modest and genuinely patriotic Edessan priest was a staunch defender of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He wrote in the tradition and formats of Arab chronicles of the period, but in simpler and sometimes loose style. Being a native of the cosmopolitan city of Edessa, he knew some Arabic and Syriac. In medieval Armenian literature his transliteration of proper names and locations is the closest to the originals. The Arabs are *azgn arabkats'* (nation of Arabs, plural for Arab in vernacular form), the Greeks are *hoṛoms*, the Muslims *msilman* (as in Muslim), *tachikk'*, *tachkunk'*, *aylazgk'* (as distinct from Arab). The 'Abbāsid caliph is the *khalip'ay of Baghdad*, Muslim armies are *zork' tachkats'*, and *zork' aylazgeats'*, opposed to *zork' k'ristoneits'* or Christian armies. The caliph is *amir almunni*, Greater Syria is *Sham*, the Dānishmandid amīr *amirayn danushman*, the Seljuks are simply *t'urk's*. Matt'ēos rarely refers to the Muslims in the earlier used terms as sons of Hagar or sons of Mahmet. One of these instances is in the semi-epic story of the delivery of the confession of faith (in favor of the Apostolic faith of the Armenians as opposed to the Chalcedonian creed) by "Gagik king of Armenians" (*Gagik II ark'ay hayots'*) the last Bagratuni king at the court of Emperor Constantine X Doukas (r. 1059-1067) in Constantinople.⁴

Uṛhayets'i looked at the region as a battlefield between the invading Crusaders, the oppressive Byzantines and the local Muslims, the most powerful of whom at the time were the Seljuks or the Turks. "The Turks defeated the Arab armies", he wrote at one point (*t'urk'n yaght'eats' arapik zōrats'n*), and "the Christians were vanquished."⁵

Decades before the arrival of the Crusaders, he depicted Emperor John I Tzimiskes (Yovhannēs Ch'mshkik, r. 969-976) in typically crusader terms as the "liberator of the Christians from the Muslims." His expedition into Palestine, he said, was "to liberate the holy grave of Christ our Lord from captivity at the Tajiks" (*zsurb gerezmān K'ristosi azatel i gerut'enēn tachkats'*).⁶ The "Turks invaded" the region in 1016/7 as "winged snakes (*odzk' t'ewawork'*), slaying the believers in Christ", he wrote.⁷ Often, he

⁴ Matt'ēos Uṛhayets'i, *History*, ed. Melik'-Adamyān and Tēr-Mik'ayēlyan, 178.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

punctuated his narratives by stories of martyrdom, when the “nation of the lawless attacked the believers in Christ.”⁸ Martyrdom, for him and generally earlier and later, was considered an aspect of Christian ethics.

Uṙhayets‘i has surprisingly accurate information about many figures, and locations in the region. He too has a list of Muslim rulers.⁹ His transliterations are precious tools to decipher otherwise unrecognizable names of locations and persons in medieval Armenian texts.

2. *Smbat Sparapet Gundstable*

Smbat *Sparapet* (general), Het‘um *Patmich‘* (historian) and Vahram Rabuni are the three major historians of Cilicia. The first two were Het‘umid aristocrats, the third was a royal secretary. All three were active in the administration and the army, thus had access to privileged information. They also shared minimal interest in Islam, or simply considered it politically safer not to refer to the subject in writing. None witnessed the conversion of their allies the Mongols. The youngest, Hetum Patmich‘ had left Cilicia at the time, the other two had passed away.

Smbat, royal army general, was the elder brother of Cilician King Het‘um I. His *Chronicle* or *Taregirk‘*, ends at the year 1272.¹⁰ He was born in 1208 and died in 1276. He was sent to diplomatic missions, among them to Mongol Qaraqorum. He wrote, “in the year 697/1248, I, Smbat Gundstable, went to the tartars and in the 699/1250 I returned to my brother King Het‘um.”¹¹ He was fluent in French and his terminology is different from his predecessors and contemporaries in the East. However, he kept the traditional terms for the Muslims, such as *aylazgi* and simply Tajik. He sometimes referred to them as “people of Mahmet” (*azg Mahmeti*), but always in negative terms as the enemies of the Christians, as in the following sentence: “Salahadin took Jerusalem from the Christians.”¹² Otherwise, Smbat made no explicit comments about Islam and its founder, and when he did, he appeared to have little acquaintance and information.

3. *Het‘um Patmich‘ or Hayton of Corycus*

This nobleman, historian and monk was the last author before the demise of the kingdom of Cilicia in 1375. He wrote in old French. *La Flor des*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰ Smbat Sparapet, *Chronicle*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹² *Ibid.*, 105.

estoires de la terre d'Orient or *Flower of the Histories of the East*, in Latin, *Flor Historiarum Terre Orientis*, is the history of the Muslim conquests and the Mongol invasions. It was dictated at the request of Pope Clement V in 1307, while he was at Poitiers. The Old French original text was recorded by Nicolas Faulcon, probably a secretary, who also prepared a Latin translation within the year.¹³ Born in mid-1240s, Het'um was a son of prince Ōshin, the lord of Korikos in Cilicia. His family enjoyed great influence. His father was the younger brother of King Het'um I and of Smbat Sparapet, the Constable. There is uncertainty about Het'um's official functions and political aspirations. In his history (chapter 46) he speaks of retiring from political life and pursuing his dream of becoming a monk. The dream was realized around 1305. However, it has been suggested that Het'um was forced out of Cilicia after losing in a power struggle with his rival King Het'um II (r.s 1289-93, 1294-97, 1299-1307). His information about Islam as an alternative faith and the Muslims is generally inaccurate, as his contributions to Samuēls' *Chronicle* show. He seems to have skeletal data about the early Arab invasions into Syria, with errors in his dates. He seems to have some interest in writing about the conflicts between the "Saracens" or the Arab Muslims, the "Turkmens" or the Seljuks, and the "T'art'ars" or the Mongols.

B. DIVERGING CASES

1. *Vahram Rabuni: Islam and Mahmet in an epic poem*

As far as the subject of Islamic-Armenian literature is concerned, Vahram Rabuni is the single most interesting Cilician figure. He was an exception in the tradition of apparent indifference toward the subjects of Islam and its founder. Vahram was the secretary of King Lewon II (r. 1269/70-1289/90), a son of Het'um I, and wrote the *History of the Rubēnians in Verse* at the order of his master.¹⁴ The poem is in 1420 lines in monorhyme verse. It begins with the fall of Gagik II and the Bagratuni dynasty and ends with the anointment of King Lewon II.¹⁵

¹³ Het'um Patmich', *History of Tartars*, trans. by Mkrtich' Vardapet Awgerian, Venice, 1842.

¹⁴ Vahram Rabuni, *History*.

¹⁵ It was first translated in prose into English by Charles Neumann in 1831. There is a recent reprint with notes. *The History of the Rubenian Dynasty*. Translated by Charles Neumann (s.l.: Soghene Armenian Library, 2020.) I have not been able to see this version.

Nothing is known about Vahram's life and other works. In his epic poem he speaks of the rise of the Christian nations, the appearance of Mahmet, Islam, the Bagratunis, the Arabs, Turks, the Rubinians, the Mamlüks, and the Mongols. The Muslims are the "Tajiks" and for the first time he refers to the Mongols as the "Mughal people" (*mughal azg*). The section about the rise of Islam and the Prophet is the most unique in the entire literature of Cilicia. The following is that section¹⁶ in my literal translation:

Those, who are enlightened by faith
 And adopt the purest laws
 Are called the Christian people
 And became part of divine realm.
 Those, whose laws are illegitimate,¹⁷
 Are corrupt in deeds,
 And surpassed limits
 Have thus stirred God's anger.
 These [people] came from the desert
 Inflamed by the fire of Arabia.
 He who is called Mahmet
 Became an offspring of perdition.
 By setting down his laws of aberration.
 He [then] attracted many towards him
 And bearing weapons and swords
 He conquered many lands.
 Aiming at evil he became an embodiment of it
 And by succession of sons to fathers
 Suppression proliferated.

He then speaks of the invasions of the Seljuk Turks, the flight of the Armenians, and the decision of Gagik II to "give" his land to the "Hořoms":

In the years that followed
 There moved from the north
 A people called T'urk'
 Consisting of twenty-four tribes.
 These [Turks] took the reign from the Tajiks
 Combining their [many] factions
 They raised a king
 Who conquered the emperor.
 By warfare they filled the world
 And camping everywhere destroyed everything.¹⁸
 Through their bodies they endangered their souls

¹⁶ Vahram Rabuni, *History*, 188-190.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

By their own doing. Reaching Babylon [Mesopotamia]
 They established their kingdom there
 They [also] moved to the east
 Where the Armenians lived
 Torturing them
 They brought them under their heavy rule.
 Weary of their evil deeds
 And enduring hardship
 They [Armenians] fled to the west and north
 Abandoning their fatherland
 And becoming exiles in foreign lands.
 The king of the Armenians
 Who is called Gagik,
 Saw all these evils
 Also saw that which was coming
 Took the entire land under his rule
 And gave it all to the emperor of the Hořoms
 Instead he took famous Caesarea
 And many territories
 That were part of Cappadocia
 Where Armenians could settle
 There they lived in exile among the Greeks.¹⁹

2. *Yovhannēs Erznkats’i: “Tajik sages” and ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir’s Futuwwa reform literature at Erznka/Erzinjān*

It was Hellenophile Grigor Magistros (d. 1058/9) who first launched a more liberal and comprehensive system of education by studying the cultures and sciences of non-Christian peoples, such as the Greeks, Romans, Persians, as well as the Muslim Arabs. He did not achieve much in this respect. Over two centuries later, in the cosmopolitan city of Erznka/Erzinjān on the upper reaches of the western Euphrates — at the time under the Mongols — it was modest vardapet Yovhannēs, Erznkats’i (c.1230-1293), nicknamed Bluz/Chluz (for his small stature) who took the most direct, daring yet surprisingly discrete initiatives to borrow from Islamic sciences and urban culture.²⁰

Born probably in early 1230s, Yovhannēs entered the Monastery of St. Minas near Erznka in his early twenties and began his literary career in early 1270s. In 1281, he travelled to Jerusalem, and on his way back he

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁰ Dadoyan, “Yovhannēs Erznkats’i Bluz”; For the city of Erznka, the Ismā’īlī channels of transmission, Yovhannēs and the subjects of interactions in philosophy and urban coalitions see Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, III, 29-144.

stayed in Cilicia until 1284. During this time there, he was asked to prepare an interpretation of grammar, he also wrote a sermon on the occasion of the bestowing of knighthood upon the sons of King Lewon II (1269-89). At the end of 1284, before returning to Erzuka, he also visited Tbilisi and gave a sermon at the royal court. He then returned to the Monastery of St. Minas, and there he wrote most of his works. In 1290 he was forced to leave the region, sought refuge in Cilicia, where he died in the midst of Mamlūk invasions, at the Monastery of Akner in 1293.

Single-handedly, Yovhannēs threw two broad bridges into Islamic intellectual and urban cultures. The first and the more explicit was a summary of the 10th century esoteric and encyclopedic compendium of sciences known as *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* or Epistles of the Brethren of Purity in four large volumes and 52 chapters or books. The authors were a small group of scholars of Shī'ī-Ismā'īlī sympathies at Baṣra. The title of this summary is *Views Gathered from the Writings of Tajik Philosophers (I Tachkats' Imastasirats' Grots' K'agheal Bank')*.²¹ With the exception of the title, the word Tajik will appear only once again in his *Constitution* for the Brotherhood of Erzuka written in 1280.

As I briefly mentioned in the Prologue, as a graduate student, my discovery of this connection, or the sources of the *Views* was the “relevant information” of philosophical hermeneutics that shattered my horizon of things Armenian and opened a new vantage point upon hitherto unexplored areas of Islamic-Armenian interactions. The primitive style, the limited and inconsistent vocabulary and transliterations, and the level of the education of the author indicated to its being a collection of notes from all the volumes, with the exception of the purely theological chapters, written prior to his education at the Seminary of St. Minas in his early twenties. As no more than a collection of notes by a newcomer to philosophical sciences, the *Views* is the earliest known summary and translation of the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. Yovhannēs quoted and paraphrased from many parts of the *Rasā'il*, deliberately avoiding the strictly theological chapters and sections on Islamic mysticism.

He simply took notes with no perceivable comprehension of the complicated Neoplatonic and eclectic system of the Brethren. His grasp of the subjects developed at later stages. Thus, unfamiliar with philosophical terminology (which had fully developed in Armenian by the 13th century),

²¹ The manuscript is published by Sen Arewshatyan: Yovhannēs Erzunkats'i, *Views from the Writings of Islamic Philosophers*, ed. Arewshatyan; Dadoyan, “Summary of the Epistles”.

he simply used Arabic terms in inconsistent transliterations. The random order in which the *Views* is written, and the intermingling of various subjects makes it extremely difficult to read. I have rearranged the text as per themes and areas (metaphysics, logic, ethics, so on).²² The vocabulary, grammar and style are much more elementary than in his the mature works, while his grasp of the complicated system of the Brethren appears minimal. He successfully concealed the esoteric and primarily Carmatian peculiarities of the *Rasā'il* and made the material acceptable for the Christian reader. Much later he assimilated the thought of the Brethren more fully and used it in two treatises in particular: *Concerning Heavenly Movements* and *Concerning Heavenly Ornaments*. The *Views*, like others of his works, has great significance as indications of close interactions between Armenian Christians and Muslims, and the Ismā'īlīs in particular. The channel, as I have demonstrated, through which the *Rasā'il* reached Erznka was the Ismā'īlī movement and its *dā'īs*, or missionaries. In fact, from the 9th century political and ideological interactions between Armenians and Muslims were mostly through heterodox groups on both sides, and with Shī'ism and Ismā'īlism in particular.

This summary of the Brethren's novel and advanced knowledge, at least for Yovhannēs at that period in Armenian intellectual culture in the Mongol world, left a lasting impact on his intellectual formation. After reading all his works, that were and still are in manuscripts, I made a large selection of his philosophical writings. I could then demonstrate that there are direct influences in these mature works, even his sermons and theological treatises.²³ Most works of Yovhannēs, over sixty treatises and homilies are still unpublished. I have made a complete list of his works and made selections of the philosophical passages from 24 manuscripts. They are in the Appendices of my monograph.²⁴

Yovhannēs took the next and even more direct and bold initiative almost three decades later in 1280, when he was in his fifties and an established and respected vardapet in Erznka. The church in Erznka asked him to write a Constitution, or what he called, "Definitions and Canons" (*Sahman ew Kanonk'*), a literal translation of the Arabic title of Caliph al-Nāṣir's Decree "*Hudūd wa Shar'*", for the reform, also the control and containment of the "Coalition of Brothers" (*Miabanut'iwn Eghbarts'*) of the city.²⁵

²² Dadoyan, *Erznkats'i "Views from the Writings"*, 173-185.

²³ *Ibid.*, 187-224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-220.

²⁵ Khach'ikyan, "Constitution", 365-377; Khach'ikyan, "Brotherhood in Erznka", 73-84; Also published in Paghtasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erznkats'i*, 220-228; Yovhannēs

The text is in two parts. Both written in 1280, totaling about 6,000 words, are commonly known as the *Constitution for the Brotherhood of Erznka*. On the title page Yovhannēs wrote that they were written at the request of the old priest Grigor Sanahnets'i to "reform and guide" the *manuks* (young man, equivalent of *fatā*), the unruly youth coalitions of the city. Closely adopting his basic terms from the decree of Caliph al-Nāṣir's (and *futuwwa* literature in general) — *ḥudūd wa-shar'* — Yovhannēs calls his text *Sahman ew Kanonk'*, or "definitions and canons."

In all respects, what Yovhannēs wrote was an Armenized and Christianized version of the al-Nāṣir's *Futuwwa* reform project. Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, written for Caliph al-Nāṣir's *futuwwa* circle, seems to have been his single most important source. Many sections are almost literal translations, and in much better language than the *Views*. After a long introduction about the peculiar nature of the "oath of brotherhood" (*ukht*, Arabic *'ahd*), *Sahman ew Kanonk'* is divided into three chapters. The first deals with the "personal conduct" of the "true" *manuks* (equivalent of the Arabic *fatā*), the second with the "benefit the brothers will find in the company of each other and the fruits of their coalition", and the third discusses the rules of "public conduct in the world among many nations" (mainly the Muslims), and the manners in which the brothers should cultivate "wise and constructive behavior to glorify the name of Christ."

Krkin Kanonk' (Additional Canons) was addressed mainly to the senior brothers or the *manktawags*, "who led physical and worldly lives and whom [the church] intend[ed] to instruct in accordance with divine commandments and the holy scriptures, in order to redirect them towards spiritual virtues." Again after a long introduction, the text is divided into four chapters: definitions of the *manuk* and the *manktawag*, and the conditions and duties pertaining to each; the brotherhood within the framework of faith, church, society and the world in general; the symbolism and significance of the initiation belt, *goti* or *zunnār*, and a poem addressed to the pseudo-*manktavag* Yakob (a leader of the Gorguian sect); the initiation ceremony, the reading of the conditions of true brotherhood, and the granting of the initiation *zunnar* or belt. In structure, language and strategies, the Constitution is a very close "Christian" replica of Ibn al-Mi'mār's *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*. The latter was a comprehensive project for the regulation of the social status and role of the urban youth coalitions in the late 'Abbāsid period.

Even though its success is not established, the Constitution was instantly adopted by the church and applied in Erznka, and later on in the Armenian communities of the East European countries, from the 16th century to the 19th, even in Istanbul. Practically, through Yovhannēs at Erznka, and obviously unnoticed, an Islamic social-urban reform project and its literature were simply adopted, but in Christian attire.²⁶

The location and the history of the province of Ekegheats', the province of Erznka, on trade routes were favorable factors. But the more immediate factors that seem to have gone unnoticed, were advanced stages in the Islamic-Armenian interactions in the Seljuk as well as the Mongol periods in the urban cosmopolitan environments in particular. Even though Yovhannēs made no mention of his sources, at one occasion he advised the *manuks* to be in good terms with "other nations", and "other races", also to respect the visiting "*aylazgi*" sages:

The brothers must be peace-loving among themselves and other nations. They should approach peoples of other races with good will and show good disposition in speech and audience. There are wise men or sages [*imastunk'*] among the *aylazgi*'s and they should be respected and appreciated for their wisdom, and treated without opposition and in a proper and peaceful manner.²⁷

What may be called the City-state of Erznka had a brief period of internal sovereignty under Bishop Sargis and his descendants. But previously, during the Seljuk period and earlier, the city was a cosmopolitan metropolis. On the frontiers between eastern and western worlds and empires, Ekegheats', the province became a haven for heterodox and syncretic trends from the first centuries of Christianity and after the 9th century to Muslim heterodox trends, especially the *Ismā'īlīs*.

The most significant and least studied aspect of the status of Erznka was its being a gateway to and from Islamic culture and society. The folklore, the dialect and the literature of this city embodied and reflected this aspect and role. Due to its position on the major trade routes and on the peripheries of regional conflict, Erznka provided a stage for close encounters between Armenians and Muslims. Intermarriages and friendships were common.²⁸ Yovhannēs himself is said to have fallen in love with the daughter of a local *molla* or *mulla* (Muslim religious figure, also wise, old, wealthy man). The poem attributed to him was in fact part of a much earlier cycle

²⁶ Dadoyan, "Constitution"; Dadoyan, "The Nāširī *Futuwwa* Literature".

²⁷ Dadoyan, *The Armenians*, III, 89. Paghtasaryan, *Yovhannēs Erznkats'i*, "Constitution", 227.

²⁸ Kiwrtyan, *Eriza*, vol. 1.

of romances in popular poetry and continued for centuries after Yovhannēs. He simply recycled the motif in his style and for didactic objectives. In his version, while the Armenian boy is adamant in his faith, the Muslim girl is ready and eager to convert to Christianity.²⁹

While in the East almost all the major authors of the 12th and 13th centuries, dedicated sections and some chapters to Islam and its founder, Yovhannēs made absolutely no reference to these themes. He rarely used the word *aylazgi*, and only once Tajik in the title of his first work the View, thus almost immediately putting these Muslim “sages”, or Arab science, in a positive context, almost on a pedestal. The applicability of an Islamic code of laws for urban youth in Armenian communities, also the assimilation of medieval philosophical ideas — including metaphysics, morals, aesthetics, cosmology, physiology, psychology — into Armenian intellectual culture, reveal similarities of circumstances, despite differences in religions.

In the case of the reform projects for the regulation of urban youth coalitions, the strategy of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir was to control them by imposing religious morality. Yovhannēs simply borrowed the project and its literature. Similarity of urban circumstances eased this adoption. Differences in various regions and periods seemed to make little difference. Just as the “true” *fatā* was a “true Muslim”, similarly, a “true” *manuk* was a “true Christian.”

However, the gap between the hedonistic and chaotic lifestyle of the urban youth and religious morality demanded in the reform programs, both Muslim and Christian, could not be mended. The reform projects were and remained idealizations. In Islamic society, *futuwwa* ideals did indeed find some followers due the support of the ‘Abbāsīd court. There are no indications about their success at Erznka. Often described as jobless, hedonistic, chaotic even heterodox young men, the folklore of urban young men laid the groundwork for the culture and arts of the urban middle and lower classes, also for the secular cultures throughout the Near East. On the level of the arts and folklore, Muslims and Christians came much closer than recorded or referred to in medieval texts.

²⁹ Srapyan, “Concerning a Poem by Bluz”.

PART THREE

THE “*ARMENIAN PAX ISLAMICA*” AS PER THE HISTORICAL AND
LITERARY RECORDS OF ALLEGED
EDICTS/COVENANTS/OATHS/DECREES/PACTS
(7th TO 20th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I

PERCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE STATUS OF THE *DHIMMĪS*

A. CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE QUR'ĀN

The full Christological terminology for Jesus in the Qur'ān is *al-Masīḥ 'Īsā Ibn Maryam Rasūl Allāh*. Jesus, Son of Maryam, Messenger of God. With respect to its theological implications, as Valkenberg points out, *Īsā Ibn Maryam* is very different from the way Christians understand Jesus. The name *'Īsā* is considered by most scholars an Arabized form of the east-Syriac Ishu, current among Syriac-speaking Christians in the 7th century. The frequent mention of him being the “son of Maryam” shows the importance given to the Virgin Mary in the Qur'ān, but more importantly, it emphasizes His human nature thus refuting the Christian doctrine of Incarnation.¹

Together with Abraham, Noah and Moses, *'Īsā Ibn Maryam* is one of the most important and admired prophets. He appears, often briefly, in 100 verses of 15 *sūrah*s. Primarily a divine messenger and a prophet, He received the *Injīl* (from the Greek *Evangelion*, “good news” or the Gospel) as a revelation from God. The same relationship exists between Moses and the *Tawrāt*, the first time, and Muḥammad and the Qur'ān the third and “last” time.

Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad were charged with the task of proclaiming God's revelation faithfully to mankind, each in his own time and circumstances.² Even though the Qur'ān recognizes the *Injīl* or the Bible as containing God's revelation given to the Prophet Jesus the son of Mary, it also charges the Christians with “corrupting” it and accuses them of *tahrīf* or distorting and altering the original revelation concerning the Prophet and Islam. Therefore, both the *Tawrāt* and the *Injīl* could not be trusted.³ In addition to the rejection of the trinitarian doctrine from strictly monotheistic standpoints, the Qur'ānic version of the Crucifixion of Christ creates a major divide. These two issues, and others related to them, were frequently brought up in all polemical-apologetic texts on both sides.

¹ Valkenberg, “Christianity in the Qur'ān”, 34.

² *Ibid.*,

³ *Ibid.*

B. *DHIMMĪS* AND THE QUR'ĀNIC BASES FOR SOCIAL ORDER, RECTITUDE, TAXATION AND FOOD (Q2:256; Q5:5; Q9:29)

Based on its holy book the Qur'ān, Islam perceives itself as the last, therefore the most superior of the Abrahamic faiths. Consequently, Islamic Law sought to create a society that reflected the supremacy of both the Muslims and Islam, hence the justification of their rule over the non-Muslims. In this perspective, conversion into another faith is unreasonable and strictly forbidden. In a mixed society where the state and the governing laws were Islamic, the status and the role of the non-Muslims, mainly the Jews and the Christians, also the public display of their religious practices and symbols were problematic. As monotheists, and “people of the book”, or *ahl al-kitāb*, or *kitābīs*, they had a special and superior position to idolaters. The more current terms were *ahl al-dhimma/dhimmah*, or just *dhimmīs*, meaning “people subject to a guarantee of protection”, or *amān*.⁴ They needed to be protected in a society where they stood apart allowed to live under certain conditions and stipulations. With the exception of Mecca and Medīnah, where the non-Muslims are prohibited to enter (by the last will of the Prophet), there are not many “closed” cities for them.⁵

From the very early periods at Medīnah, and soon after the first conquests led by Caliph 'Umar I, the surrender agreements paved the way to a long process for the regulation, rather, canonization of rules, stipulations, restrictions as well as commitments both ways, in sum, the *Pax Islamica*. As far as the *dhimmīs* were concerned, three Qur'ānic verses are usually referred to in matters related to the social order, rectitude, taxation and food. These are very briefly cited below. In the Islamic state, all three Qur'ānic texts drew the distinctions between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. In Armenian literature related to what I call the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*” these verses were often mentioned indirectly, and never with concrete references to the Qur'ān.

1. *Sūrat al-Baqarah, Āyah 256* — “*The Cow*”, verse 256 (Q2:256)

“There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allāh has grasped a firm handhold which will never break. God is All-hearing, All-knowing.”
(*Lā ikrāha fī'l-dīni qad tabayyana al-rushdu min al-ghayyi, fa-man yakfur b'il-tāghūti wa-yu'minu b'illāhi, fa-qad istamsaka b'il-'urwati al-uthqa lā infīṣāma laha, w'Allāhu samī'un 'alīmun.*)

⁴ See Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 102.

⁵ Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 107-108.

As per this verse, the early attitudes toward the Jews and Christians were obviously very tolerant. It seems that at the early stages of the formation of the Armenian Mahmet, Armenian authors had the correct impression about Islamic tolerance, as it is clear in all the Armenian versions of the alleged “Edict of the Prophet.” It was the actions of the invading Muslims and harsh taxations that gradually threw their shadow on their images of the Prophet. It is also true that “Islam formulated toward each community that it faced a particular attitude, which was shaped by the historical circumstances in which the encounter took place, and was influenced to a certain extent by the nature of the respective non-Muslim religious tradition.”⁶

2. *Sūrat al-Mā'idah, Āyah 5 — The “Table/Table-spread/Feast”, verse 5 (Q5:5), the first part:*

“Today the good things are made lawful for you, and the food of the ones to whom the Book was brought is lawful to you, and your food is made lawful to them.” (*Al-yawma uḥilla lakum al-ṭibatu wa-ṭa'āmu alladhina ūtū al-kitaba ḥillu lakum wa-ṭa'āmukum ḥillu lahum*).⁷

“Sunnī interpreters and jurists uniformly understand the term food (*ṭa'ām*) in this verse as referring to all foodstuffs that God has not prohibited, including permissible meat, the subject of the preceding verses.”⁸ However, meat slaughtered by non-Muslims became a problematic issue. In Near Eastern cultures and from Antiquity, animal slaughter was regarded as a divinely prescribed ritual activity. Slaughter practices of the Muslims and *dhimmi*s were regarded equally valid, each within their own religious traditions.⁹ Thus “Islamic Law requires Muslim butchers to invoke the name of God over the act of animal slaughter.”¹⁰ However, with respect

⁶ Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion*, 1.

⁷ The complete verse, as translated by Freidenreich, is: “Permitted to you this day are the good things, and the food of those who were given the Book is permitted to you, and your food is permitted to them. So are the chaste women among the believers and the chaste women among those who were given the Book before you, provided you give them their dowries and take them in chastity, not in wantonness or as mistresses. If anyone denies the faith, his work shall be of no avail to him, and in the hereafter, he will be among the losers.” Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 110. I saw part of this verse, in slightly different version written in Arabic with a translation on the back cover of the first copy of the first translation of the Qur'ān by Step'anos Lehats'i, M3019. See Part Four, Chapter II. The translation in modern Eastern Armenian was written below the Arabic: Ինչ որ ազգ որ սուրբ զիրք ունի այդ ազգի հացը դուք կերե՛ք և ձերը նրա տու՛նք:

⁸ Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 110.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

to eating meat butchered by Christians, there are differences in interpretation as well as application between the Sunnī and Shī'ī Laws, as it becomes clear in Armenian polemical texts of the late 14th century concerning these issues (discussed below in Chapter V of this part).

3. *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, Āyah 29 — “*The Repentance*”, verse 29 (Q9:29)

“Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allāh and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture [fight] until they give the *jizya* willingly while they are humbled.” (*Qatilū alladhīna la yu'minūna b'illāh wa-la bil'yawmi al-ākhar, wa-la yuharrimūna mā ḥarrama Allahu wa rasūluhu wa-la wadīnuna dīna al-ḥaqqi min alladhīna ūtū al-kitaba ḥattā yu'tū al-jizyata 'an yadi wa-hum saghirūna.*)

Taxation was the most distinct area where the religious communities were differentiated by the state. The *jizya* or the annual head/poll tax was imposed solely on the *dhimmīs*.¹¹ It seems that jurists in Sunnī Law offered two distinct interpretations of the *jizya*. “On the one hand, this tax constituted a fee for services rendered to *dhimmīs* by Muslims: the right to live as non-Muslims in Islamic territories, exemption from military service, and the protection provided by Muslim soldiers. For this reason, jurists generally exempted women, minors, slaves, and the infirm from the *jizya* payment.” “The other interpretation is the more negative, for it considered the *jizya* a penalty imposed upon non-Muslims on account of their refusal to embrace Islam. This notion underlined the widespread norm of exacting payment of the *jizya* in humiliating circumstances.”¹² Practically, Q9:29 implied that conversion freed the non-Muslims from the obligation incumbent upon *dhimmīs*, and in particular the *jizya*.

Depending on circumstances and location, the *dhimmīs* would also be required to pay distinctive property taxes and to pay taxes on commercial transactions at a higher rate than Muslims. Certain categories among the *dhimmīs* were exempted: women, adolescents, hermaphrodites, slaves, handicaps, demented, chronically ill, elderly, monks, blind, monks and hermits.¹³ In all events, the *jizya* is an expression of the superiority of the Muslims over the *dhimmīs*, furthermore, war against those who refuse to

¹¹ Philip Wood, “Christians in the Middle East, 600–1000: Conquest, Competition and Conversion”, in *Islam and Christianity*, 23-50, 38.

¹² Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 102.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 270.

follow their faith was a religious duty. In this commandment, says Fattāl, the “spiritual and the temporal united toward a single objective.” The hierarchical pattern of the Islamic city was simultaneously and necessarily religious, consequently, the status of the non-Muslims was problematic. The concept of *jihād* comes in this context too.¹⁴

As far as the non-Muslims were concerned, and this aspect is the most pronounced in Armenian texts, the most significant implication of this stipulation is that in return to taxes, the Muslims have obligations to abstain from acts of hostility toward *dhimmīs*, to respect their rights, and to protect them from aggression. In return, most Armenian texts, implicitly and explicitly acknowledged subservience and obedience to the laws governing their status and practices under Muslim rule. In short, the poll tax (*tributum capitis*), is the payment for which the non-Muslims obtained *dhimma* from the Muslims.¹⁵ During the early periods of Muslim rule, it seems that the treasury depended heavily on the taxes paid by the *dhimmīs*, who to the 10th century were still the majority in many locations.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁵ Fattāl, *Le statut légal*, 264.

CHAPTER II

THE *PAX ISLAMICA* AND THE PROCESS OF CANONIZATION (7th TO 9th CENTURIES)

This chapter provides a background for the literary and the historical records of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*, by drawing its dynamics in skeletal form. One of the many peculiarities of the Armenian *Pax Islamica* is that in the literature most texts of pacts or covenants with the Muslim side remained attached to and identified with an alleged initial “Edict of Mahmet” to the Christians and/or the Armenians. The name of “Ēōmer”, or Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, to whom the *Shurūt* or ‘*Ahd* ‘Umar was symbolically attached, appeared only in the 19th century in two contradictory contexts, as it shall be discussed below. Otherwise, to my knowledge, the familiar document and versions known as *Shurūt* ‘Umar, or ‘*Ahd* ‘Umar are never referred to in medieval and early modern Armenian literature.

A. THE “EDICT OF THE PROPHET”

During the formative period of Islam at Medīnah (622-632) and as the early campaigns were taking the Muslims into non-Muslim communities and lands, the first problem was the regulation of relations between the Muslim conquerors and their non-Muslim subjects, who remained the majority for the next few centuries.

The problem of the relations with the Jews and Christians in the Islamic city was acutely posed during the reign of ‘Umar following his invasions into Palestine and al-Shām, with predominantly Christian and Jewish peoples, and the capture of Jerusalem their Holy City, in 637. But earlier on at Medīnah, meetings and agreements seem to have been made, allegedly by the Prophet and his close associates. However, as Fattāl indicated, the sources about such meetings and documents, known as those of Haibar, Bahrain, Tabūk, Banū Taghlib, Najrān are problematic.

The earliest known document is the “Constitution of Medīnah” with the Jewish tribes of the city, made during the earliest periods of the Hijrah. At the time, however, it addressed the Jewish community as part of the

early Islamic *Ummah*, when it stated, “to the Jews their faith and to the Muslims theirs.”¹

The “Charter of Najrān” (about 150 miles north of San‘ā’, on the southernmost border of modern Saudi Arabia with al-Yemen) is a most familiar text in the literature. According to Bar Hebraeus,² a delegation carrying presents and headed by a certain Sayyid, met with the Prophet. The latter is said to have granted a decree to their community. Some of the main points were the following: the Arabs will protect the Christians against ill-treatment; they will not force them to go to war with them; they will not demand any changes in their religious customs and laws; if Christians wanted to renovate a church, the Arabs will come to their assistance; taxes on the poor (who are not priests or monks) will not exceed 4 *zuzes* (*dirhams*), and taxes on the wealthy 12 *zuzes*; Christian wives of the Arabs will not be forced to convert, and similar tolerant terms.³

There is an older version written by an anonymous Nestorian priest from Seert (or Siirt, in modern Turkey, south west of Lake Van and north east of Mardin).⁴ It is closer to al-Balādhurī’s version. The date of the meeting is cited as the “18th year of the reign of Heraclius”, or 627/8. According to this long narrative, Islam having become powerful, the inhabitants of Najrān, led by the Christian al-Sayyid al-Oassanī, went to the Prophet carrying gifts and their respects. The introductory passage is of particular interest for this study, because it seems to have been a model for many subsequent texts at later periods, at least among the Armenians. This famous document of Seert is cited by Fattāl. The following are highlights of this text:⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

² Bar Hebraeus, in Arabic Ibn al-‘Ibrī, “Son of the Hebrew”, Abū’l-Faraj, Latin Gregorius, was maphrian-catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church, born in Melitene 1226, and died at Marāgha 1286.

³ Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* (Syriac text with Latin translation by Abbeioos and Lamy) 3 vols (Louvain, 1872-1877), vol. III, 116 sq.; Fattāl, *Le statut légal*, 28; al-Balādhurī, *Fulūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. de Goeje ((Leiden: Brill, 1863-1866), from the Cairo edition of 1901, vol. 1, 102.

⁴ See Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*.

⁵ Fattāl, *Le statut légal*, 28. The *Chronicle of Seert* (or *Siirt*), sometimes called *Histoire nestorienne*, is an Arabic ecclesiastical history, by an anonymous Nestorian writer, at an unknown time between the 9th and 11th centuries. There are grounds for believing that it is the work of Nestorian Isho’dnah of Basra, who was active during the second half of the 9th century.

In the name of Allāh the merciful and benefactor, this edict is given by Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Muṭṭalib, messenger of God ... to Sayyid Ibn Ḥārith Ibn Ka‘b and his coreligionists and the followers of Christianity in the East, as in the West, in near and far countries, Arabs or strangers, familiar and unfamiliar, this edict constitutes an imperial contract ... I declare that with the assistance of my horsemen and infantrymen, my armies and my resources, and my Muslim partisans, I will protect the Christians even in the farthest places ... I commit myself to protecting them, I will also take under my protection their persons, churches, chapels, oratories, establishments, monasteries, residences, and retreats ... I hereby make a pact with them and a promise not to allow any damage, and exempting them of all demands and costly obligations ...

More specific requirements follow. There is a *jizya* of 4 *dirhams*, but the clergy and monks are exempted. A striped robe of “Yemen fabric” or a turban, or their price, were alternatives. The *jizya* imposed on the wealthy Christians should not exceed 12 *dirhams*.⁶ There are clauses concerning criminal cases, marriage, war, persecution, abuse, mutual need and assistance, loyalty to the Muslims, and so on. The edict ends as follows:

[I decree that] Everyone observe the treaties and alliances agreed with the monks. This edict of Muḥammad was witnessed by ... [31 names] and written by the hand of Mu‘āwiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān ...].⁷

Eventually, the so-called “Treaty of Najrān with Muḥammad” and the “Seert Document” came to be known as “The Edict of the Prophet to all those who profess the Christian faith”, and then “The Edict of the Prophet to all the People”. A copy is preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. It is copied in 1560 from an “original” during the incumbency of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I the Magnificent (1494-1566).⁸ It is said to have been written by the hand of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib in Muḥarram of the 2nd year of the Hijrah (624), in the presence of 22 “companions” of the Prophet, who signed as “witnesses.” The initial text was said to have been dictated by the Prophet and written by the hand of Mu‘āwiyah. Most Armenian versions of the “Edict of Mahmet to Christians and Armenians” are also said to have been “written by the hand of Mawia” (Mu‘āwiyah).

There is an “original” document at the Coptic Library of Cairo (with an error in the date). It is again “written by the hand of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, in Muḥarram 3, in the 2nd year of Hijrah, being the 1st of August, in the

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*

year 622.”⁹ Finally, another “original” copy was discovered in 1909 at the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Constantinople. It met with great propaganda at the Armenian Press of Baghdad. The journal *Rawḍat al-Ma‘ārif* of Beirut reprinted it under the title: “The Christians have nothing to fear from.” The “Edict of the Prophet” reached even India, where the Zoroastrians exploited it to their favor.¹⁰ The Christian authorship of these edicts is established. Fattāl wrote:

At present it is inadmissible to assume the authenticity of the “Edict of the Prophet to all People” for a number of reasons. Contrary to other writings of that early period, the language is inaccurate. Even though the date [of the issue] is always recorded in the versions, it was only in the Hijrah year 17 or 18 that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who established these terms, long after the death of the Prophet. Furthermore, Mu‘āwiyah could not have been the writer, because from the 2nd to the 4th year of the Hijrah, he was in open conflict with the Prophet. He reconciled only in the 7th year [629]. It should also be added that several of the so-called witnesses never existed and others in the list were already dead at the time.¹¹ [The author of the “Edict of the Prophet to all People” is a Nestorian priest, concludes Fattāl] [The author] ... was always careful to note that the Prophet made a promise that “each side will observe the treaties, the alliances and the contacts with the monks.” He also adds that the “copy” was registered in the year 265/878 at Birmantha, in the custody of the monk Ḥabīb.

Fattāl explains that the document was made on a parchment of cowskin and bore the seal of “Muḥammad, peace be upon him.” This version also appears in the *Chronicle of Seert*.

B. CANONIZATION: FROM ‘UMAR IBN AL-KHAṬṬĀB TO AL-MUTAWAKKIL

Following the early conquests and subsequent expansion of the Muslims, as geographical and social areas of contact and friction between Muslims and non-Muslims increased, it became more pressing for the authorities, as well as the public, to find terms of coexistence that were doctrinally acceptable and practically applicable. Thus, changing circumstances created an incentive and a necessity to formulate and fix a uniform set of regulations, or canons for all the *dhimmīs* living under Muslim rule. All the phases in this process of regulating relations were reflected in the Armenian

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

condition and the literature from the 7th century, hence the necessity of this brief section on canonization.

The process of canonization lasted over two centuries. It started practically also symbolically from the conquests of ‘Umar I in 630s and ended at the “Edict” of ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 850. It evolved through surrender agreements, local practices, written pacts, partial stipulations and restrictions, eventually canons and a harsh caliphal edict. It must however be noted that the canonization was always part of the records and jurisprudence, but practices on the ground varied and sometimes diverged from the texts.

1. *Caliph ‘Umar I (634-644) — The symbolic-historical beginnings*

As mentioned, traditionally, and still in popular circles, the name of Caliph ‘Umar has been attached to the initial *Pax Islamica*. He was the first Muslim ruler to capture wide areas in Palestine and al-Shām. However, as discussed by most scholars, the attribution of *Shurūt* ‘Umar to him, is obsolete. The surrender agreement made by ‘Umar following the capture of Jerusalem in 637 bears no similarities to the surrender documents made at the time as well as the *Shurūt*.¹² As we shall see, as late as in 1811, an alleged Armenian copy of this particular document (of ‘Umar) was presented by a vardapet from the Monastery of Surb Yakob (St. James) of Jerusalem to Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) at Istanbul, and was granted as an authentic caliphal decree.

2. *Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) — The initiator*

Mu‘āwīyah Ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 661-680), the founder of the Umayyad Caliphate, acted more as an Arab when he avenged the murder of Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (644-656). In general, he and the next three Umayyad caliphs were more tolerant. They maintained good terms with the peoples of the places they conquered.¹³ In Armenia the circumstances began deteriorating only during the last decade of the 7th century, under Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik. He chose to rule directly and often brutally.

The reign of ‘Abd al-Malik, the fifth Umayyad caliph, was indeed a watershed. He launched a broad project of centralization, through the Arabization and Islamization of the Caliphate. No doubt he was an Arab but

¹² Levy-Rubin, “The Pact of ‘Umar”, 361.

¹³ Tritton, *The Caliphs*, 229.

he was also a Muslim. For greater centralization, he was the first to impose restrictions on non-Muslims and tightened the rule of law by the state on the local elite and aristocrats. During this period, around the year 700, a crack-down on the high nobility of northern Iraq and the aristocratic houses or the *nakharars* as well. In 701-703 there were uprisings in many parts of Armenia.

‘Abd al-Malik’s first objective as a Muslim monarch was to develop a centralized Muslim-Arab government, which would also insure a large revenue.¹⁴ He took an unprecedented step, which was previously made but at low key, when ‘Umar constructed a mosque at Jerusalem in late 630s. The construction of the Dome of the Rock in the city by him in 690s changed the landscape and the status of the Holy City of the Jews and the Christians. These measures immediately fixed the “religious identification of the state” for the non-Muslims as well as the world to accept.¹⁵ Through the Arabicization of the bureaucracy by ‘Abd al-Malik, Arabic became a “Christian” language as well, at least for the educated elite. In addition to Syriac and often Greek, the knowledge of Arabic helped the authors, and the clergy in particular, to play important roles in translations from Greek philosophy and sciences into Arabic.¹⁶ These translations eventually caused great advances in Near Eastern, and in particular Arab sciences and philosophy. This development never touched the Armenians unfortunately. Arabic remained beyond their interests.

3. *Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar II Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717-720) — The first “canonizer”*

Reigning less than three years, ‘Umar II, as he wished to be identified, was indeed an intriguing and controversial figure. In accordance with his belief in the supremacy of Islam and the Muslims, he was more restrictive toward the Christians. He prohibited the chimes and raising of voices from the churches and introduced harsh segregation measures. He also stipulated sets of laws. For instance, if a Muslim killed a Christian, he was not punished by death, but by paying a fee of 5000 *zuzes*. When he declared that all converts were exempted of taxes, many converted.¹⁷

¹⁴ Wood, “Christians”, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 37.

¹⁷ Fattāl, *Le statut légal*, 68.

However, these and similar stipulations were not strictly applied until the incumbency of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Mutawakkil in particular.¹⁸

Muslim sources rightly attributed the first code regarding the distinctive attire, or *ghiyār*, and the behavior of non-Muslims in Muslim society, to him, says Levy Rubin. “This code was part of a planned and deliberate policy which was a result of his ideology regarding the ascendancy of Islam over the other religions.” It seems that following his example, even though while there are differences between the various codes that were in a state of formation by the end of the 8th century, most versions of *dhimmī* codes also included a section regarding the *ghiyār*, or items of dressing that distinguish the non-Muslims, and draw the exaltation of Islam.¹⁹ In Armenian literature, this stipulation, added by a continuator, appears in the *Chronicle* of Samuēl Anets’i (M7261 and M10202) in the entry for the years 1305-1316, in the context of Mongol Khūdabanda’s persecutions of Christians.²⁰ There is also another reference related to Mamlūk “Sultan Nasr” (Nāṣir ed-Dīn Muḥammad, during his third reign, 1310-41). In 1333. Despite a peace agreement, he imposed blue ensigns on the Christians and canceled the agreement.²¹

Several scholars trace the roots of these practices in Sasanian culture, where segregation followed measures of oppression and humiliation. The process of the adoption of Sasanian ideology and practices began with ‘Umar II, as mentioned. He issued the first edict listing a set of demands regarding the appearance and public behavior of non-Muslims in Muslim society. “‘Umar’s ingenuity is manifest in the idea that he appropriated the Sasanian social dress and behavior code not to distinguish between strata within Muslim society, but rather to highlight the exclusion of the non-Muslims.” “By the end of the century, the dress code was unofficially canonized, unlike other rules, it became unanimously accepted, and is the one issue that is in total agreement among subsequent jurists.”²² Again, as it shall be discussed, I have found no reference in the literature to these measures stipulated by ‘Umar II in Armenia. In fact, he is depicted as one of the most tolerant caliphs.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 69.

¹⁹ Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*, 91, 95.

²⁰ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat’ewosyan, 271-272

²¹ *Ibid.*, 276.

²² *Ibid.*, 168, 98.

4. Canonization: *Shurūṭ ‘Umar* in early 9th century

During the early years of the 9th century, al-Imām Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (767-820) of Baghdad completed his very extensive *Kitāb al-Umm* (model, exemplar), the first exhaustive compendium of Islamic code of law based on the Qur’ān. It was an authoritative guide for the Shāfi‘ī school of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), founded by him, within Sunnī Islam. Thus, what came to be known as *shurūṭ* (conditions), or *‘ahd* (oath), or *‘aqd* (covenant) *‘Umar*, or *al-Shurūṭ al-‘Umarīyyah* (The Conditions of ‘Umar), identified and phrased differently, first appeared as a canonical document.²³ It had its symbolic beginnings in what is known as the “Edict of the Prophet.” Although there were documents of similar nature at the beginning of the 9th century, such as those cited by al-Shāfi‘ī and by Abū Yūsuf, by the time at which al-Mutawakkil published his famous “Edict” in 850, the *shurūṭ* represented Muslim consensus regarding *ahl al-dhimma*.²⁴

Al-Shāfi‘ī made his own composition. In addition to the Qur’ān, he also made use of circulating versions of an early Islamic oath and conditions, also trusted sources and supporting documents. The purpose was to generate a comprehensive document, which clearly defined the terms and formulae concerning the status, obligations and practices of the *dhimmīs* under Muslim rule.

Previously, Abū Yūsuf (Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī, d. 798) had a more tolerant disposition in his *Kitāb al-Kharāj*. He dismissed unnecessary restrictions upon the non-Muslims and considered that a fair treatment was more in the interest of the Muslims, rather than the *dhimmīs*.²⁵ Al-Shāfi‘ī, a less tolerant figure, believed that these “restrictions should apply only in cases of Muslim-Christian coexistence, and that all previous *ṣulḥ* (peace) commitments should be respected. His emphasis was on the “protection of Muslim society from the infidelity of the *dhimmīs*, or from the possibility of any other action injurious to Muslim society.” He also underlined “the mutual character of the treaty, and enumerated the rights and the obligations of both sides.” However, the classic text of the *Shurūṭ* is a “unilateral text.”²⁶

²³ Al-Shāfi‘ī, *Kitāb al-Umm*, vol. IV, 118-119.

²⁴ Levy-Rubin, “The Pact of ‘Umar”, 362.

²⁵ Levy-Rubin, “*Shurūṭ ‘Umar*”, 203.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The *Shurūt* has clauses regarding the obligation of the *dhimmīs* to host the Muslims in their houses and churches, and to be loyal to them; a list of restrictive measures regarding their religious customs, such as beating the *nāqūs* (bell) lightly, praying quietly, refraining from various public displays (public processions on Christian holidays, funerals, crosses, lights on roads, sale of pigs and wine); clauses regarding their behavior in the presence of Muslims (an obligation to respect them and give them priority on the road as well as in seating, not to be buried next to them, not to peer into their houses, not to own Muslim slaves); a series of clauses regarding the issue of *ghiyār*, or differentiating signs, including the prohibition on resembling Muslims in appearance, the obligation to wear the *zunnār* (girdle, belt), the prohibition on using saddles, on using Arabic seals, names and epithets, on carrying weapons, and on teaching their children Arabic.

The text of *Shurūt ‘Umar* exists in several versions, with certain variations between them.²⁷ In his book about the legal status of *ahl al dhimma*, Fattāl used the most famous version which appears in Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṭurṭūshī’s, *Sirāj al-Mulūk* [*Lamp of Kings*, early 12th century, and Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Ta’rīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, again of the 12th century. The version of al-Shāfi‘ī is cited in the Appendix.

5. The “Edict of al-Mutawakkil” (850)

Almost a century after the canonization of *Shurūt ‘Umar*, in 850, Caliph al-Mutawakkil issued his “Edict” this time establishing the *Pax Islamica* on the ground:

In that year (H 235), al-Mutawakkil ordered that the Christians and all the rest of the *ahl al-dhimma* be made to wear honey-colored *taylasans* [hoods] and the *zunnār* belts. They were to ride on saddles with wooden stirrups, and two balls were to be attached to the rear of’ their saddles. He required them to attach two buttons on their *qalansuwas* (conical caps) ... and [the cap] was to be of a different color from the *qalansuwa* worn by Muslims. He further required them to affix two patches on the exterior of the slaves’ garments. The color of these patches had to be different from that of the garment. One of the patches was to be worn in front of the breast and the other on the back. Each of the patches should measure four fingers in diameter. They too were to be honey colored. Whosoever of them wears a turban, its color was likewise to be honey colored. If any of their women went out veiled, they had to be enveloped in a honey-colored *izār* (large wrap). He further commanded that their slaves be made to wear the *zunnār* (belt) and be forbidden to wear

²⁷ The English translation of “*Shurūt ‘Umar*” is in Lewis, *Islam*, vol. II, 219-223. Levy-Rubin, “The Pact of ‘Umar”, 360.

the *mintaqā* (Arab military belt). He gave orders that any of their houses of worship built after the advent of Islam were to be destroyed and that one-tenth of their homes be confiscated. If the place was spacious enough, it was to be converted into a mosque. If it was not suitable for a mosque, it was to be made an open space. He commanded that wooden images of devils be nailed to the doors of their homes to distinguish them from the homes of Muslims. He forbade their being employed in the government offices or in any official business whereby they might have authority over Muslims. He prohibited their children [from] studying in Muslim schools. Nor was any Muslim permitted to teach them. He forbade them to display crosses on their Palm Sundays, and he prohibited any Jewish chanting in the streets. He gave orders that their graves should be made level with the ground so as not to resemble the graves of Muslims. And he wrote to all his governors regarding this.²⁸

Several caliphs issued similar edicts. Al-Muqtadir issued a set of regulations concerning the employment of *dhimmīs* in public service. He too required the distinctive honey-colored attire and other *ghiyār* rules.²⁹ The four schools of Sunnī legal thought, which crystalized by the 10th century, shared general ideas concerning the status of *dhimmīs*, with some differences, but along the same lines. However, as Freidenreich says, these texts “expressed normative ideals that did not necessarily receive support from the coercive powers of the state ... Muslim political authorities at times treated their Christian subjects in ways that contravened the norms articulated in classical legal sources, sometimes to the benefit of these subjects and sometimes to their detriment.”³⁰ In time, the regulations became more elaborate and more strictly enforced, as can be seen in the Mamlūk periods, as we see in *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimma* of the Syrian jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350).³¹

²⁸ Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*, 104.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Freidenreich, “Christians in Sunnī Law”, 100.

³¹ Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*, 104.

CHAPTER III

THE “ARMENIAN *PAX ISLAMICA*” — THE LITERARY RECORD

The “Armenian *Pax Islamica*” is a two-tiered subject. On the one hand there is the historical record of edicts, agreements, oaths, pacts and arrangements (labeled differently) made from the middle of the 7th century, during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān, to Ottoman sultan Mahmud II in the 19th century. On the other hand, there is the literary record, which in addition to authenticated pacts, includes a significant number of alleged documents.

I argue that while the record and the texts on these two levels vary, they must be seen in a single context. Because, together they are essentially reflections of the Armenians’ perceptions of the Islamic state and their status, rights, obligations also expectations as *dhimmīs*. Indeed, they draw what may be called the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*”, alongside the “Armenian Mahmet” and the “Armenian *Ghurans*.”

A. THE FORMATION OF THE ARMENIAN “EDICT OF MAHMET”

One of the most intriguing aspects of the literature about pacts with the Muslim authorities, is that with the exception of few ascribed to ‘Alī” (in Shī‘ī environments), all texts emanated, as alleged, from the “Edict of Mahmet to the Christians and Armenians”, or just “to the Armenians.” All subsequent agreements were considered “reconfirmations” or “renewals” of the initial prophetic covenant.

1. *The first reference in the Chronicle of Samuēl Anets’i*

The first reference to an “oath” specifically by Mahmet the Prophet, appeared in the *Chronicle* of Samuēl Anets’i during the late 1150s (Part Two, Chapter I). In his entry for the year 646, and in the context of an otherwise negative account about Muslim rule and practices he also wrote:

Mahmēt prevented the sword, and by counseling and advice made most of the world obey him. By a firm oath, he signed a pact with the Armenians to maintain their Christianity, and sold them their faith by taking from each house four *dirhams*, three *marzans* [weight/volume unit] of barley, one rope

[of hair] and one towel. The clergy, the nobility and cavalry were exempted of paying taxes.¹

This “oath of Mahmet” as cited by Samuēl, had no precedents, that I am aware of. Also, the positive depiction of Mahmet’s personality and his commitment to the Armenians is not found in all the previous accounts of the “Armenian Mahmet.” Obviously, for its political and moral significance during Seljuk times and more so later, and predictably, it was adopted verbatim by all subsequent authors as the earliest and the most authentic document, as they assumed. This brief text was composed on the basic grid and formulae of the early *Pax Islamica*: freedom of worship and safety, in return to obedience and taxes and/or equivalents. The clauses on restrictions seem to have developed in the early 8th century by the Umayyads.

There are two Mahmets in Samuēl’s passage. The first is presumably the Prophet, a powerful and benevolent leader, who put the sword aside and made the whole world obey him by “counseling.” This aspect of the Armenian Mahmet as a divine oath-giver and guarantor was immediately adopted and maintained throughout, in all the versions of the alleged pacts, even by the historians of the 20th century, as it shall be discussed. When Samuēl says “and he sold them their faith by taking from each house ...”, the reference is to another Mahmet. He is the Umayyad governor of *Armīnyah*, Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, as discussed earlier. The only “oath” that can be linked to Ibn Marwān is the one he signed and gave to Catholicos Sahak III posthumously in 703. The exact content of this particular pact never appeared in the literature. However, as told, if this “Mahmet” told Sahak’s companions, that he agreed, in writing, to everything the catholicos had asked in his letter (first cited by Ghewond), he must have given a most tolerant oath that probably was similar to the versions of the so called “Edict of the Prophet”.

2. A direct citation by Kirakos Gandzakets’i

Over a century later, Kirakos Gandzakets’i in the 13th century, borrowed this passage from Samuēl verbatim and placed it in a section about Mahmet, without mentioning Samuēl’s *Chronicle*. In turn, he confused the two Mahmets, made some modifications in the amount of the taxes, and added some inaccurate data about the successors of Mahmet:

¹ Samuēl, *Chronicle*, ed. Mat’ewosyan, 150.

... the Madians [people of Medīnah] accepted [him] and asked laws from Mahmēt, who gave them laws ... he was thus a messenger and lawgiver for seven years ... They invaded Bznuni [Lake Van], Aghiovid and Taron [west of Lake Van]. This Mahmēt prevented the sword and made the whole world obey him by the power of advice. He sealed a permanent oath that the Armenian world maintain Christianity freely. [In fact] He sold them back their own faith ... He required four *dirhams* from each house three *modii* [about 30 kg.] of sifted wheat, one horse-sack, one hempen rope and a gauntlet. It was ordered to levy no taxes from priests, *azats* and cavalymen. And those who ruled the world [after him] were called *amirmumnik*. After twenty years [Mahmēt's reign], the reign of Ismayel passed to Abubakr, Ot'man ['Uthmān] and Amr ['Umar] for 38 years.²

3. *Grigor Tat'ewats'i — Completion of the "Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians"*

During the mid-1390s, at the Monastery and School of Tat'ew in Siwnik', Grigor Tat'ewats'i adopted the narrative of Kirakos Gandzakets'i, again without mentioning his sources. His account is more sophisticated and complex. It is the following in my translation:

... They say about this [Mahmet] that he was the legislator, messenger and commander of the Tajiks for 20 years. Following battles, he ruled over many [peoples/lands]. This Mahmet [then] prevented the sword and with words of advice made the greater part of the universe obey him. Now, with the Armenians he sealed/signed a permanent oath, which is now called the "Great *Manshur*" [decree] [by which he allowed] to maintain their Christianity freely, and in return, he required from each household 4 *dirhams*, three *marzans* of barley, one rope of hair and one towel. The clergy, the nobility and cavalry were exempted of taxes. He [also] ordered not to require taxes from priests, freemen and cavalry. After 20 years of Mahmet's reign, Bubak'r and Ōt'man and others ruled for 38 years. After him another Mahmet in the same name and position, reigned as prince and messenger and a successor. They say that Lord Catholicos Sahak died while going to meet him. He was taken to him in his coffin. [upon this encounter] He gave the "Little *Manshur*" to the Armenian people, in the example/manner of the pact that the first Mahmet wrote [stipulating] that the priests, freemen and cavalry be free from all taxes, and openly and freely maintain their faith. This much is sufficient about this [subject].³

² Kirakos, *History*, 55.

³ Grigor Tat'ewats'i, "Against the Tajiks", 121-123. In Armenian: ... Չսա ասեն օրէնսդիր և պատգամաբեր և զօրավար լեալ Տահկաց ամիս Ի [20] որ յետ կոտորելոյն և տիրելոյ բազմաց: Մահմէտս այս արգել զտուրն, և բանիւ խրատու հնազանդեցոյց ինքեան զմեծ մասն տիեզերաց, [121] եւ անմոռաց երդմամբ կնքեաց մուրհակ աշխարհիս Հայոց, որ այժմ կոչի Մեծ Մանշուր. Համարձակ ունել զԲրիստոնէութիւն. և վանառեաց նոցա, յամենայն տանէ առեալ

Several elements in this passage make it probably the most intriguing account of the Armenian *Pax Islamica* in late medieval Armenian literature. Even though the brief passage in Samuēl's *Chronicle* is cited almost literally, it is preceded by an introduction about Mahmet, the “legislator, messenger and commander of the Tajiks.” As a true Prophet, and after victorious battles, he resorted to counseling and made most of the world obey him. According to Grigor, it was this Mahmet the Prophet of the Tajiks, who “sealed/signed a permanent oath” called the “Great *Manshur*.” In return to specific taxes, he made a “permanent oath” to the Armenians to “maintain their Christianity freely”, and to exempt the clergy, freemen and cavalry, again “permanently.” Furthermore, it is this Mahmet the Prophet, who specified the amounts and types of taxes in his “Great *Manshur*.” Given the dates of the Prophet's death in 632, the arrival of the Arab armies in Armenia, then the first pact in 652, Grigor's narrative is strangely misinformed and chaotic.

Grigor also has the story of the other Mahmet, or Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, whom he seems to consider a caliph, when he says “Mahmet in the same name and position, reigned as prince and messenger and a successor.” In 703, and following the Prophet, he gave the “Little *Manshur*”, in the manner of the “Great *Manshur*”, with the same conditions. In other words, he simply renewed what the Prophet had done 70 years earlier. The rest of the story about Sahak is in turn his. According to him, the deceased catholicos was taken to the second Mahmet in his coffin, with no mention of any letter.

The most significant aspect of Grigor's account is the link he made between the two *manshurs*. According to his account, the “Little *Manshur*” to the “Armenian people” was written in the example/model of the pact that the first Mahmet wrote,” or the “Great *Manshur*.” Previously as well most authors, including Sahak III in his famous letter to Ibn Marwān, considered the pacts as “renewals” of the initial prophetic oath or edict, hence the continuation of the prophetic legacy of oath-giving.

չորս զրամ, և երբ մարգան գարի, և ձիատուպրակ մի, և պարան մի մագէ, և ձեռնարար մի: Իսկ ի փահանայից և յազատաց և հեծելոց ոչ իրամայեաց առնուլ գիարկն: Եւ յետ քսան ամին Մահմետայ, տիրեցին Պուպաբր և Օբման, և այլն անս երեսուն ուր: [122]

Յետ սորայ միւս Մահմէտ նովին անուամբ և գործով, նստի ի շխան և պատգամաբեր փոխանակ նորին: Մմայ ասեն դէմ ընդ առաջ գնացեալ Տէր Սահակ կաթողիկոսն վախճանեալ ի նանապարի և յազապոփ տարեալ առ նա: Եւ սա ետ գՓոբր Մանուրն ազգիս Հայոց, նորին օրինակովն, զոր գրեաց առաջին Մահմէտն, ազատ լինել փահանայից և ազատաց և հեծելոց [122] յամենայն հարկէ, և համարձակ և յայտնապէս պաշտել զհաւատս իւրեանց: Այսքան առ այս: [123]

It may be said that the Armenian *Pax Islamica* emanated from the assumption that there was indeed a prophetic commitment to them. Through Grigor, at the end of the Middle Ages, the oath or “Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians” became an established historical fact. Through the formulation of Grigor, these pacts were adopted in the literature. *Against the Tajiks* (Ėnddēm Tachkats’), where this passage appeared, was a chapter in his *Book of Questions*, one of the most copied texts in the monastic centers.

Finally, a reference to an edict by the Prophet appears most unexpectedly in 1680, at Ėjmiatsin, in the first translation of the *Ghuran* by Step’anos Lehats’i. “Azoara” (*sūrah*) 12, “Usuf” (*Sūrah* 12, Yūsuf), he has a verse 9, which incidentally does not exist in the Qur’ān: “And then he [Mahmet] established an oath of love ... with the Christians.” [*Ews zknī hastateloŷ zukht sirelut’ean ... ėnd k’ristoneays*]. Obviously impressed and pleased, Step’anos wrote in the margin: “He gave an oath to the Christians” (*k’ristonēits’ ukht ewet*).⁴

B. OTHER VERSIONS OF THE “EDICT OF MAHMET”

1. “*The vasiat (will) of p’eghambar Mahmat, by the hand of Maviē to the Christians*”, M6984

To the first years of the 18th century, I have not found specific references to or any versions of the “Edict of Mahmet.” The first version appeared at the end of a copy of it made in 1706. The translation, now lost, of the first so far known anonymous translation of the Qur’ān from Arabic, probably made during the first years of the century, or the last years of the previous one. It is entitled *Book Called Ghuran* (*Girk’ or Koch’i Ghuran*, M6984). This text is made by a barely literate person, in the Eastern Armenian vernacular, mixed with Arabic, Persian and Turkish words. The Muslims are referred to as “Kurds”, as an indication that the writer is from a location with a predominantly Kurdish population, possibly in the triangle between Hamadan (where the scribe of the manuscript Aristakēs Erēts’ came from), Suleymanieh and Tabriz. This copy of the Qur’ān from Arabic will be discussed in Part Four. This version of the “Edict of Mahmet” attached to it, has a very elaborate title:

⁴ *Ghuran*. Step’anos Lehats’i, *This is the book of laws of the Hagarians or the Ismaēlites called Ghuran, meaning collection of precepts*. Այս է գիրք օրինաց հազարացւոց կամ իմամ-յէլացւոց որ կոչի Ղուրան այսինքն հաւաքումն պատուիրանաց. 1680. M934, fol 59b/page 118.

“The *Vasiat* [Will] of Mahmēt — for the Christians [and] Christian catholicoi, by the handwriting of Maviē ... and in the presence of the *jamiat*’ [*jamā’ah*] of the *p’eghambar* and all those who were *hazir* [*ḥāḍir*, present, in Arabic] ... All their names are written below ... this was written at Meydinay [Meḍinah].” [*Vasi Mahmētīn* — *Vasn k’ristonēits’ azgi khmar, k’ristoneay kat’oghkosnerats’ Maviē dzeragrovñ, ew nerk’oy greal p’eghambarin jamiat’in huzurumn ēl ov or hazir ēr anmēranin, mi ēst miojē nerkoy gratsoy ē or Meytinay grets’aw*].

At the end, the date is stated as 626, “the second day of the week, three years and eighth months past the year [of Hijrah].” (M6984, fols 303b-305b/594-598).

The text is the following in my literal translation. Incomprehensible and illegible words and phrases are left blank, the names of the so called “witnesses” at the end, are as they appear in the text. Non-Armenian words are in italic:

This writ is my *vasiat*’ [will, Arabic *waṣiyyah*], those who do not comply with it and commit a *mukhalafat*’ [unlawful act] against my *huk’m* [order, dictate], let God’s judgment be upon him, be him king or slave ... on judgment day, because, to the Christians we gave a security against their enemies, be them far or near, not to harm them. Concerning their churches of worship, wherever they are, over hills or plains, or in cities, those who wish ill, we will hold them accountable, be they at sea or land, north or south, and to return them [to the Christians what they took of them] ... if someone [of the Christians] is in distress, let no one feel empowered ... Let no one expel catholicoi from their sees, let no one tell a Christian “be Kurd” [Muslim]. Let no church be destroyed. Whoever goes against this advice is contradicting the will of God, and the *p’eghambar* [prophet]. Let there be no coercion over the catholicoi and the priests. If an enemy invades the country, do not ask the Christians to go against him, unless they consent to do so. No excessive *jzira* [*jizya*] will be taken from *bezirkans* [merchants]. Only if they have a house and estates in the country, anything [tax] will be taken from them. Let whatever they give, be [considered sufficient]. It is not appropriate for Christians to go to war with the Kurds, leave them alone. We imposed a *kharaj* [land tax, must be *jizya*, poll tax] on them instead of going to war. The Kurds will go to war, and they shall not ask for gold, silver, horses, swords and bullets [from the Christians]. If someone chooses to give to his friend, he may. Let no one feel empowered over the Christians and ask them to become Kurds. Let no one argue about laws [religion]. If a Christian and Kurd argue, it is the duty of another Kurd to reconcile them. If a Kurd is found guilty, he must accept [his fault] and if a Christian is [guilty], he must not be relieved. If someone [from the Christians] wants to get married, let no Kurd interfere, and if a Kurd marries a Christian girl, there will be no coercion to convert. No one will question them about going to church. If anyone is prevented from going to church, that will be against the will of

God and forbidden by Him and [considered] a hateful act. If Christians want to repair a damaged church, the Kurds must come to their assistance and not ask their money back, what is given is *imdad* [*imdād* assistance in Arabic] ... that will be against the word of the *p'eghambar*. This is the charter that I gave to the Christians, let no one ignore it, in the churches or outside, let no one rise against the Christians. It is not allowed for Christians to assist the enemies by swords, bullets, horses, gold, silver and *zakhiray* [*dhakhīrah*, ammunition in Arabic]. If a Kurd seeks refuge in the house of a Christian, he must keep him and not expel him. Whoever refuses this, let him be cursed. Whoever negates my word, betrays my *ahd* [*'ahd*, oath] ... this was written before [the following] witnesses:

[Witnesses. I have copied these names as they appear, in transliteration, with no intervention on my part to correct the pronunciations] Omar Khat'ab, Osman Son of Afan, Ali Son of Apit'alub, Maviay Son of Safyan, Abudarday Abu Huderay, Abdullah Son of Abas, Hamzay Son of Mut'alup, Fudeyl Son of Abas, Sayet Son of Mayed, Balhay Abdullah Oghli, Sayet Son of Yibayd, Saybib Son of Gheys, Zeyid Son of Saybid, Abdullay Son of Zeyid, Yarzuz Arzam Oghli, Abumay Son of Zeyid, Sahl Son of Bede, Osman son of Madum, Tuay Son of Jubed, Abu Son of Ali, Abdulay Son of Omar, Zahadi Fekhed Son of Aser, Esayib Son of ... Amaria Son of Mir, Yashum on of Asbay, Hasan Son of Sabit', Son of Melik Kayb, Son of Kayb Jahan, Son of Abut'alb ... God sustain them.

Maviē wrote this by his hand dictated by the *p'eghambar*, on the second day of the week, three years and eighth months past the Hijrah year. *Alhem-durillah rabbil alamin. Vesselam.*⁵

Most versions of this alleged “Edict of Mahmet” are said to be “written by the hand” of Mu'āwiyah, as in the “Edict of the Prophet” among Syrian and Nestorian Christians, discussed previously. They all end with a list of witnesses. The strong and detailed terms in which this particular text is identified as the “*vasiat*” (will), “*huk'm*” (deliberation), and “*huchatulay*” (word-charter), reveal the political role it was desperately expected to play at the time and location, probably around Tabriz and Abadan during late 17th and early 18th centuries. In general, the source or sources of the Armenian versions of the “Edict of Mahmet” seem to be Syriac versions. The links between the Armenian Church and the clergy on the one hand, and the Syriac churches and the literature on the other, were always very strong. Several authors knew Syriac.

Next to the poetic imagination which produced this “*vasiat*” of the *p'eghambar*, the vocabulary is probably its most intriguing and revealing aspect. Rarely the Muslims are referred to as “Kurds”, the association of

⁵ *Book Called Ghuran* [Girk' or Koch'i *Ghuran*], 1706, M6984, fols 303b-305b/594-598.

Islam with the Kurds is an indication to chaotic and oppressive practices of the Kurds against the Armenian population both in the Ottoman and Persian Empires.

Several points must be made about this version of the Armenian “Edict of Mahmet.” First, it is definitely part of the broader Christian literature on the so-called “Edict of the Prophet”, as of the alleged “Epistle of the Prophet to the people of Najrān.” There are intriguing similarities between this text and other versions composed by *dhimmīs* and circulating in the entire region. Next, as a historical document of sorts, it is a description of the circumstances of the Armenians living among Muslim Kurds, on the Persian side in the Armenian East. It is also a bridge between the medieval tradition of the edicts ascribed to the Prophet, and 18th century texts related to Islam in the Safavid World. Furthermore, this version revived the earlier and more tolerant *Pax Islamica* under Safavid rule.

The two anonymous copiers (from Persian Armenia in the East) of this *Ghuran* from Arabic (copied in 1706), must have considered the “*vasiat*” of Mahmet an authentic document. They copied it meticulously and attached it to their copies.

2. “The Decree of the Prophet Mohammad” (626)

The next reference to the “Edict of Mahmet” to the Armenians appeared in 1881, in the *History of New Julfa which is at Asbahan* by Yarut’iwn Tēr Yovnanyants’.⁶ According to him, a copy of this “charter”, as he calls it, is preserved at the Armenian Bishopric of the city. In 1946, Leon Arpee published a translation of this text in his *Armenian Christianity*,⁷ a more detailed study was made in 1970, by L.G. Minassiyants’, in “The Decrees Given to the Armenians by the Prophet Mohammad and Head-Amir ‘Alī.”⁸ Granting the authenticity of the existing manuscripts, he wrote:

The great Prophet Muḥammad of Islam and his close associates and successors had warm feelings toward the Christians. For that reason, he granted them two decrees, which present great historical value ... They both speak of the necessity to treat Armenians well, and are in favor of their freedom and protection.⁹

⁶ Yovnanyants’, *History of New Julfa which is at Asbahan* (1880, 1881).

⁷ Arpee, *Armenian Christianity*.

⁸ Minassiyants’, “The Decrees”, 192-198.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

According to Minassiyants', the "Prophet's Oath" was written in 626, and the decree of Caliph 'Alī in 661. It is not clear, he added, where the original texts are, but there are three copies of a manuscript that contain the two decrees. The first is at Ējmiatsin, the second copy is at the Museum of the Bishopric of New Julfa (Ms 596, fols 3a-12b) prepared in India in 1870s, by an anonymous scribe. It is in Arabic, attached to a small novellette titled *Little Tale of Atineants'* (*P'ok'rik Vēp Atineants'*), or *History of Baghdad*.¹⁰ The manuscript carries five seals, which testify, as believed, that the "copy is identical with the original." The date is "Thursday ... of Muḥarram, 1040 Hijrah", or 1630, written at "Darōlsalt'ē, T'abriz" (or Dār al-Saltānah in Tabriz).

The third copy is at the Chehel Sotun Museum of Isfahan, in Ms 98. It is in Kūfī style with black ink, with an Arabic translation (in black) and Turkish (in red), it is written in Arabic script (page size 6.87×35.5 cm). According to Minassiyants', these two decrees were published twice.¹¹ He translated these decrees into Armenian (from the New Julfa Ms 596, fols 3a-8b and 9a-12b).¹²

Below is Leon Arpee's rather peculiar translation of it, from the text published in the *History of New Julfa* by Tēr Yovnanyants'.

*The decree of the Prophet Mohammad — Authenticated copy of the pacts of the Prophet granted to all beings and the Christian people or the Armenians in the fourth year of the Hijret, and this is the translation by the will of God, and in the name of the gracious rahim [God].*¹³

By the will of God, in the name of God the Merciful: By this writ known to all in the handwriting, and the style, a compact firm, a treaty that must be obeyed by all Christian nations, such as dwell throughout the world toward the eastward of Arabia and Persia, or within the bounds of them, whether they be distant, and whether or no they have acquaintanceship with the Faithful. This covenant and compact is worthy of obedience, and it behooves all Moslems also to observe its provisions. Whosoever shall esteem its bounden duty to obey the words of this covenant, his faith is perfect after the manner of men who do well, and such a one shall be esteemed worthy of a reward; but those

¹⁰ *History of Baghdad [Patmut'iwn Baghtati]* the text is on large pages, the writing is in black ink, the pages are framed by a 3 cm-wide red paper, some words are underlined in red.

¹¹ Sawanlyants', "The decrees of the Prophet and Ali" (?), 261 (?), and "By the Paths of Armenian Suffering", 50-54. These notes are borrowed from Minassiyants', I have not been able to access and check them.

¹² Minassiyants', "The Decrees", 192-196.

¹³ Title of New Julfa Ms 596, fols 3a-8b and 9a-12b, in Minassiyants', "The Decrees", 193, the text is on 193-196.

who shall willfully pervert the words of this Covenant, annul or do despite of it, or disobey the commands of this Compact, persisting in their contrary way, such shall be deemed nullifiers of the covenant and compact of God. Whosoever also shall irreverently despise this Writ, the same shall be held worthy of punishment, whether he be a king, or one of the people, whether he be a pious believer (Muslim), or only a believer (Christian).

Now begin the words of the compact, in accordance with the prompting of God vouchsafed to me in authentication. With a firm bond I do bind this compact, the like of which no prophets of the past ever have bound, and as no angels standing before God have found it easy to command. The words therefore of this covenant which I am about to lay down must be obeyed by all who are my people.

All pious believers shall deem it their bounden duty to defend believers and to aid them wheresoever they may be, whether far or near, and throughout Christendom shall protect the places where they conduct worship, and those where their monks and priests dwell. Everywhere, in mountains, on the plains, in towns and in vast places, in deserts, and wherever they may be, that people shall be protected, both in the West and in the East, both on sea and land.

And even as they honor and respect Me, so shall Muslims care for that people as being under our protection, and whenever any distress or discomfort shall overtake them, Muslims shall hold themselves in duty bound to aid and care for them, for they are a people subject to my Nation, obedient to their word, whose helpers also they are.

It therefore is proper for My sake to attend to their comfort, protection and aid, in face of all opposition and distress, suppressing everything that becomes a means to their spoliation. In the levying of taxes, it is necessary not to exact more than they are able to pay, but to adjust matters with their consent, without force or violence. Their building enterprises shall not be interfered with; their priests shall not be molested in the performance of their task; they shall not be persecuted for their own rites; neither shall their churches be dismantled or destroyed, or their homes and mansions confiscated by Muslims, for mosques or residences, without their consent. Whosoever shall not be do as is here prescribed, but shall do contrary to my behests, the same shall be held a despiser of this Compact, and a gainsayer of the word of God and his Prophet.

No land taxes shall be exacted from them in excess of the value of Four Dinars or one linen sheet, which shall be applied for the benefit of the Muslims and held as a sacred trust for public use. Nothing more also shall be exacted from them than what we here prescribe. Whether they be merchants and wealthy and wealthy, or whether they live in the open country, whether they fish for pearls in the sea, or own mines of precious stones, or of gold, or of silver, or possess other rich estates, they shall not be made to pay more than twelve *dirhams*.

Of those who are not of the Christian faith, neither conduct worship according to the Christian rite four *dirhams* shall be exacted. But of those who conform to that people and are obedient to their word, not more shall

be demanded than the afore mentioned twelve *dirhams*, provided that they dwell where all people are resident. Those who travel, and being without a place of permanent abode are constantly on the move, shall not be subject to land taxes, except that in the event any of them shall fall heirs to property on which the Imām has a legal claim, the lawful tax shall be exacted, yet even so the taxpayer shall not be made the victim of violence or of unlawful exactions in excess of his ability to pay. His mansions, his produce, and his fruits shall not be made the objects of avarice.

Christians must attend to all repairs on their own churches, chapels and monasteries. If in the interest of the benevolent Muslim public, and of their faith, Muslims shall ask of the Christians for assistance, the latter shall not deny them what help, as an expression of friendship and goodwill, they are able to render. Seeing that the Christians have submitted to us, implored our protection and taken refuge with us, we deem all help and succor rendered to them every way legitimate. If any one of them shall be sent as an envoy to negotiate peace between Muslims and Infidels, no one shall prevent his going, and if he should prove of service to our cause, let the service be accepted; but whosoever shall despise him, the same shall be numbered among the wicked, guilty before the Prophet of God, and an enemy of his revealed word.

Here also follows a treaty of Muḥammad, the great Prophet of God (may the blessing of God rest upon him and upon his posterity), with Christian people, a Treaty which His Majesty after foregoing words commanded and established with the Christians relative to their faith and laws, embracing a few commandments by which Christians shall regard themselves as being bounded. Let them do nothing contrary to the previous words, and everything in harmony with those following.

One of the commandments is this, that they shall give no aid to infidels, whether openly or surreptitiously, neither receive into their houses enemies of Muslims lest at a convenient opportunity they attack them. They shall not permit enemy men to stop at their houses or churches, neither shall they harbor enemy troops, or aid them with spear, arrow, sword or horse, or with aught else.

They shall not act as guides to them or show to them their possessions for safekeeping; they shall not communicate with them, or aid them by word or deed, or afford them shelter except only under duress.

If a Muslim shall chance at a Christian's house, he may there be entertained three days and three nights; more than that is unnecessary. Christians shall avert from Muslims the abuse and oppression of tyrants. In the event that it becomes necessary for them to hide a Muslim in their own mansions or houses, they shall give him a place to live, and take care of him, neither forsaking him, nor leaving him without food, so long as he shall be in hiding. Women and if children of Muslims shall not be betrayed or shown to the enemy, neither shall Christians deviate from these orders.

And if any Christian shall do contrary to this Treaty, or ignore it, he shall be accounted as annulling the same. Such a one is loathsome to God, and the Prophet shall visit upon him his just retribution. Wherefore let all Christians

deem it both binding and proper to observe the words of this Treaty even until such time as God shall ordain.

In witness whereof is attached the signature that in the presence of the Clergy and the Lords of the Nation, the Holy, Great Prophet, Muḥammad, affixed, confirming the foregoing Treaty. God Omnipotent and Lord of All.

In pursuance of the Command of the Great Prophet of God, Muḥammad, the Lord's Chosen (may the blessing of God rest upon him and upon his posterity, this Treaty was drawn up on the Monday following the first four months of the fourth year of the Hijrah [626/4]).¹⁴

In 1980, Anassyan wrote an article on “Islam and the Christian Tax-payers. The Treaty of Mahmēt and the Decree of Ali.”¹⁵ Few minor studies of these pacts were made since. In turn, he considered the texts as authentic historical documents dictated by the Prophet himself and ‘Alī. According to him, there are two manuscripts, “written by the hand of ‘Alī” translated from Persian. There are other translations of “Mahmet’s Treaty” made in the 19th century from Turkish manuscripts. He explains that in order to have a supreme reference and a case to present to their mostly Muslim rulers, the Armenians sought to find such documents in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. He is convinced that there must have existed an initial treaty bearing the name of Muḥammad, which granted protection to the non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state, issued sometime during third or fourth year of the Hijrah, or in 625 or 626. He also believed that there was an ancient Armenian translation of an oath of the Prophet “by the hand of Mu‘āwiyah” from Arabic, and two 19th century translations from Persian of a text allegedly written “by the hand of ‘Alī.” He adds that there are other Armenian translations from a Turkish original of the initial document.¹⁶

3. *“The Great Manshur — Treaty of Mehemmet written for the Christians by the hand of Ali” — 626*

According to Anassyan, there is a more recent type of translations from Persian. He focuses on M2622: The title is:

“Translation from the Persian language of the treaty called the Great Manshur. [This is] the Treaty of Mehemmet written for the Christians by the hand of Ali of the Sublime God. In the name of God the most gracious the most merciful.”

¹⁴ Arpee, *Armenian Christianity*, 356-360.

¹⁵ Anassyan, “Islam”.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

The first and the last paragraphs are:

This is a pact proclaimed and made manifest as a legitimate bill of treaty that stated the duty of the *musulmans* to protect all the Christian peoples, who lived all over the world ...¹⁷

By the order of the Blessed Prophet of God (God bless him and his clan and grant him salvation), this oath was written on Monday, the fourth month [*Rabī' al-Thānī*] of the fourth Hijrah year [626]. This is a testimony that whatever is written is universally applied. Let he who deviates [from it] be cursed by God.¹⁸

This particular version of the so-called “Treaty of the Prophet” was translated by Bishop N.T. Beknazaryants', on August 30, 1851, in New Julfa. The phrase “Great *Manshur*” first used by Grigor Tat'ewats'i appears again, and for the last time. At the end there is the following passage:

[This is a] A copy of the Great *Manshur*, the treaty of Great Mahamēt to the Christians. The original is in the Kufi language, of which was taken the one in the Persian language. Its authenticity in relation to the original is established by the witness of religious dignitaries of the Persians. This is now found at the Library of the Monastery of Surb Amenap'rkich [All Savior] in New Julfa at Asbahan [Isfahan], of which this translation is made. [A reader added a note]: We also found another copy written on July 39, 1853 at Teheran. [It is signed]: Translated by Galust Shirmazanyants'.¹⁹

Anassyan points out that this particular translation could be the one published by Shirmazanyants', cited in *The History of New Julfa* by Y. Tēr Yovhanyants'. The first and last paragraphs are:

Ratified/confirmed copy of the covenant/charter of the Prophet of the Arabs, granted to the Christian peoples or the Armenians on the fourth year of the *hichrēt'* [626], and this is its translation:

By the will of God, and in the name of God the graceful, this writ known to everyone, as per the writing and composition, it is a confirmed covenant and pact that must be complied with for all the Christian peoples and others found in this universe...[End]: Mahamad Zafer, who is one of the famous Imāms, established the authenticity of this copy as per its original.²⁰

Translations have also been made from a version of the oath of the Prophet in Turkish, said to be “by the hand of Mu'āwiyah.” Anassyan

¹⁷ M2622, fols 115a-116b; Anassyan, “Islam”, 37.

¹⁸ Anassyan, “Islam”, 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Tēr Yovhanyants', *History*, vol. II, 147-153; Anassyan, “Islam”, 38.

briefly refers to a translation by Yovhan Guzyan at the beginning of the twentieth century.²¹ The first and last paragraphs are:

Treaty of Mummēd – Prophet of the Muslims – to the Armenians.

By the will of God I ordered this blessed epistle to be written upon the plea of many from the Armenian people, who entered under the protection of the Muslims by an early treaty. Let the word of God be kept high. And I order the Muslim people and each individual to act as per this writ ...

This treaty was written in the presence of select personalities, let God's mercy be upon them all. These witnesses are [as they appear]: Bekir Essebdk, ve [and, in Turkish] Umur Ubn el-Khettab, Osman Ubn Affan, Ali Ibn u Ebi Talib, etc. This [epistle] was written by Maaviet Ubu Sefyan, who by the order of the messenger of God, peace be upon him, on the second of *zilhuchchēt'* [Dhu'l-Hijjah], the second month of the holy *hachriet'* [Hijrah], [year?]²²

Lewon Jerahian made another translation, the first and the last paragraphs are:

The treaty signed between Armenian dignitaries and the Prophet Muhammēt in accordance with the wish of many individuals from the Armenian people, who by a previously made agreement had entered under the protection of the Muslims, in accordance with divine will, I ordered to put in writing this holy treaty...

By the order of the Prophet Muhammet, Maviyet' Ibni Sefyan wrote this on the second year of the *hijrēt'* [624], the second day of the month of *zulhijē*.²³

At the Matenadaran, there are several copies of the so-called Prophet's Treaty or Oath of Mahmet, titled differently, both in Arabic and Persian. M358 in Arabic is dated the 4th year of the Hijrah, or 626, the Monday of the 4th month (*rabī' al-thānī*). It is in Arabic in big letters, and Persian beneath the lines in smaller letters. All the Armenian translations are very close to this particular text. The Matenadaran also has a defective copy in several versions, and some Persian translations.²⁴

C. THE ALLEGED "DECREE OF 'ALĪ" (660/61)

In addition to the alleged oath of the Prophet in the literature, there is also an alleged "Decree of 'Alī" granted to the Christian taxpayers on the month of Šafar, the 40th year of Hijrah (660/61), the year he was killed.

²¹ It was published in *Mejmuai Akhbar* 14/27, January (1909), no. 4633.

²² Anassyan, "Islam", 39.

²³ Jerahian, "The Prophet's Treaty"; Anassyan, "Islam", 39

²⁴ Anassyan, "Islam", 40. Anassyan has copied the list of witnesses, for comparison.

This particular text is different from the other versions called the “Edict of Mahmet” “written by the hand of ‘Alī”, allegedly in the second year of the Hijrah, or in the case of Persian copies, in the fourth year of the Hijrah. While all the so-called pacts or oaths are given to Christians in general, those attributed to ‘Alī are said to be granted specifically to the Armenians.²⁵ Thus, all the versions and copies of ‘Alī’s decree are translations from Persian and composed in Eastern or Persian Armenia. The Mkhitarist Library of Venice has a copy of a “Decree of Ali.” It has two colophons, by the translator, and the copier:

I, Grigor Kambanyan, translated from Persian into Armenian this writ of oath in the year 1757 of the Lord, January 15, at Azhdarkhan [in modern Pakistan]. It is the decree granted by Ali to the Armenians.

Being a witness to truth, I, humble soul Yovakim Grigor Bagratunian, born and raised at the Pontus and presently living at Constantinople, I copied this writ and gave it to my beloved brother T’oros Agha Ghrēmpejian in the year 1804 of the Lord, on April 20, at Odessa.²⁶

There is a much older and anonymous copy at the Library of Surb Yakob Monastery of Jerusalem, and another published in *Bazmawēp* by G. Shirmazanyants’. The latter found a copy in Persian that was “authenticated”, as he believed, by seals and signatures. He sent it to Ējmiatsin in 1844. There are several other copies published in journals, also others translated from Persian at the Matenadaran. A translation by Shirmazanyants’ into Russian was published in Tbilisi, *Kavkaz* 75 (1852). V. Barkhudaryan published a translation into modern Armenian as “The Decree of Ali given to the Armenian people.” There is an earlier article by H. Bērbērian “The Treaty of Ali” written in 1951.²⁷

Always convinced of the existence of an original oath by the Prophet himself, as well as ‘Alī, Minassyan’s adopted a rather simple approach and granted the authenticity of the copies of these decrees. In the same article, as referred to previously, he also published the copy of an alleged “‘Alī’s Decree at the Monastery of All Savior” (*Amenap’rkich’*) of New Julfa (M956, fols 9a-12b). This copy is made in India with no additional information. In order to give an idea about this category of decrees by ‘Alī, I cite it in my literal translation:

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁷ Barkhudaryan, “The Decree of Ali”. See Anassyan, “Islam”, 42-43; Bērbērian, “The Treaty of ‘Alī in the Chronicle of Grigor Kamakhets’i”, in *Sion* (1951), 302-324.

Decree of 'Alī in the name of God the Benevolent and Gracious, of whom we ask assistance.

Glory be to the creator of the universe and peace to the Great Leader and benefactor Mahmet and his pure family. Furthermore, in accordance with the order of the blessed lord of the Arians and divine lion, holy of holies 'Alī son of glorious Abit'aleb [this was written] in Kufi script at the residence of the famous monastery of Kharotal [?], in the month of Šafar at the fortieth year [660/1] of the Hijrah year.

Some very prominent and wise dignitaries from the Armenian people, Yakovb Seyid Ardshukh and his son T'ahanay and Abraham K'ahanay, Bishop Yesayi and many others, up to forty people, visited and talked to me. They wanted to pave the way for this oath [*ukht*] and wished to hear it from me. They had previously met our official dispatched to the fortresses at the borders. These were circumstances of our talks with them and agreement, upon which I issued an oath to all the Muslim peoples from the east to the west. In accordance to it verily and under my protection, as long as I am alive and after my death, let it be established, that as long as Christian preaching lasts, it is the duty of all the princes and others to comply with our divine oath, as long as the sea ... the mountains and bushes [exist] ... and rain pours down from the sky, and grass grows from the earth and stars spread their light, the sun rises in the morning over the near and far, let no one in power contradict or modify my oath, add [to] or reduce [from] ... [their] punishment will increase and our patience expire, and he who corrupts [this oath] in mean maneuvering will be disloyal to me and verily destroy the divine oath, he will also stir the wrath of the one and only God.

It is sufficient to have the witness of Bishop Seyid, and the many other dignitaries if the Christians ... The heads of the Christians asked from me to confirm an oath and treaty for all the Christians under the protection of the *musilmans*, in accordance to which let there be peace and extinction of the perennial conflict between the Christians and the *musilmans*. Whatever I issue, let it be accepted in good will, and let all hatred toward the faith of my people be overcome. If they [Christians] adhere to their oath, they will be similar to the *musilmans* and to each other.

Now I presented ... to the *musilmans* and my noblest officials, and confirmed my oath, which the Christian people asked from me and I sealed it to be kept by them, so that if kings or princes, or whoever disturbs or tortures them, they show it to them, and the latter must obey our order and be loyal. They will thus glorify our oath and please us, who put it [the oath] on their behalf.

Let there be no disobedience to our order and advice, it is necessary not to put pressure on and despise the Christians. By complying they will be applying our oath and treaty.

This oath is my task, and duty to those, who accept it, and cause for anger to the envious and slanderer. What I wish must not be disputed among my people glorified by their reign. Those who corrupt this writ, will contradict the divine will, which led me to be benevolent toward these people [Christians] and spared them suffering and pain.

And now I promised those who asked me to give them and their kin a divine oath. Let the ancestors, prophets and all the saints be witness, from beginning to end, we vow to remain loyal to the divine oath to the Christians under [the rule of] my people, and me as ruler over them, it is therefore my duty to protect them against any need and suffering. Let there be [divine] reward for me and my people, who are [rulers] over the entire world, for not harming them [Christians].

Let no one try to alter/convert them, no clergy from his being what he is, no Christian from his Christianity no monk from his monastery. Do not prohibit the preachers to do their preaching, do not destroy their residences and districts, do not prevent them from hanging their bells on their churches. Those who counter my oath, and trespass my advice, will have contradicted the divine oath and will deserve eternal punishment.

Kings or others from the faithful *musilmans*, should not try to convert Christians by force, and should not argue [with them] about their faith. They must address them sweetly and keep them under their protection, sparing them suffering and pain, wherever they are or live.

If they need assistance to renovate their churches, monasteries, homes, civil facilities, provinces, the Muslims are required to assist them. They must visit the needy, not out of duty but out of grace, and advise them in their transactions, for these acts are pleasant to God and his Prophet.

If someone betrays or corrupts my oath, he is an unbeliever in the Prophet of God, and a rebel. The Prophet is not pleased with the disobedient and the breakers of the oath confirmed by me, how can they [breakers of the oath] be considered obedient subjects to me, the son of glorious Abut'aleb. All that is decided is a duty of the *musilman* ... to the end of the world, and glory be to the Creator of the universe.²⁸

²⁸ New Julfa Ms 956, fols 9a-12b, in Minassyants', "The Decrees", 196-198.

CHAPTER IV

THE “ARMENIAN *PAX ISLAMICA*” — THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Levy Rubin argues that “the surrender agreements made between the Muslim conquerors and the representatives of various conquered entities (cities, regions, or groups) have their origin in an ancient tradition of international diplomacy and law which, *mutatis mutandis*, was still prevalent throughout the territories when conquered by the Muslims. This tradition was not only a norm accepted by the conquered population at the time of the conquests but was known to the Muslim conquerors as well. If this is true, then not only is there no need to suspect the authenticity of these agreements, there is in fact good reason to acknowledge their validity”, at least in spirit and intention, one might add.¹ Furthermore, common terms and phrases in these covenants called “bond and oath” or “pact and promise” demonstrate that treaty-making was based on a well-established set of rules, perceptions, and terms in the ancient world, which were simply continued by the Muslims.² In sum, “alliances (*ḥilf*) and covenants (*‘ahd*, *‘aqd*) among the Arabs were recorded also in pre-Islamic times.”³

Safety, or *amān*, mentioned almost universally, was a very common concept, which however does not appear in the Qur’ān. It meant protection based on a peace accord or *ṣulḥ*. *Amān* is parallel to the Greek *pistis* and the Latin *fides*, meaning faith, trust, protection, and assurance of security. Predictably, it came into usage at the time of the conquests.⁴ Freedom of worship, as per the norms of the given community, and safety of person, family and property are in turn universal themes in these documents, at least in Armenian literature. They have common forms, beginnings and endings. They include the *basmala*, the names of the giver/s and the recipients of the *amān*, the location, the stipulations, the restrictions, tax amounts and types, and at the end so-called witnesses, finally the scribe, the date, the signatures, and in some cases, the seal.⁵

¹ Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*, 10.

² *Ibid.*, 11

³ *Ibid.*, 18

⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

As is the case of most similar documents extant among the Christian communities in the Islamic states, at least to the end of the Middle Ages, the authenticity of many surviving Armenian documents too — with rare exceptions — is problematic. Some are unquestionably authentic, such as the 652 pact of Mu‘āwiyah. References to some, such as the “written word” given by Muḥammad Ibn Marwān to Sahak III in 703, or the pact of ‘Umar II to Yovhan II in 719, give sufficient reason to establish their actual occurrence. “The existence of such documents ... cannot be doubted”, says Levy-Rubin. “The inhabitants of the conquered area knew well from their own centuries-long experience that drawing up such documents at the time of surrender was the only means to assure their safety and well-being.”⁶ In Armenian literature, these pacts, identified differently, also reflected the disposition of the given author/text toward the episode. The 652 pact was either overlooked or described as a “pact with hell.” Others, were considered successes in extracting an agreement from the Muslim authorities. The investment on the legacy of the “Edict of Mahmet” was a most common strategy to influence the Muslim side, on two occasions, at least, it proved to be beneficial.

A. PACTS AND RELATIONS UNDER SUNNĪ LAW — EIGHT RECORDED PACTS

Identified differently, there are eight recorded agreements made under Sunnī Law, two during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthman, three by Umayyad caliphs, one by Seljuk Malik Shāh, one by Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn, and one by Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II. There is no record of any significant peace agreements made by the ‘Abbāsids.

1. *The Pre-Umayyad Period, during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān*

a. The pact between Mu‘āwiyah and T‘ēodoros R̥shtuni in 652 during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (r. 644-656)

Even though this particular pact was briefly discussed in Part One, in order to maintain the coherence of this discussion, I will include it in the discussion of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*..

The first historic record of the early Muslim-Christian protocols is in the *History* of Sebēos. At the time Armenia had lost sovereignty for over two centuries (in 428) and was divided between the Byzantine Greeks and

⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

Sasanian Persians. Referring to the incoming and victorious Arab Muslims as the “sons/nation of Ismayel”, Sebēos wrote about a peace pact made in 652 (about twelve years after the arrival of Arab armies in Armenia) at Damascus between Mu‘āwiyah, the “prince of the forces of Ismayel” (*Mawias ishkhan zawrun Ismayeli*) and Byzantine Patrician general in Armenia “*T’eotos Ršhtuni*, master/head of the Armenian princes.” Powerless before the invaders and “abandoned” by the Greeks, as the Armenians felt, “*T’odoros ... took a decision to serve the king of Ismayel*”, wrote Sebēos. Thus, he “gave an oath of death and made a pact with hell ... abandoning divine harmony” (*astuatsayin dashnaworut’iwn*, meaning the alliance with the Christian side). He added, “in this manner, the servants of the Antichrist cut them [Armenians] away from the Romans [Byzantines].” The following is the text of this agreement, as cited by Sebēos:

Now thus spoke to them the prince of Ismayel: Let this be my oath of accord/peace [*ukht hashtut’ean*] between me and you for as many years as you may wish. I shall not take tribute for a period of seven years. Then, you will pay [tribute] with an oath, as much as you wish. You will keep in your country 15,000 cavalry and provide sustenance from your country; and I shall reckon it in the royal tax. I shall not request the cavalry for Syria; but wherever else I command they shall be ready for duty. I shall not send *amirays* [amīrs] to [your] fortresses, nor Arab armies — neither many, nor even down to a single cavalryman. Enemies shall not enter Armenia, and if the Romans [Byzantines] attack you, I shall send troops in support, as you many as you wish. I swear by the great God that I shall not be false.⁷

This initial treaty drew the regional stage for all subsequent agreements. The choice was between the Christian and Muslim camps, and Armenian political identity and national interests seem to have dissolved. In the opinion of the next authors, it was indeed seen as a “pact with hell” or the Muslim side, despite the despotic rule of Christian Byzantium. It is not surprising to find that this first pact was deliberately marginalized in the literature and never cited as a whole text.

⁷ Sebēos, *History*, 215-216. In Armenian: Արդ խաւսէր ընդ նոսա իշխանն Իսմայէլի և սսէր, ‘Այս լիցի ուխտ հաստութեան իմոյ ընդ իս և ձեզ որչափ ամաց դուք կամիցիք, և ոչ առնում ի ձենջ սակ է [7] ամի ապա յայնժամ տաջիք երդմամբ որչափ և դուք կամիցիք: Եւ հեծեալ կալէք յաշխարհիդ ժե [15] հազար: Եւ հայոց աշխարհէն տուք և ես ի սակն արքունի անգարեն և գեհեծեալսն յԱսորիս ոչ խնդրեն բայց այլուր և հրամայեն պատրաստ լիցին ի գործ: Եւ ոչ արձակեն ի բերդորայն ամիրայս և ոչ տանիկ սպայ ի բազմաց մինչև ցմի հեծեալ: Թե՛նամի մի մտցէ ի Հայս, և եթէ զայ Հռոմ ի վերայ ձեր արձակեն ձեզ զաւրս յազգնականորիւն որչափ և դուք կամիցիք: Եւ երդնում ի մեծն Աստուած եթէ ոչ ստեն’:

Over two and a half centuries later, Catholicos Yovhan V Draskhanakertts'i (r. 898-929), who considered Mahmet the "offspring of Hagar the hand-servant", related that at the time (around 652), T'ēodoros R̥shtuni was the "army general [*zōravar*] of the Armenians." Since no one could resist the "destructive forces of Hagar" and terrorized by the Arabs, he wrote, T'ēodoros and the *nakharars* "agreed to obey them and making an oath of death, he signed an infernal pact with them", almost quoting Sebēos.⁸

According to him, T'ēodoros was appointed at the request (rather, plea) of Chalcedonian Catholicos Nersēs III Tayets'i Shinogh (r. 641-661) to the Byzantine emperor. Following this pact with his enemies, Catholicos Nersēs had to apologize to the "king of the Romans" (Emperor Constans II), and publicly announced his acceptance of the Chalcedonian creed. With an obvious ease also inaccurately, he said that soon after this "infernal" pact, and another Arab invasion then withdrawal, T'ēodoros was taken captive with many others to Syria, where he died in exile,⁹ almost implying a divine punishment that he deserved. This story does not correspond to what really happened. T'ēodoros died in his home estate of R̥shtunik' in Vaspurakan.

Lēō (Aṛak'el Babakhayan, 1860-1932) called this first treaty between the Caliphate and the Armenians the "Pact of Caliph 'Uthmān" made through Mu'āwiyah with T'ēodoros, in 653 [must be 652].¹⁰ The treaty was a "bold move", wrote Lēō, because practically it was a decision to abandon the Christian-Byzantine camp and move to the enemy Muslim-Arab camp. In the eyes of the Hellenophiles, also probably most of the clergy, the Armenians became allies of the Muslims and their leader Mahmet.¹¹ Thus by this treaty, the Armenians became the subjects of the Caliphate, taxpayers, simply *dhimmīs* who were not allowed to collaborate with Byzantium. As most early pacts with non-Muslims, it implicitly allowed internal sovereignty and marked a tolerant and fair beginning of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*, which nevertheless was not received well by many Armenians.

b. The Pact of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah at Duin (654)

Following the Treaty of 652, and under the circumstances, the collaboration of the Hellenophile *nakharars* with Byzantium meant the breaking

⁸ *Draskhanakertts'i*, Matenagirk', 410.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 410-411.

¹⁰ Lēō (Aṛak'el Babakhanyan), *Collected Works*, vol. II (Erevan, 1967), 322-323.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 324.

of the agreement and antagonizing the Muslims. When contacts with the Greeks persisted, Caliph Uthmān ordered Mu‘āwiyah to organize a large campaign led by Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, with orders to eradicate Byzantine military presence and subjugate the Hellenophile *nakharars*. Ibn Maslamah arrived in the winter of 654 and crushed the dissident elements with extreme brutality. The invasion was the biggest of all raids. He entered the cosmopolitan city of Duin (or Dābil, just south of Yerevan) a second treaty was signed, which Sebēos does not mention. The following is the version of al-Balādhurī:

In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful: This is a treaty of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah with the Christians, Magians [Zoroastrians] and Jews, including those present and absent. I have granted you safety for your lives, possessions, churches, places of worship, and fortifications. Thus you are safe and we are bound to fulfill our covenant, so long as you fulfill yours and pay the poll tax [*jizya*] and land tax [*kharāj*]. God is witness, and this is sufficient.¹²

The payment of the land tax or *kharāj* by non-Muslims is a strange stipulation. It is found only in this pact with the Armenian side.

2. The Umayyads

- a. A third pact by — now Caliph — Caliph Mu‘āwiyah concerning taxes (661)

In 661, the year Mu‘āwiyah became the first Umayyad caliph, he signed another and more practical agreement concerning the amount of annual taxes. Step‘anos Taronets‘i Asoghik (11th century) wrote:

And then they [Arabs] wrote a decree to the Armenians concerning their taxes. The princes, the *nakharars* and Catholicos Nersēs agreed to pay an annual tax of 500 *dahekans*. Then Mawia appointed prince Grigor [Mamikonian] as prince [governor] of Armenia and Georgia.¹³

Asoghik does not seem to be aware of the promotion of Mu‘āwiyah. To the year 685, the situation was under control. It changed drastically soon after ‘Abd al-Malik rose to the Umayyad throne and launched his project of Arabicization and Islamization. In 693 Muḥammad Ibn Marwān was dispatched as the commissioner or *ostikan* of *Armīnyah*. Already in 696, he began punishing the pro-Byzantine and other rebellious *nakharars* and ruled directly.

¹² al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 200.

¹³ *Asoghik*, *Matenagirk’*, 718-719. In Armenian: Եւ ապա գրեն հրովարտակ ի հայս՝ հարկել նոցա. և յանձն առին ի թխանքն նախարարաւքն և կարողիկոսն Ներսէս՝ Շ [500] դահեկան յանենայն ամի հաստուցանել: Եւ Մաւիա գրիբիզոր ի թխան հաստատեաց Հայոց և Վրաց:

- b. The Oath of Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, Ostikan/Commissioner of Armīnyah, to [deceased] Catholicos Sahak III (703)

The semi-legendary story of the mission of Catholicos Sahak III Tzorap'orets'i and his success at the Umayyads marked the beginnings of the moral-political significance and legacy of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*.

The episode was first told by Ghewond. He related that following extreme measures against Armenian uprisings during 701-703 (in response to high taxes by 'Abd al-Malik) Catholicos Sahak was delegated to meet with "Mahmet" (Muḥammad Ibn Marwān), the "general of the armies of Ismayel."¹⁴ After a long and hard journey, when the ailing catholicos arrived in the town of *Kharan* (Ḥarrān) his condition deteriorated. But just before dying, he is said to have written a letter addressed to Ibn Marwān reminding him of the protected status of the subjects of the Muslims in return to their obedience and taxes, as per the three previous pacts. This alleged letter and the episode are cited by several authors and in different versions. The following is the version (in my translation) with the rest of the story as told by Ghewond, the first source of the report:

I am sent [as messenger] by my nation in order to present to you what the *nakharars* and the commoners together ask of you. But He who is the source of life called me to Him and did not allow me time to meet and speak with you. Now I swear by the living God and seal a pact with you, in accordance with the divine covenant granted to your ancestor Ismayel by God, who promised to put the entire universe in his service and obey him, [I ask you] to give peace to my people, and it will obey you by paying tax. Keep your sword away of bloodshed and your hand of pillage, and they [Armenians] will obey you by all their hearts. Concerning our faith, let us have the opportunity to maintain what we believe in and witness, and let no one from you force apostasy. Now if you do what I ask of you, the Lord will fortify your reign and you will achieve all your wishes and He will make the whole world obey you. But if you choose not to listen to my words, the Lord will scatter your plans, and confuse your ways, turn your armies against you and refuse to act by your orders, and raise obstacles before you. Now do not neglect my petition and let my blessing be upon you.

When Mahmet arrived in Kharan and heard about the death of the catholicos of the Armenians, he hurried to see him [Sahak] where he was, for they had not buried him yet. He stood by the body and greeted as per their custom [*al-salamu 'alaykum*] as if he was alive, as we have heard of truthful people, and he repeated his greetings twice and thrice. Then he took his hand, as that of a living man, and spoke. He said "I saw your wisdom from your letter.

¹⁴ Ghewond, *History*, trans. Tēr Ghewondyan, 35.

As a brave shepherd [leader] and by law you hurried to take care of your herd and faced my arrogant sword. I agree to keep it away from innocent people, now I will do all that you have asked of me and let your pious blessing fall upon me. And if I fail to follow any of your words, let all the anathema that I read in your letter befall me.”¹⁵

There is no doubt that a “written word” was taken back to Armenia, but there is no record about its content and the terms of the agreement. Ibn Marwān’s commitment, as per the stories, that he “will do all that you [Sahak] have asked of me” means that an exceptionally tolerant pact was made. It is certain, that during the few years, to the death of Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik in 705, there was peace. The successor of Sahak III, Eghia I Archishets‘i (r. 703-717), and the next, Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i (r. 717-728) were in good terms with the Caliphate and against Byzantium.

Ghewond’s version of this letter, most probably composed by him at the end of the 8th century, is the second full statement of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*, but as the Armenians saw it in the lifetime of Ghewond, not Sahak’s in 703. Ghewond made Sahak to declare that he accepted the Qur’ānic “promise” of God to Ismayel, or the Muslims, to rule the entire universe. He also knew about the terms of the Islamic pacts, such as allegiance and payment of taxes, in return to safety and freedom of worship. Furthermore, the bold ending of the letter with an explicit threat to put a curse on Ibn Marwān, only shows the disposition of Ghewond at the end of the 8th century.

At the end of the 9th century, T‘ovma Artsruni, the most direct source about the Arab invasions, was silent about pacts and oaths.

During the early 10th century, Catholicos Yovhan V Draskhanakertts‘i however, and predictably, wrote a more dramatic version of the story of Sahak III. According to him, Sahak was already in Damascus with thousands of other captives, taken there following the reprisals of the revolts. When he died after arriving in Ḥarrān, his body with the letter clenched in his hand, was taken to the *ostikan* (Muḥammad Ibn Marwān). The latter promised to comply with the wishes of the saintly man and gave a written word. But this was a deceit, for he launched even harsher assaults and “burned” “the land of the Armenians.”¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

¹⁶ *Draskhanakertts‘i*, Matenagirk‘, 417.

In the *History of Albania* by Movsēs Daskhurants‘i, there are no references to other pacts or agreements with the Muslim side.

In his *Universal History* (ended at the year 1004), Soghman Taronets‘i Asoghik borrowed the narrative of Draskhanakerts‘i about the alleged capture of Sahak III, his mission to “Kharan”, his illness, the writing of the plea and Ibn Marwān’s noble gesture.¹⁷ He deviated from his source and wrote that by the terms of this “writ of peace” (*gir khaghaghut‘ean*) general amnesty was granted to all the Armenians.¹⁸

The next reference to the 703 pact was made in the *History of the Anonymous Storyteller Shapuh Bagratuni*. Shapuh was silent about the 652 agreement, even though T‘ēodoros R̥shtuni appeared in his narratives. According to his version of the episode of Sahak III, the Arab general was a certain “Ahmat son of Mahmēt” from Baghdad, and from the “great nation of Ismayel.” In the story, he responded favorably to Sahak’s plea and released the Armenians of taxes for three years, he then returned to Baghdad.¹⁹

At the end of the Sequel to M3019 (attached to the first copy of Lehats‘i’s *Ghuran*, dated 1680/1), after a blank page, the last section of Part IV bears an intriguing title in red: “Concerning the coming of Mahmet to Armenia and going to meet the most ... R̥shtuni bishop” (Sahak III).²⁰ This is Ibn Marwān, who allegedly came to Armenia to meet with Sahak and sign a treaty, but no mention is made of any text.

c. The oath of Caliph ‘Umar II to Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i (719)

During the first half of the 8th century the conditions of the Christians in Armenia were relatively better than the other Christians in al-Shām and Iraq. Most agreements and commitments met with limited or no success, and freedom of faith and safety in return to taxes did not materialize. In the absence of a central authority in Armenia after 428, the role of the institution of the Catholicosate gained political importance and several catholicoi played significant political roles. After the posthumous success of Sahak III, the oath of Caliph ‘Umar II to Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets‘i in 719 was a fifth pact and a spectacular success. The Arabs had respect for the clergy, furthermore, political circumstances at the time were favorable.

¹⁷ *Asoghik*, Matenagirk‘, 702-703.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 704.

¹⁹ *Pseudo-Shapuh*, trans. Thomson, text pages: 89, 93.

²⁰ Sequel to M3019, fol. 413a/834. In Armenian: *Patmut‘iwn galsdean Mahmetin i hays ew gnaln ěnddēm srbuyn amena ... r̥shtuneats‘ episkoposin*.

In turn, this episode is told in many histories and in slightly different versions. Asoghik has an elaborate story of the visit of Yovhan II Ōdznets'i *Imastasēr* (philosopher) to the “*amirapet*” (also called “*amiralmumnin*”), Caliph 'Umar II in Damascus and a formal renewal of an oath of safety to the Armenians.²¹

Yovhan was a handsome and elegant man, as told by several authors. He knew Greek and some Arabic, and more importantly, he seems to have understood the political culture of the Arabs. The local officials in Armenia were impressed, and soon, Caliph 'Umar II invited him to Damascus in order to meet him in person. He arrived sometime in 719 in royal attire, his long gray beard sprinkled with gold powder mixed with scented oils. Amazed at Yovhan's appearance, when the caliph reminded him of the humility of Christ, he showed him the shirt of coarse goat-hair that he wore on his skin, underneath the luxurious garments. According to Draskhanakertts'i, the caliph said, “How is the body of a man able to endure this intolerable shirt of coarse hair, unless patience is given to him by God.”²²

According to Gandzakets'i, when the caliph offered all types of assistance, the catholicos reportedly had only three requests: no compulsory conversions, exemption of the clergy of all taxation and freedom of faith and worship. He is quoted as saying,

Grant us these requests in writing [said the catholicos] and all my people will serve you. And he ['Umar II] immediately commanded a letter to be written according to his demand. He sealed it with his ring, lavished upon him favors, convoked numerous troops under him and sent him with great honors to the land of Armenia. The catholicos also insured the release of Armenian prisoners in Damascus as of 705.²³

The treaty of 719 was probably the most effective on the ground. Yovhan II severed relations with Byzantium, drove away the Chalcedonians and the Paulicians (*Pawghikeank'*). The latter anyway chose to move to the west because of the Byzantine iconoclastic shift at the time. In the context of pacts with the Muslim side, and particularly during periods of power vacuum, as J. P. Mahé says, the Catholicosate remained the only “stable institution,”²⁴ and Ōdznets'i made the most of the circumstances.

²¹ *Asoghik*, Matenagirk', 709.

²² *Draskhanakertts'i*, Matenagirk', 104.

²³ Kirakos, *History*, 68.

²⁴ Mahé, “Le Rôle et la fonction”, 99.

Even though the visit of Yovhan II to Damascus was a very widely told favorite story, few authors mentioned the pact and the promise of freedom of worship he could obtain from ‘Umar II. Draskhanakertts‘i, for instance, wrote only about the visit and the great impression Yovhan made on the caliph, without referring to the pact.²⁵

The decisive factor in the success of Yovhan II and the renewal of a tolerant “Edict of the Prophet” to the *dhimmīs*, was probably ‘Umar’s perception of the Islamic state with a large non-Muslim population. Even though, as a true and pious Muslim, he considered the supremacy of the Muslims over the *dhimmīs* a first principle, he also felt bound to maintain the prophetic legacy of fairness. Probably, as Spuler says, it “was his sense of self-righteousness as against the transgressions of his predecessors, which made him respect the rights of the Christians, in the sense of the Qur’ānic prescriptions.”²⁶ Clearly, he was the first Umayyad to see the Caliphate in theocratic terms and took much pride in being a descendant of Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb through his mother’s family. According to Spuler, “he decreed that equal pay be given to clients who fought in wars for the faith and that converted peasants be henceforth exempt from the poll tax. Apparently, the Muslims had to pay the *kharāj* or land tax, because otherwise the tax-revenue would have been seriously impaired. The non-Muslims paid the poll tax or the *jizya*. It also appears that the collective liability for taxes was retained, and that the burden of the payments by Muslims fell onto the shoulders of their fellow-countrymen, who remained Christians or Zoroastrians.”²⁷ In Damascus, he compensated the confiscation of the Church of St. John (by his predecessor), by returning the Church of St. Thomas in al-Ghūṭah to the Christians.²⁸

3. *Consolidation of Classical Sunnī Law in the ‘Abbāsīd Period*

Medieval Armenian sources put the beginning of a sharp turn in the treatment of Christians at the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. The period coincided with the canonization of *Shurūṭ ‘Umar* by al-Shāfi‘ī. Few decades later, the “Edict of al-Mutawakkil” (cited earlier) finalized a process in Sunnī Law. Even though he is often depicted as a “hater of Christians” and supporter of the violent commissioners, there is no specific reference

²⁵ *Draskhanakertts‘i*, Matenagirk‘, 420-422.

²⁶ Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*, 47.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kennedy, *The Prophet*, 106.

to a specific decree or edict in Armenian literature. Furthermore, while the Caliphate supported and encouraged the rise of both the Bagratuni (in 884, Shirak) and Artsruni (in 908, Vaspurakan) dynasties, there is no record of any documents of peace pacts or agreements during the 9th and 10th centuries. The names and reigns of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs were often mentioned and listed inaccurately, often in dark colors and some more than others, such as al-Mutawakkil and al-Muqtadir.

Despite stormy times of persecutions and high taxes, also no obvious protection for the *dhimmī* Armenians, there is also no mention of the classic restrictions and stipulations common to both the *Shurūt ‘Umar* and the “Edict of al-Mutawakkil.” There are few references to *ghiyār* stipulations. Despite the persecutions, churches were built but in geographically isolated locations, and monasticism flourished in the 10th century. Most of the great monasteries and their schools began appearing at this time and continued for centuries through unstable conditions and always under Muslim rule.

4. *Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh — A pact with Bishop Barsegh of Ani (1090)*

As mentioned, high ranking clergy, often catholicoi, were involved in negotiations and agreements with Muslim authorities. From early Seljuk times, there is the episode of then Bishop Barsegh Pahlawuni of Ani. In 1090 he set off on a mission to come to terms with the invading Seljuks. He met with Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh, bearing precious gifts and accompanied by dignitaries. According to Matthew of Edessa, he succeeded in his mission and obtained a “written word” to ease persecutions and relieve the churches and clergy of heavy taxes. The sultan was said to be relatively tolerant toward the Christians. Matthew, and later on other authors, such as Vardan Arewelts‘i (13th century), often have praises for Seljuk sultans. “Matthew’s rejoicing certainly refers to the Armenian Christians as a whole”, says Beihammer, “but has also much to do with the power, wealth, and status of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In addition, these statements reveal Matthew’s awareness, following the collapse of the Byzantine government, of the importance of the protection which the sultanate in the framework of the new order granted to the church; in exchange, the ecclesiastical leaders supported the implementation of Muslim rule.”²⁹

²⁹ See Beihammer, “Christian Views”, 64. *Matthew*, Dostourian, 156-157.

5. *Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's Oath to the Christians-Armenians of Jerusalem in 1187 — The seventh pact under Sunnī Law*

The fall of Crusader Jerusalem in 1187 to Kurdish Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn, the Ayyūbid Sultan of Egypt, was perhaps the most significant event in the history of the Medieval Near East. As far as the Christians were concerned, the event symbolized the final fall of the Holy City to Islam and the end of an era. According to narratives of the episode, the immediate cause was a relatively insignificant assault in 1187 by Reynaud de Chatillion (a feudal lord of Jerusalem), on a caravan in which Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn's sister was said to be traveling. The episode immediately became a pretext for a large-scale retaliation by the Ayyūbids. At Ḥattīn, near Lake Ṭabariyyah/Tiberias in Palestine, led by King Guy of Lusignan of Jerusalem the Franks were defeated and the Kingdom of Jerusalem fell on October 2, 1187, or Rajab 27, 583H. The event caused the Third and failed Crusade (1189-1192).

Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn was the second liberator of Jerusalem from the "infidels", 550 years after Caliph 'Umar in 637. He was the new champion of Islam and a worthy successor of the Prophet, as he presented himself. He stormed the city with an enormous force, occupied all the Latin churches and converted them into mosques, but refrained from entering the Great Mosque of 'Umar before "purifying" it. He was said to have ordered a caravan of five hundred camels to bring in the special rose water of Damascus to wash the mosque "contaminated" by the Crusaders. Christians were strictly forbidden from entering this mosque. Otherwise, only the Eastern Christians were allowed freedom of worship. The Latins were driven out and their churches confiscated.

The capture of Jerusalem had special significance for Islamic-Armenian history. It was an occasion for a "reconfirmation", of the "Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians" this time at the Holy City. Bishop Abraham of the Armenians (who is said to have taken part in the ecumenical Council of Hromkla in 1180) led a delegation to meet Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn and presented the subjection of the Armenians of the city to him. He is said to have shown him copies of previously made, as alleged, three oaths of the Prophet, 'Alī and 'Umar and requested his reconfirmation of the initial promise to protect the Armenian churches, persons, estates and property in Jerusalem. In return, the Armenians would pay the *jizya* and recognize no other sovereign.³⁰

³⁰ Sawanlyants', *History of Jerusalem*, 408.

Salāḥ ed-Dīn responded positively and signed an elaborate oath. A copy of this oath is said to be in the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It is cited in the *History* of Sawanalyants³¹, in his translation into Armenian. This version is identical with the Arabic text in circulation and is generally considered to be authentic. The following is my literal translation of the Armenian version at the Patriarchate, as cited by Sawanalyants³¹.

This [writ] is granted by Salāḥ ed-Dīn Ibn Muzaffar: Glory be to God who allowed me to open the gates of the Holy City and cleansed its temples of the idols. We address greetings and blessings to Muḥammad Ibn Abdallāh, who went through hardship in order to bring peace upon humanity, greetings to his associates too. This is what Muḥammad wrote and the same was reconfirmed by the prince of the magnificent temple, the Sultan Salāḥ ed-Dīn (may God extend the days of his rule to eternity and bestow upon him all that is good and blissful in afterlife). As our lord ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may God be pleased at him and increase his glory) bowed to the will of Muḥammad, we too must obey and follow his path. Among the Christian peoples, they [Muḥammad and ‘Umar] decided to designate the Armenians and their co-religionists the Ethiopians, Copts and Syrian Christians, as subjects of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him). ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with them) followed his decision. The present document was written for both the above mentioned [Christian] peoples and all other peoples submitted to us by God. This [document] was written for the near and far, close ones and strangers as an awesome oath and public proclamation and as a testament to my successors, whose justice it will reveal too. This is an obligation that is the privilege of Muslims, who are required to fulfill and not to go beyond it as they will only demean it. If anyone of the faithful dares to oppose it, he will have contradicted the orders of God’s Messenger (peace be upon him). This was agreed upon by my entire administration, nobles, and associates and their followers. Indeed, he who contradicts this oath — be him a Muslim, even a monarch or anyone else — will dishonor his obligation toward this divine oath and will face eternal judgment. By the present writ on parchment I adopted this oath and treaty requested from the Muslims and the faithful and the Prophet and Messenger of God and his successors and made it compulsory for all the generals under my command. Great are this oath and its conditions, which God required of His Prophet and Messenger, and his king [Salāḥ ed-Dīn], who stand close to His worship. It is my duty to fulfill the obligations stated in this oath, to protect the valleys and palm groves, the population of the large and small provinces, their places of worship and churches. It is my obligation to protect the Great Church of Mār Ya‘qūb in the southwest of the city near Zion, also the Church known after the Olive Garden (Archangel) and Christ’s Prison (Monastery of the Savior), the Churches of Bethlehem and Nāblus, the greatly revered

³¹ *Ibid.*, 409-413.

location behind the Church of Holy Ascension, and the place from which the Christians believe that the light shone, because it is the tomb of the Messiah (peace be upon Him), also the upper and lower parts of Golgotha, the location of the Cross and the Church of St. John. These are the places of the Armenians in the Holy City and its vicinity and there must be no debate concerning them. These locations must be given to them, as the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) had done so previously, and his noble companions after him. I too granted to them [Armenians] the totality of their churches, worshipping places, the clergy, and pilgrims' quarters, wherever they are, on the hills, or in the valleys, caves, and all other locations. Let their religion and property be kept safe and sound at sea and land, east and west, and wherever I and my seal are. Let there be no discrimination between my people and the orthodox [not Latin Christians] and let them be kept safe of all infliction, pain, and evil. He who causes harm to anyone of them will become an enemy to my person, my associates, and my people. I am an absolute ruler, therefore it is worthy of me to protect them of all evils. If a problem external [unrelated] to us arises let them resolve it among themselves and do not interfere or promise anything. Let no bishop be removed from his office, or a Christian of his faith, or a priest [vardapet] of his vocation, or a traveler of his path, and no monastic be thrown out of his cell. Do not persuade the Christian people to convert to Islam. Do not destroy any of the estates of the Churches. He who commits such acts will have contradicted God's will and His Messenger's (may God be pleased at him) as well as my prerogatives and my oath to them [Armenians], the Ethiopians, the Copts, and the Syrians. Trespassers will have committed injustice before God and will be held accountable before His Messenger and his associates. If monks and bishops encounter hardship, they must be consoled. No excessive pressure must be put upon the merchants and their merchandise. They must pay a yearly tribute of two *dinārs*, and no more taxes beyond their capacity must be required of the taxpayers. In case of war with the enemies, nothing should be asked of them [Christians], because the war is not waged for their sake. They will continue paying the same amounts. If the taxpayers are Muslims, they must be protected by the royal delegates. This is the reason why I granted the Christians this oath of God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). The requirements stated by this oath and treaty upon the Muslims, also concern blood-tributes and holy relics. If their churches need renovations, the Muslims should contribute, not out of any consent to their religion but out of their piety and grace for the glory of God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). It was ruled by God's Messenger (peace be upon him) that the faithful perform their duties and fulfill their promises. It is forbidden to employ the Christians as slaves, or to use their property and mules, or to prevent them from any of their endeavors. According to the orders of the Messenger (peace be upon him), all that the elders [religious] legislated for you [Muslims] should not be overlooked. Anyone who does so by avoiding some rules or reducing others, he will have broken his oath before God and His Messenger (peace be upon him). This oath was given to Bishop Abraham and transmitted through him to their [Armenians'] bishops, monks and the people, and

their followers the Ethiopians, Copts and Syrians. This is protection in return to their duties toward God and His Messenger, peace be upon him, his successors and agents. The duties imposed by the Messenger peace be upon him, are more serious than just promises for safety that come from mere faith. Let this compact remain unchanged by me and the caliphs that will succeed me, the people of Muḥammad and all the faithful and the Muslims from now to the end of the world that we will inherit, for He is the benefactor. This oath was witnessed by the faithful brothers who were present [to its writing]. It was written on the 20th of Rajab and the 582nd year of the Hijrah [Oct 6, 1186] of our Prophet (peace be upon him). Let God decide everything in peace. Witnessed by ‘Izz ed-Dīn, Shihāb ed-Dīn, Najm ed-Dīn and Abū’l-‘Awf.

The fall of Jerusalem was in October 2, 1187, therefore the date recorded by Sawanelyants’, 20th of Rajab, 582 (Oct 6, 1186), is a year earlier, and obviously wrong. He may have made a conversion error from the Gregorian calendar to Hijri.

Prior to the Crusader occupation of the city in 1099, most churches and other locations mentioned in Salāḥ ed-Dīn’s oath, were in the hands of Armenians. Practically, Salāḥ ed-Dīn “sold the Church of Holy Ascension to the Armenians”, wrote Sawanelyants’, and required an entrance fee of one *dīnār* from each pilgrim.³²

B. TURKMEN AND SHĪ‘Ī TIMES AND POLEMICAL LITERATURE

After the arrival and the conquests of the Mongols by the middle of the 13th century, then their conversion to Islam in 1300, most Armenians, both in the East and West were in even more precarious circumstances. To that time, the most significant influence of Classical Sunnī Law was on Armenian canon laws. The *Book of Judgment* or *Datastanagirk*’ by Mkhit’ar Gōsh was closely connected to the Armenian circumstances in the Worlds of Islam. (Part One, Chapter II)

During the later decades of the 13th century the Armenians in the East began coming under Turkmen and Shī‘ī rule. This chapter deals with episodes and texts in Shī‘ī contexts and in response to Shī‘ī Law.

1. *The Circumstances*

Ani fell to the Mongols in 1236, but for a while the Georgian-Armenian Zak’aryans remained the vassals both to them and the Georgian Bagratunis. In 1360, the city became the capital of the Kara Koyunlu (or Qara Qoyunlu,

³² *Ibid.*, 414

Black Sheep) Oghuz Turks. Their dynasty lasted to 1468, and included Eastern Asia Minor, Armenia, Georgia, present-day Azerbaijan, and parts of northwestern Iran.

By the second half of the 14th century, and after the fall of Cilicia to the Mamluks in 1375, the entire Armenian world, in the east and the west, was under Muslim and often chaotic and harsh rules. However, despite wide-spread destruction, some monastic institutions in the remote mountain areas, such as Tat'ew in Siwnik', thrived.³³

Around 1380, Mongol Tamerlane, or Timur i-Lang, or Timur Lang (r. 1370-1405) began his campaigns and the region from the Caspian to the Black Sea was devastated by the "southern fire", as Matt'ēos Jughayets'i (d. c.1421), who at the time was at Vaspurakan, put it.³⁴ In the colophon of a Bible he copied at Tat'ew in the year 1407, Matt'ēos described the times as "bitter and difficult." He was relieved that "the arrowmen of T'imur disappeared and on the throne of Atrpatakan [between the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia] rose [Turkmen, Qara Qoyunlu] Qara Yūsuf ... by divine providence and Christ our redeemer, the Armenian world was saved."

Matt'ēos was soon to be disappointed. In the colophon of *K'nnut'iwn Gortsots' Arak'elots'* (1410-1411), he described Qara Yūsuf as just another Tamerlane. He was also unhappy about the cultural wasteland in Armenia. No one was left, he said, to succeed the "great scholars" (Esayi Nch'ets'i, Yovhan Orotnets'i, Grigor Tat'ewats'i). The "false" and "slothful brothers" at the monasteries were involved in intrigues, treason and rivalries.³⁵

As always, the clergy in the monastic centers in the East considered themselves the guardians of the Armenian Apostolic faith. They targeted the heterodox trends, the Latin Unitarians, also the Catholicosate at Sis and Cilician clergy for their more ecumenical and reconciliatory dispositions. After the 12th century, not only ecclesiastical relations between Cilicia and the mainland were tense, but travel had become very perilous. In addition to cultural stagnation in the late 13th century, and more so in the 14th and 15th centuries, religious persecutions, loss of faith among the populace and conversions into Islam posed urgent challenges for the church everywhere. Matt'ēos Jughayets'i complained that some people even cursed and despised the Holy Scriptures, probably as the cause of their sufferings at the hands of the Muslims. Wealthy Armenians, some known as *khojas*, managed to penetrate into the Mongol and Turkmen

³³ T'ovmasyan, *Grigor Tat'ewats'i*, 24.

³⁴ Khach'ikyan, *Fourteenth-Century Colophons*, 613.

³⁵ Khach'ikyan, *Fifteenth-Century Colophons*, 119-120.

administrations as financiers, contractors, landowners, state officials, ambassadors and translators.

In general, Matt'ēos and others everywhere, were concerned about urban styles of life, and attacked the culture of the male population of the cities, probably referring to the urban youth coalitions, both artisanal and others. Vagrant and jobless Armenian young men drifted from one city to another, wrote Matt'ēos. Every day after work, these “lewd and arrogant” young men reveled in drinking parties, entertained by poet-singers (*gusan*), musicians and female dancers. Their “loathsome” culture was nothing but a legacy of the heretical sects (*herdzwatsoghk'*) known for their hedonism, also links with the Muslims.³⁶

Matt'ēos has an intriguing description of the social-economic classes in the cities at the time: the vagrant and jobless youth who drifted from one city to another (probably referring to the *manuks*, *fityān*, *'ayyārūn*), those who subsisted on occasional means, hired laborers, craftsmen-artisans, messengers (like *dallaks* and couriers), crooks and thieves, judges and lawyers, scholars and wise men, clergy and members of the religious institutions, and people of power and authority.³⁷ He also painted a very dark picture of the Armenian leadership at the time. In Cilicia and everywhere the church was under external and internal pressures, corruption was unavoidable.³⁸ Both the clergy and princes, who were supposed to lead and assist at times of crises, he wrote, were involved in petty quarrels and the exploitation of their own people. The period also saw a sudden rise in taxes, and since Muslims were exempt, conversions increased among the peasants and the populace in general. Those who attempted to migrate were brought back by force. Matt'ēos wrote:

The *aylazgi* tyrants [Turkmens] ... are human in image ... similar to us ... but have the heart of wild beasts. They ruthlessly rob and torture us and inflict harm, deprive us of our faith, abuse and persecute, and by exterminating us altogether they think they are serving God.³⁹

As mentioned, urban centers generated favorable environments for interactions. During subsequent centuries as well, many Armenians, especially the younger generations, genuinely welcomed cultural Islam and assimilated

³⁶ Khach'ikyan, “Matt'ēos”, 79.

³⁷ Khach'ikyan, “Matt'ēos”, 76-79. Source: *K'nnut'iwn Gortsots' Arak'elots'*, M1402, fols 155a-155b.

³⁸ Khach'ikyan, “Matt'ēos”, 70-71.

³⁹ Matt'ēos, “*Vasn K'arozut'ean Banin*”, M6607, fol. 229b, in Khach'ikyan, “Matt'ēos”, 69.

the folklore and the arts. Mongol, Turkish and Arabic names such as Alam-Khat'un, Yakhshī Bēk, Aghbugha, Ardla, Damur-Bugha, were fashionable.⁴⁰ As far as the church was concerned, it seems that as long as conversions were limited, no urgency was felt to look at Islam as a rival religious culture and way of life. Doctrinal Islam had been overlooked almost to the end of the 14th century.

The exceptionally high levels of religious persecutions first by the Mongols then by the Turkmens, and conversions, were serious challenges for the church and clergy. The untold factors were the sharp increase in Islamic sympathies also conversions in Siwnik', Aghuank', Vaspurakan, and other places further west and south. Conversions were shortcuts to power, position and wealth. To keep and maintain their estates, property, titles and rights, even some from the traditional nobility (such as the Ōrbelyans and P'roshyans) the lords of Siwnik', made political conversions to Islam (at least temporarily). They knew Arabic and Persian, also appreciated these cultures. Many kept their Christian names to the end of the 15th century. In addition to the old aristocracy, and after the latter dwindled, smaller or lesser feudal lords emerged known as *tanutērs*. There were converts among these classes too. For instance, in the village of Orotn, just north east of Tat'ew, inscriptions on tombs of Muslim Armenians indicate to these circumstances in Mongol times.⁴¹

Despite the official position of the church, as expressed in the literature, the idea that the two religions remained separate, is inaccurate and mixed and syncretistic religious cultures are proofs. Furthermore, the attitudes and practices of the illiterate masses toward Islam went unrecorded, except in negative comments and in particular popular poetry and arts. Even though in their polemical formats and language, Grigor and Matt'ēos addressed the "Tajiks," the intended audience seems to be the general Armenian public that knew very little about the doctrines of both Christianity and Islam. Many had Islamic sympathies and assimilated cultural Islam. There were opportunistic converts, who were indifferent toward both religions and had no scruples about conversion. Finally, there were many rural Armenians who simply converted to avoid high taxes and remain on their land. In the literature of the 13th and 14th centuries, also later periods, there are many references to moral and religious "degeneration" and "decadence", meaning conversion.

⁴⁰ Khach'ikyan, "Matt'ēos", 72-75.

⁴¹ Khach'atryan, *Arabic Inscriptions in Armenia*, vol. I, 11, 49, 56. See Inscriptions 58-80 and 103-112.

One of the factors that contributed to the appearance of apologetical-polemical literature was the improvement of learning in the monastic schools and the introduction of western literature through the Catholic missionaries and the *Unit'ors* or Unitarians (who preached union with the Catholic Church) that had initially arrived with the Crusaders. Often referred to as “universities” (*hamalsaran*) these schools opened during relative peace under the Zak'aryans.⁴² These were Tat'ew, Gladzor, Geghard, Ani, Haghbat, Sanahin, Haghartsin, Gōshavank', Khor Virap and Khoranashat.

These monastic schools contributed to the organization of education and raised the standards of the literary culture among the clergy. Their curriculum was similar to what is known as the seven liberal arts. The *trivium* included grammar, rhetoric and logic; the *quadrivium* covered arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. Works of Aristotle, Porphyry, Dawit' Anaght', Movsēs Khorenats'i, Anania Shirakats'i, Grigor Magistros, and Yovhannēs Erznkats'i were read. Some texts of Abelard, and Aquinas in particular, were also read. Translations were made by Dominican and Franciscan missionaries. These trends had sympathizers and converts among the clergy and the populace.

Despite the unfavorable light in which traditional Armenian historians presented them, the *Unit'ors* and the Armenian-Catholic religious orders played a unique and positive role in introducing late medieval western thought into Armenia, both in Cilicia and in the monastic schools. After the first quarter of the 13th century, the Catholic school of the Monastery of Gṛna produced a great number of translations by Yovhan Gṛnets'i, Bartholomeo da Bologna (the Latin abbot of the Monastery of Maragha), and Petrus of Aragonia.⁴³

During the last two years of the 14th century, a papal decree put all the Catholic institutions under the direct control of Rome and the Franciscans were favored.⁴⁴ The School of Tsortsor gave a number of Franciscan scholars like Zak'aria, Yovhan Tsortsorets'i and Israēl Vardapet.⁴⁵ The new literature was available at anti-Unit'orist and anti-Cilician schools of Gladzor and Tat'ew. However, it seems that not everyone was happy about the introduction of Latin and western literature. Matt'ēos Jughayets'i complained about the assimilation and appreciation of western ways, he

⁴² For the period, see Yovsēp'yants', *Khaghbakian*; Papayan, *The Social-Political History*.

⁴³ For the School of Gladzor see Khach'eryan, *The University of Gladzor*; Khach'ikyan, “The University of Gladzor”.

⁴⁴ See Örmelian, *National Narrative*, vol. II, 2016.

⁴⁵ For these translations, see Grigoryan, *Medieval Armenian Philosophy*, 75-77.

wrote: "It has become a national custom to seek and appreciate the wisdom of foreign scholars, to read their works, and neglect their own, even though the latter too are the fruits of hard effort."⁴⁶

2. *Shī'ī Law and Armenian Polemical literature*

Between 1393 and 1397, and for the first time, three polemical texts appeared in the literature, the first two were written at Aght'amar on Lake Van by Matt'ēos Jughayets'i (1350-1421), and the third was an extensive text (a chapter in a book) by the latter's teacher, Grigor Tat'ewats'i (1344-1409) at Tat'ew in Siwnik'.

Until I started research for this particular study five years ago, and went through every single text in the perspective of Islamic-Armenian relations, I could not explain, at least in a convincing way, the direct cause of the sudden appearance of polemical literature, with no precedents. No doubt, the phenomenon indicated a radical change in circumstances that did not exist previously and elsewhere in the Armenian West during the same decades.

The key concepts that revealed the missing links were the Muslims' "accusations of blasphemy (*kufī*) and impurity (*najāsah*).⁴⁷ Both Grigor and Matt'ēos repeatedly explained that their objective was simply to disprove and refute these two accusations and prove the contrary. Indeed, blasphemy and impurity are the most recurring themes in all three polemical texts, as we shall see below. These concepts related to non-Muslims are more characteristic of Shī'ī Law, hence the Persian ethnicity of the "adversaries", "accusers" and "inquirers" in all three texts.

I can now see that it was the shift from Sunnī to Shī'ī environments and authorities at the time and in the Armenian East that prompted these polemical texts. This change did not happen in the Armenian West under Sunnī Law.

The classification of the *dhimmīs*, or the "people of the book" as blasphemers, unbelievers, or *kāfīrs* is more common to Shī'ī perspectives.⁴⁷ The conception of the Christians as both *ahl al-dhimma*, or "people subject to the guarantee of protection" and *kāfīrs* is evident throughout the literature of Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Mufīd (d. 1022/1032), an early systematic treatise of Imāmī law.⁴⁸ The *jizya*, in accordance with Q9:29,

⁴⁶ Khach'ikyan, *Fifteenth Century*, 120-121. For the period see Yovsēp'yants', *Khagh-bakeank'*.

⁴⁷ Freidenreich, "Christians in Shī'ī Law", 29.

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Mufīd (d. 1032), *Al-Muqni'a* (Qum, 1994/95).

is incumbent upon all adult male unbelievers [*kuffār*], or people of the book [*ahl al-kitāb*]. These are the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians. In the opinion of his student, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Tūṣī (Shaykh al-Tāʾifah, d. 1066/67) even though Zoroastrians were not a people of the book, they shared the same legal status. All are classified as blasphemers, and at this point these theologians deviated from Sunnī Law. Otherwise, the restrictions and stipulations are more or less the same as those of the *Shurūʿ* and the “Edict of al-Mutawakkil.”

The concept of impurity seems to have a Qurʾānic base in Q9:29, or *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (Repentance), verse 28: “Truly, the polytheists (*mushrikūn*) are impure.” Classical sources of Shīʿī law dating roughly from the 11th century, consider non-Muslims impure, in accordance with this verse. Impurity stems from the “false beliefs about God which non-Muslims espouse” (not just circumcision) “and render them equivalents to polytheists”, hence their “impurity.”⁴⁹ Obviously, the Trinitarian doctrine is at the basis of the comment on the Christians’ concept of multiplicity of divinities, hence their polytheism. In this perspective, the state of impurity is intrinsic to being a non-Muslim and a Christian in particular.⁵⁰

Impurity, as a doctrinal problem, has its practical aspects. Non-Muslim impurity is communicable through the medium of moisture, therefore through touch and food prepared by them. Consequently, there are very specific and additional restrictions in this respect, to safeguard the purity of the believers and their possessions. Improper behaviors, unacceptable to Muslims, such as consumption of pork and wine, are also prohibited, as impure.

Freidenreich says that classical Sunnī authorities, “generally downplay the practical ramifications of non-Muslim impurity, while from the early 11th century onward Shīʿī authorities make a point of doing the opposite ... Sunnīs, according to Shīʿīs, fail to acknowledge the full implications of Christian and Jewish unbelief, a failure that carries significant consequences with respect to the purity status of Sunnīs and thus the efficacy of their worship.”⁵¹

Sunnī authorities consistently distinguish between *ahl-al-kitāb* and other non-Muslims with respect to animal slaughter, in keeping with Q5:5 as discussed earlier, the dictum, “the food of those who were given the Book is permitted to you.” Shīʿīs do not see any affinity between Sunnīs

⁴⁹ Freidenreich, “Christians in Shīʿī Law”, 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

and People of the Book, even though, prior to the 11th century, they held similar views with the Sunnīs. The slaughter of animals by non-Muslims became problematic at the turn of the 11th century. Al-Mufīd asserted that non-Muslims are incapable of properly invoking God, whom they do not understand, the proof is their Trinitarianism. Their refusal to accept the prophethood of Muḥammad is in turn unacceptable.⁵² He is critical of the Sunnīs as well, for their “refusal to acknowledge that ... meat [butchered and prepared] by non-Muslims was prohibited.”⁵³

C. POLEMICS IN RESPONSE TO ACCUSATIONS OF BLASPHEMY AND IMPURITY

The first and only so far known three polemical texts by Grigor Tatewats‘i and Matt‘ēos Jughayets‘i at the end of the 14th century remained completely concealed for five centuries. I have not seen any references to or citations from any of them in the entire literature before 1930. In 1729, in Ottoman Istanbul, during the first publication of the *Book of Questions* (*Girk‘ Harts‘mants‘*) by Tat‘ewats‘i — of which *Against the Tajiks* (*Ėnddēm Tachkats‘*) is a chapter — this chapter was removed to avoid Turkish censorship. In 1905, then the editor of *Luys* theological weekly, Bishop (later on Catholicos) Papgēn Gulēsērian accidentally discovered it in one of the copies of the manuscript of the *Book of Questions*. Political turmoil and Ottoman massacres prior to, during and after World War I delayed the publication of *Against the Tajiks* until 1930 in Vienna.⁵⁴ The two texts by Matt‘ēos still remain in manuscripts.⁵⁵

Against the Tajiks has been made available only less than a century ago, and in the near absence of Islamic-Armenian research and studies, there is still a vast ground to be explored. For instance, despite my initial studies, only recently I could establish the Shī‘ī connection in the case of these very rare Armenian polemical texts.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁴ See Gulēsērian, Introduction to *Islam in Armenian Medieval Literature*, 1-25; Dadoyan, *Medieval Cosmopolitanism*, 197-204.

⁵⁵ Matt‘ēos Jughayets‘i, *Various Responses*: M3854 (1471), fols 107-113b, Ėjmiatsin Ms 956, now M969 (1720-1721); Matt‘ēos Jughayets‘i, *There Arose False Prophets*: number 23 in a collection of 44 Sermons (although he is said to have 50 sermons), M2229 (1689) fols 185b-190b; Ėjmiatsin Ms 710, 2114.

1. *The martyrdom of Catholicos Zak'aria II Nahatak (martyr, r. 1369-1393) of Aght'amar as immediate cause*

Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels (Vasn Harts'mants' Anawrinats' Zanzan Pataskhanin) was prompted by the martyrdom of Catholicos Zak'aria II Nahatak (martyr, r. 1369-1393) of Aght'amar in 1393, where Matt'ēos was at the time, at the “glorious Church of the Holy Cross” (*Surb Khach'*) on the Island and Monastery of Aght'amar. As he explained in his introductory passage, the book was written at the request of “pious Abisoghom, the great *tanutēr* [local chief, governor] of Shiryān.”

The narratives of this episode have some differences, as it shall be shown, however, they are secondary to its significance as a paradigm case. The incident revealed the circumstances of the Armenians in that area obviously in Persian Shī'ī context and under their control. More importantly, it explained the texts, the focal concerns and polemical strategies of both authors. If it weren't for the incident of the martyrdom of Zak'aria, neither Matt'ēos, nor Grigor few years later, would take the initiative to write the type of polemical treatises that they did.

The martyrdom was caused by a certain *Mulla Dānishmand* 'Alī, a Persian jurist, on June 25 of 1393 at the city of Ostan of R̥shtunik', in Vaspurakan, just south east of Lake Van. N. Akinian related the episode as follows: *Mulla Dānishmand* 'Alī, a Muslim jurist (*qāḍī*) from the city of Ostan or *Vostan*, arrived in the Monastery of Aght'amar and asked Zak'aria if he could leave his *makhagh* or sac in his custody. “Suspecting the evil intentions” of the *mulla*, Zak'aria refused. 'Alī attacked him but fled when the priests of the monastery arrived at the scene. After plucking his own beard and scratching his face, *Mulla* 'Alī presented himself to the Amīr of Ostan (around 10 kilometers away). Zak'aria in turn arrived there to complain and was taken to the public bath where the Amīr was. The latter however responded by asking the catholicos to convert to Islam. When the latter refused, the *aylazgik'* or the Muslims beat him up and dragged him in the streets of Ostan. Catholicos Zak'aria's body was brought back to Aght'amar and buried next to his parents.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Akinian, *History of Catholicoi of Aght'amar*, 68. Vostan R̥shtuneats' was a city on the southern shore of Lake Van, its fortress was on the cliffs overlooking the city. It was said to be the capital of King Rusa of Urartu. At the end of the 8th century, the Artsrunis took it from the Arabs and at the beginning of the 10th, it became the capital of King Gagik Artsruni who renovated it. After the fall of the Artsrunis in 1021 and the invasions of the Seljuks around the middle of the 11th century, the city saw consecutive occupations, in

According to P. Cowe, Zak'aria was "probably the nephew of Dawit' II, and a scion of the Sefedinian branch of the prominent Armenian aristocratic and royal family of the Artsrunids ... he was consecrated in 1378 (or possibly 1369)". Previously, "he had fallen captive to Timur-i Leng during his campaign against Van but had escaped in 1387."⁵⁷

There are differences in details between the brief account by Matt'ēos Jughayets'i and the information in the "Martyrology of Zak'aria, Catholicos of Aght'amar [*Vkayabanut'iwn Zak'ariayi, Kat'oghikosi Aght'amaray*] by an unidentified author from the region of Aght'amar. The following is the narrative in this text:

In 1393, Zak'aria received a visit from the Persian qadi of Ostan, the regional center on the southeast shore of Lake Van, who wanted to leave his satchel with him for safe-keeping. When the hierarch responded that his residence was not a fitting place for it and that he should find somewhere more suitable, the *qāḍī* became annoyed, began cursing him, and stretched out his hand to strike him. The other placed his arm over his chest defensively, so the qadi hit him on the chin, to which he retorted that it was not appropriate for the *qāḍī* to strike him without proper cause. With a large group of men and women gathering around them, the *qāḍī* tore Zak'aria's robe and pulled his beard until blood ran over his face, and then left the island to return to Ostan, where he spoke badly about the catholicos and the Christians of Aght'amar to the emir 'Izz ed-Dīn. The catholicos also hurried to the emir and found him at the baths. The emir's response was that the catholicos should denounce Christ and accept Islam if he wanted him to overlook the matter. When the latter refused, the Muslim crowd became incensed and drove him out of the baths at sword-point, then stripped him and trailed him through the streets at the end of a rope, fatally striking him with stones, sticks, and swords. After this, they dragged his body out of the town and were about to burn it when the emir intervened to prevent it, granting the Christians permission to give him an honorable burial. The martyrdom took place on Wednesday, June 25, 1393.⁵⁸

The refutation of blasphemy and impurity were the priorities of both Grigor and Matt'ēos, as mentioned. In their polemics they had a double strategy: first, to prove that Christianity withstood what they called "questions/accusations" of the Tajiks by simple "rational" arguments, next to instruct the public in the doctrines of their own faith, which obviously they were ignorant about. As they both emphasized, the ultimate objective was to "arm" the people with rhetorical "weapons" against Islam and the Muslims.

1424, it was destroyed by Qara-Qoyunlu Iskandar (1420-1437). Later on, the Kurds settled there.

⁵⁷ Cowe, "Martyrology of Zak'aria", 216.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

The repertoire of the themes, arguments and stories in support, indicate to a corpus of reference texts and a program in the monastic schools, where, as mentioned, major Syriac and later on Latin texts (in translation) were available. The question-response format was used by Arab Christian authors much earlier. The so called “debates” with Muslim adversaries were hypothetical, with rare exceptions. Matt’ēos, the less sophisticated of the two, formulated the “questions” (*harts’um*) and “accusations” of blasphemy (*kufīr*) addressed to the Armenians by the Tajiks, who were no doubt Shī’īs.

Grigor presented the issues as “confusions” (*molorut’iwn*) or “fallacies” of the Muslims. He wanted, as he said, to show that the Muslims themselves were the true “blasphemers” and not the Christians, as they were always accused of being such. Both advised their audience to have courage and sufficient knowledge to respond to accusations. “Do not appear to be ignorant”, said Grigor, “answer each and every one of their objections.”⁵⁹

Even though Grigor’s vocabulary, level of knowledge and intellectual sophistication are incomparably higher, there are very close similarities between the arguments and the range of polemical themes in the texts of both authors. At the time, and after seven centuries of experiences and close encounters with Islam and Muslims of many ethnic backgrounds and trends — such as Sunnī, Shī’ī and heterodox-syncretistic — and for the first time, Islam was considered as an alternative religion. To the end of the 13th century, Islam was marginalized through the derogatory narratives of the Armenian Mahmet, and the doctrinal aspects were avoided.

As far as the character and career of the Prophet were concerned, Grigor in particular seems to be more aware of the previous accounts of Samuēl, Mkhīt’ar, Vardan, and Kirakos. In general, re-telling Mahmet’s “true story” was common practice in the literature, and most authors followed it. The “Armenian Mahmet” is present in the texts of Grigor and Matt’ēos as a supporting polemical tool in their “rational arguments.” With the exception of derogatory comments about Mahmet’s character and conduct, Matt’ēos did not dedicate a special section to his biography. Grigor, the more organized author, saw it necessary to insert a brief biography, put together from previous accounts in the context of his “Sixth Fallacy” of the Muslims, in the rest of the passage, he has his own version of the “Edict of Mahmet”, as discussed in Part Two:

⁵⁹ Grigor Tat’ewats’i, *Against the Tajiks*, 53.

In the year 620, there appeared a certain Ismaelite man called Mahmēd son of Abdēlla. He was somehow familiar with the Law of Moses and had been a disciple of a monastic at the Sinai called Bkhira, a follower of the heresy of Arius. He [Mahmet] said that Paradise was corporeal and that there was food and marriage there. Although he knew the Old and New Testaments, he came up with all sorts of worthless and ludicrous teachings for his own people and claimed to be their lawgiver and messenger [prophet]. On the tenth year of the Muslim calendar [632], he was [already] the lawmaker and the commander of his people, and after many battles he gained power over multitudes. Eventually, this Mahmēd dominated the whole world.⁶⁰

2. *Matt'ēos Jughayets'i and the "seven questions" of the Tajiks*

Matt'ēos Jughayets'i was at Aghtamar at the time of the assassination of Zak'aria, and he responded with a polemical treatise within the same year. He was not much younger than his teacher Grigor. He was born around the middle of the 14th century in Jugha in southwest Armenia, at the time a small but commercially active town on the river Araxes/Araz. He was a student of Sargis Vardapet at the Monastery of Aprakuni, then to Grigor at Tat'ew. He had a vagrant lifestyle, and visited many cities of the region, such as Aght'amar, Archēsh, Mekk', Khach'en, Ernjak, Karin, Sivās, even Constantinople. In 1393, immediately after completing his *Various Responses*, he moved to the monastery of Tandzap'arakh, then settled in Tat'ew nearby. Always a modest vardapet, after the death of Grigor in 1409, and by the latter's decision earlier, he took over the directorship of the monastic school until his death just before 1421/2.

In his homilies, Matt'ēos spoke of "hard and bitter" times under the Mongols then the Turkmens. Otherwise, his works contain valuable information about cities, urban societies, social classes, princes, and clergy. He is the author of a dozen works, mainly commentaries, interpretations (*meknut'iwn*) and homilies, none of which are published or translated.⁶¹

The most significant work of Matt'ēos, as far as this study is concerned is: *Various Responses to the Questions of the Infidels* by Matt'ēos Vardapet, Requested by the Pious Great Lord of Shiryan Abisoghom [*Matt'ēos Vardapeti vash harts'mants' anōrinats' zanazan pataskhanin zor khnd-real barepashtn Abisoghom mets tanutērn Shrianay*]. Matt'ēos explained

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶¹ A complete list of his works is found in Khach'ikyan and in Oskian. Khach'ikyan, "Life and works of Matt'ēos Jughayets'i". For the biography also see Oskian, *Step'anos and Matt'ēos*; Dadoyan, "Matt'ēos Jughayets'i"; Khach'ikyan, *Fourteenth Century Armenian Colophons*; Khach'ikyan, *Fifteenth Century Armenian Colophons*.

that his aim in writing the treatise was to teach the Armenians to formulate the appropriate responses to the unfair and violent inquisitions of the Muslims, empowered by the Turkmens. He wrote:

It is the duty of all Christians to learn to formulate moderate answers to the questions of the infidels, because they are often subjected to the abusive words of the *aylazgik* and as in the past, the sects [*herdwatsoghk*] have [also] flourished and multiplied ... In our times many ancient forms of unbelief and heresies, which fail to distinguish between truth and falsehood, have become extinct. But there still remains the Tajik *azg* [Muslim people] as a remnant of the heresies of Arius and Cerinthus. They deny the Trinitarian Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and [in particular] the divinity of Christ ... They follow the Prophet *Mahmēd* and his evil beliefs.⁶²

The text is in the form of a direct dialogue with an Armenian audience. Occasionally the Muslims are addressed too. The Christians are “we” and the Muslims “you”, sometimes, “they.” First, the so called “questions” — rather false allegations and accusations — of the latter are stated, then the “rational” answers presented to them. By responding to the “accusations” of the “mischievous and corrupt [*vnasakar ew pights*] “*danishmand* called Ali”, who “assassinated the pious Catholicos Zak’aria of Aght’amar”, Matt’ēos said that he was trying to “reveal the impiety [*anōrinut’iwn*] of the Muslims and the righteousness of the Armenians.”⁶³ This was his primary aim, to refute the accusations of blasphemy addressed to the Armenians and to condemn the tortures and persecutions by the Muslims.

Matt’ēos organized his polemics under seven “questions” (*harts’um*) or accusations and seven “answers” or “responses” (*pataskhan*) as follows. The seven “accusations” are the following:

1. Describing Christ as son of God
2. Proclaiming the divinity of Christ
3. Rejecting the prophethood of Mehmēd
4. Refusing circumcision, hence their impurity
5. Refusing ablution
6. Genuflection towards the east, hence pagan sun worship
7. Refusing Muslim fasting at *Ṛamaḍān* [or *ṣiyām*]

The first question, in the opinion of the Muslims, wrote Matt’ēos, was “our describing Christ as the Son of God.”

⁶² Matt’ēos Jughayets’i, *Various Responses*, M3854, fol. 107b.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, fol. 108a.

According to them, the statement implied that God took a wife and had a son. Therefore, as the Muslims insisted, terms like “father” and “son” inevitably led to blasphemy, because they brought divinity into the temporal-material order. He replied:

First, we are absolutely far from implying that God took a woman. However, we do believe that God had a son without the encounter of male and female, because any generation of such encounter is physical and human, and not divine. Furthermore, if they [Muslims] ask us about the manner in which the birth [of the Son] came about, we reply that the impossible is possible for God ... This position is indeed accepted by many ... the Spirit is that of the Father and the Word originated from Him, is the Son.⁶⁴

Matt'ēos reminded his adversaries that the prophets of the Old Testament too referred to God as the “Father” and to the faithful as His “sons.” The Jews did the same in their *T'awrēt'* (Torah).⁶⁵ “We are not saying”, he added, that “God is the father of a son who is born of a father and mother, because this child would be of corporeal nature, while God is incorporeal.” Consequently, there can be no likeness between man and God in this respect. “Man is [created] in the image of God by his intellect [*mtats'*] and the Logos/Word [*ban*].” The Christians are in fact proclaiming the “intelligibility of divine nature.” It is in this sense that they speak of God as “Father” and the Word as His “Son.” Matt'ēos then briefly stated the Christology of the Armenian Church:

The divine Word [Christ] is one, has life and is personal, born of one and not many, He is God born to God and inseparable of Him ... The person of the divine Word is not a written word for His nature is infinite.⁶⁶

Resorting to imagery, used in Arab Christian texts centuries ago, he then gave the metaphor of the Sun and light:

The power of the Person of the Word united with the written letter penetrates our minds as the light of the Sun ... Just as no one can contain the totality of the Sun but simply receives its light that spreads in nature ... similarly, always remaining in God Himself, the divine Word is diffused into men imparting wisdom to their minds and graceful words to their speech. So much suffices about the Son.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 108b.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 109a.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The Holy Ghost is discussed in the last part of the First Question. Taking “life” was a divine attribute, said Matt’ēos, and justified the third person of the Trinity on that basis.

If they inquire about the Spirit that we mention along the Son, we say that as explained about the divine Word, we call the Divine life Spirit, and if life is that of God, then it is the Spirit that is the source of life for all bodies.⁶⁸

Concerning the divine image in man, Matt’ēos advised his Armenian audience to resort to metaphor, and say:

As man is not alive without the soul and his life is inseparable from him, so are the persons of the Trinity, who are not creations of our minds but revelations of God Himself, as we read in all the writings of the prophets ... This is similar to the roundness, the light and the heat of the sun, as three in one, similarly, an apple is round, red and sweet. Thus, God is three in one.⁶⁹

The second question about the divinity of Christ, is perhaps the oldest and the most common issue brought up in most polemical texts.

As in this case too, Matt’ēos often advised his Armenian audience thus: “Just listen to them but only say that this is what is recorded in our Scriptures, which you do not accept.”

To prove the divinity of Christ, Matt’ēos took a sentence “written” in “their books” the Qur’ān — but in Persian, and without mentioning the Qur’ān, he formulated a simple syllogism in order to show the contradictions in the accusations of the Muslims:

It is written in your books that ... *Yisē* [‘Īsā, Jesus] is *ruhallah* [*rūḥ allāh*, Spirit of God], and ‘Alī that of Man. And if they [Muslims] say that although we say *ruh* we do not mean that it is divine light, you answer that God created five sorts of light: first the angels and demons, second the human souls, third the sun, the moon, and the stars, fourth the light of fire and candles, and fifth the light of the eye [vision] of living beings. Apart from these, there is no other light created by God ... Now, the above refutes your objection and ... if something is in divine light it means it is truly God.⁷⁰ And if they say that He [Christ] is in divine light but is not God, you reply that if the divine light is not God, and if nature is not God, then what is left of God that is God? This is like saying that the leg of Moses is not Moses, his head is not Moses, and all the parts of Moses are not Moses, then what is Moses, if nothing is left of him that is Moses. It is obvious that the whole is constituted of the parts ... Similarly, in the case of God, if the divine light is not light, divine power is

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 109b.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

not God, nothing is left that is God. This is indeed great *kufṛ*. According to your own scriptures, it is clear that divine light is God.⁷¹

At this point, Matt'ēos applies a version of the cosmological argument to prove the divinity of Christ:

They say that if God speaks to us through that power [the Word, Christ], show us why/how ... should we accept that Christ is God ... The answer is in the artisan and his work. An artisan is not established as such until he applies his art, even if he claims to be an artisan. The carpenter is what he is only when he takes his hammer and starts to work. [he adds that this is how we come to know God by observing his work] True art is that which brings about creatures out of nothing and makes the impossible possible. If such deeds reveal God then He is God, if not, then the Muslims are right. The whole world knows that Christ made the paralyzed walk, the blind see, the dead rise and made the impossible possible, therefore He is truly God. If they still object by saying that all the prophets performed miracles, they too must be considered gods, we reply that it is true that they too were miracle workers but not the way Jesus was. Christ was autonomous in His power while the prophets depended on God and asked his assistance.⁷²

[He then explains the reasons why Christ had to become a man verily.]⁷³

The third question is probably the gravest, at least as far as the Muslims are concerned. It is the rejection of the Armenians of the prophethood of Mahmet. Matt'ēos formulated the problem as follows:

They say that you do not consider *Mehmēd* a prophet ... While you accept Moses, *Mehmēd* is no less a prophet than the other prophets. What fault [*pakasut'iwn*] makes you refuse his prophethood?

The recommended answer/response [*pataskhan*] was based on pure faith in the Scriptures. He advised his audience to produce three answers, the first of which is simply faith in the Bible:

All our knowledge is derived from the Bible, which you call *Injīl*, and we cannot accept other scriptures ... Your *Mehmēd* is not mentioned in the Bible, which was written much earlier, we therefore cannot recognize him as a prophet. [The classic accusation by the Muslims concerning falsification/corruption of the Bible does not appear at this point]. The second answer is that when *Mehmēd* appeared, Armenians already had a faith, and he had nothing new to teach them anyway. But it is the obligation of the Muslims to follow and obey their prophet because he liberated them from paganism.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 110a.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, fol. 110b.

The third answer is that “as it was customary to send a messenger of *p’ēshra* [good tidings in Persian] before the arrival of a king, the coming of Christ was announced and when He appeared, we needed no other ... and for these reasons we do not believe in *Mehmēd*.”⁷⁴

The fourth question is a direct accusation of “impurity” addressed to the Armenians, because they refused circumcision.

Matt’ēos advises the Christians to remind their adversaries that this was a law in the remote past. In ancient times, the people of Abraham were the only monotheists among pagan nations and needed to be distinguished, so they used a mark on the body and refrained from eating pork. But after the coming of Christ, no pagans were left to be distinguished from, so circumcision became obsolete. Furthermore, while in past the faith of the Jews was acceptable, the Jews are now a “cursed nation” among all and in particular in the eyes of the Muslims. He wrote:

We eat pork and do not practice circumcision, not to follow/resemble the cursed Jews ... He who keeps the laws of the Jews will be a Jew and he who follows those of Christ is a Christian. We disagree with the Jews in these matters, but you follow them, and we have nothing against you in this matter.⁷⁵

The fifth question of the “infidels” concerned ablution or “washing the *junubk’*” (lower parts, *junūb* is south in Arabic).

Matt’ēos advises the audience to remind the “infidels” that washing should be of sins and not of physical impurities. He asked, “what use is washing the body when your heart is the seat of sins and full of blood.” Besides, he saw no necessity for a law about washing the body, because whoever is soiled will take a bath anyway.

Ask if washing is for God or man? If it is for God, He looks at the soul ... if washing with water helped anyone to find salvation then all the fish would be worthy of it.⁷⁶

The sixth question about praying facing east, was an implied accusation of pagan sun worship. The reply is:

Wherever the king is the servants turn their face towards him, the sun, the moon and the stars are God’s servants and they all come from the east, we follow their example. Secondly, the Prophet David deliberated that we should

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 111a.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 111a-b.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 112a.

bow toward the east and we obey him ... Thirdly, we follow Christ and his apostles ... fourthly, Christ described the world as coming from the east and we kneel facing the east.⁷⁷

The seventh and last question was rejecting the Muslims' fast (*ṣiyām*) during the Holy Month of Ramaḍān.

The Muslims, wrote Matt'ēos, dismiss Christian fasting as "nothing but a kind of *p'ahrez* [diet, in Persian] of fat-free food. This is not real fasting." He then explained that during Christian fasts the consumption of food is minimal. The Muslims, however, prepare and consume exceptionally rich food that stirs the senses. He then listed different types of food that are necessary for the functions of the body.⁷⁸ In the last sections of *Various Questions* Matt'ēos taught his audience about ancient times, from Adam to the Deluge, Noah, and Islamic and Jewish calendars.⁷⁹

Yarets'an Sut Margarēk'

The other polemical text is a sermon entitled *There Arose False Prophets* (*Yarets'an Sut Margarēk'*). It is written in mixed classical and vernacular, the aim is to show that Mahmet is a "false prophet."

Matt'ēos states seven conditions for "true prophethood": foreknowledge, altruism, signs/miracles, credibility, originality, moral teachings, and personal example. He then, demonstrates, by "facts" that Mahmet forced himself upon his people by "threats and death, like Tamerlane", and he did not qualify.⁸⁰

At the end of this sermon, he has an intriguing account about vagrant, dervish-type Armenian ascetic sectarians. He describes this group as follows:

Faking faith and piety, they wander around aimlessly, dressed in black, barefooted and half starved. They despise each other and the Christians. There are many of them and the only way to get rid of them is extermination by the sword because they mislead the world by making salvation accessible to everyone. For this reason, the Lord said that there will arise false prophets and this has indeed been the case in the past as well ... God allows these [false prophets] to appear for many reasons. First, if the impostors did not exist, the righteous would not be distinguished; second, this is how truth becomes more pleasurable.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 112a-b.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 113a.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, fols 113a-113b.

⁸⁰ Matt'ēos, *There Arose False Prophets*, M2229, fols 188a-190b

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 188a.

This sermon has little if any theoretical contribution to apologetical-polemical literature. The derogatory remarks about the life and teachings of the Prophet were common. However, in its blunt style, vocabulary and direct reports about the times, this sermon reveals aspects of social interactions rarely found in other works of the time or of earlier periods. In particular, the paragraph about the mystical group reveals less hostility and intransigence than his hostile remarks might suggest. It might trigger an entire study into such mystical groups in Armenian society as late as in the 15th century. There are hints at this phenomenon in many primary texts, but no studies have so far been made.

3. Against the Tajiks of Grigor Tat'ewats'i — The "sixteen fallacies"

Grigor was born in 1344-1346, in Siwnik'. His baptismal name is Khut'lushah. He studied at the monastic school of Gladzor, under Yovhan Vardapet Orotnets'i, an aristocrat. He received his degree of vardapet from the latter, around 1373. In 1391 he was at the Monastery of Tat'ew as its director. In addition to being a scholar and theologian, he was also said to be a painter and a musician. Grigor was the last of six late medieval Aristotelians, who were loosely identified as "Armenian Nominalists" by Soviet Armenian scholars: Yovhannēs Sarkawag Imastasēr (d. 1129), Vahram Rabuni (second half of the 13th century), Nersēs Mshets'i, (d. 1284), Esayi Nch'ets'i (1260/5-1338), Yovhan Orotnets'i (1313/15-1386/88). Nersēs was said to be the initiator of these monastic schools. These institutions of higher learning functioned from the 13th to 15th centuries.

A radical conservative figure, Grigor considered the existing feudal social-economic structure natural and God-given. A fanatical adherent to the Armenian Apostolic faith, and a defender/guardian of its purity, Grigor was involved in politics and internal debates of the church, including and especially with the Catholicosate at Sis, in Cilicia. In many respects, he prepared the doctrinal as well as political ground for the establishment of the See of Ējmiatsin in 1441, three decades after his death.

In 1408, Grigor fled Tat'ew with his students due to harassments by the Muslims in the region and went to Lake Van. He apparently tried to return to Tat'ew in the next year, but died in mysterious circumstances either on his way back or upon arrival around 1309. He was buried at Tat'ew, where his tomb stands.⁸²

⁸² For other and different biographical details see Sergio La Porta, "Gregory of Tat'ew", 229.

Grigor's most significant and massive work, *Book of Questions* (*Girk' Hartsmans'*) written at Tat'ew around 1397, is in "question by pupil and answer by teacher" format.⁸³ Basically, it is prepared with a definite theological program. It is "the earliest known handbook and systematic treatment of Armenian theology, exegesis, and ecclesiology. It served as an important text for monastic students in the centuries to follow and formed a bridge between the medieval and 18th century Armenian intellectual traditions."⁸⁴

In the title Grigor mentioned that the book was written at the request of a certain Atom, an *ughghap'ar* or orthodox scholar. The subject of heresies recurs in many contexts. He reports and discusses their doctrines in great detail. Otherwise, it is written in a didactic style, most probably for the school of Tat'ew. It became one of the most frequently copied texts, hence the availability of many different versions.

The subtitle of *Against the Tajiks* is: *Against the doomed nation of the Tajiks, who are the precursors of the Ner [Antichrist], [and] the new pagans and the followers of the heresies of Arius and Cerinthus* [*Ėnddēm koruseal azgin tachkats' ork' karapet en Nerinn, ew nor het'anosk' herdzwatsovn Ariosi ew Kerint'osi*]

Against the Tajiks consists of sixteen chapters, each one is dedicated to what Grigor calls a "fallacy" or *molorit'iwn* (literally, going astray), such as the divinity of Christ, as a rational and true doctrine, which the Muslims simply fail to grasp and consequently fall into fallacies. He uses different styles and methods of argumentation. They vary between scholastic formulations, informal debate, lecturing, descriptions and metaphors,

⁸³ Vol. 1 contains polemics against those who believe in fate and in the divine creation of evil, as well as against Manichaeans, Muslims, and Jews. Vol. 2 refutes various Christian heresies, including the teachings of those who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit (the Pneumatomachoi, the followers of Macedonius), Nestorians, and Dyophysites (Chalcedonians). Vol. 3 is devoted to a discussion of the nature of God and of the angels and demons that is explicitly based on the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. Vol. 4 is a description of the first six days of creation and the creation of the world. Vol. 5 discusses the particular composition of man. Vol. 6 — the longest, with 82 questions — is a commentary on the Pentateuch; it also includes a brief explanation of the book of Job, as Gregory believed Job to be a contemporary of Moses. Gregory continues his exegesis of the Old Testament in vol. 7, which covers Joshua through 2 Kings. Vol. 8 is a commentary on the New Testament and the nature of the Incarnation. Vol. 9 presents Gregory's explanation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and his sacramental theology. He completes his encyclopedic work in vol. 10, with a discussion of the eschaton and the general resurrection. La Porta, "Gregory of Tat'ew", 231.

⁸⁴ La Porta, "Gregory of Tat'ew", 232.

direct and abusive attacks in popular idioms and imagery, etc. In all cases, he advises the reader to be both defensive and offensive, because he stands, as Grigor often assures him, in a position of truth and justice. There are slight differences between the lists and the texts of the various copies of the manuscript. The last chapter (16) summarizes the previous fifteen and shows that truly, the Muslims are the true “infidels”, and not the Armenians.

Grigor’s strategy is a reversed form of that of Matt’ēos. Instead of the accused, he sat in the chair of the accuser with “questions” addressed to the Muslims, whom he put in the status of “blasphemers.” According to this scenario, the sixteen “fallacies”, showed that it is the Muslims who had gone astray and committed blasphemy. This was an aggressive policy supported by both polemical and apologetic elements. Indeed, Grigor advised the Armenians, who were under threats and assaults, to be both aggressive and defensive. He assured them that not the Muslims, but they stood in a position of truth and justice. In the last “fallacy” he summarized the previous fifteen and concluded that the Muslims themselves are the “true infidels”, and not the Armenians. The following are the sixteen fallacies (in Gulēsērian’s edition), each is a chapter:⁸⁵

1. Denying the Trinity, similar to the Sabellian heretics
2. Positing God the origin of both good and evil
3. Denying the Incarnation (*mardeghut’iwn*) of the Word
4. Denying Christ’s divinity and considering him a prophet
5. Denying the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments
6. Considering a certain man prophet (*p’eghambar*)
7. Considering the Resurrection corporeal
8. Considering the angels and spirits mortal
9. Despising and abusing the Cross and the holy icons
10. Indiscriminately eating the flesh of contaminated animals
11. Forbidding wine as *haram* (forbidden)
12. Considering washing with water purification of sins
13. Despising Armenians for not being circumcised
14. Refusing to apply the fast of both the Old and New Laws
15. Banning the meat of animals slaughtered by Armenians
16. Considering us infidels, while being such themselves⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Grigor Tat’ewats’i, *Against the Tajiks*, 50-51.

⁸⁶ In Armenian: 1. Զի ուրան գերբարդութիւնն անձանց; 2. Զհարի և զՋար յԱստուծոյ ասէն; 3. Ուրան գմարդելութիւնն Բանին; 4. զԲրիստոս ոչ խոստովանին Աստուած, այլ

*The first fallacy of the Muslims is about the Trinity.*⁸⁷

They argue that if we accept the Trinity, we must also grant the birth of God, and since generation implies degeneration and death too, the whole concept becomes void.⁸⁸

In reply, Grigor observes that the doctrine is true, as a revealed truth, but human reason being limited, the concept remains beyond comprehension. He then suggests the idea of the uniqueness of what he calls “divine” generation and birth, and initiates a logical exercise based on Aristotelian metaphysics: granting the immutability of God, he says, it is perfectly “rational” to argue that the birth of Christ is outside time, in eternal time. Being in eternity, His birth is not a transition from potentiality to actuality, for it is always “actual.” In the rest of this section Grigor cites variations of the concept of the unity of the divine essence and trinity of its manifestations as its attributes in the three persons. He too gives the example of the sun/beams/light, fire/light/heat, and others, in order to “assist the dim-witted” to understand the doctrine.⁸⁹

*The second fallacy of the Muslims is considering God the cause of both good and evil.*⁹⁰

Holding God as First Cause, says Grigor, and in an attempt to avoid Manichean dualism, the Muslims ended up declaring God as the cause of both good and evil, thus committing another fallacy. He insists that God can only be the cause of the good and not evil.⁹¹ He then gives twelve reasons. Free will, and generally the Will, he says, is part of the image of God in man. Man is a sovereign (*andznishkhan*) being.⁹² Even though God foresees everything, his foreknowledge does not in any manner condition or control human actions, which can be good or bad. In other words, Grigor simply reproduces Eznik’s concept of evil, as the product of free human action.⁹³

մարդ սոսկ և փեղամպար; 5. Ջամենայն սուրբ գիրս, այսինքն զՀին և զՆոր Կտակարանս, ոչ ընդունին; 6. Ջոմն մարդ փեղամպար ասեն; 7. զՅարութիւն մարմնական ասեն; 8. Ջերեւտակս և զեղգիս մահկանացու ասեն; 9. Անարգէն զնշան խաչին և զպատկերս սուրբ; 10. Զպիղծ կենդանիս ոչ ընտրեն այլ զամենայն անխտիր ուտեն; 11. Զգինին հարամ ըմպեն; 12. Հանապազ ջրով ողողին և սրբութեան համարին; 13. Կրճատելն որ է սունաթելն; 14. Պահի ոչ ունին ոչ գինին և զնորս; 15. Զհայգէնս ոչ ուտեն; 16. Զի անօրէն են և կարծեն զինքեան օրինաւոր զոյ.

⁸⁷ Grigor Tat’ewats’i, *Against the Tajiks*, 52-62.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-88.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

Another argument for the absolute goodness of God's nature is a response to an observation by "some Muslims," that if we exclude God of the problem of evil, we must then maintain another power as its source and we will inevitably fall into Manichean dualism.⁹⁴ He defines evil as a deficiency, an accident and not a substance. It may only be the consequence of the free and sovereign will of both angels and men. It is like the absence of light. He then concludes that God is the single cause of all Being and argues in favor of the goodness of the will as a faculty created by God.⁹⁵ The rest of the arguments are all in line with his philosophy of evil and free will. Of these, the 11th is of special interest for medieval philosophy. Referring to a certain "philosopher," in fact Aristotle, he who acts by nature, observes Grigor, will not err. In general, the context of this discussion is reminiscent of Virgil's first speech on love in Dante's *Purgatory*. He talks about the "innate" natures of animals and of men. Some are smart, others not, some are peaceful others aggressive, etc.⁹⁶ The last part is addressed to Muslim Fatalists, who obviously did not accept free will.

The third fallacy of the Muslims is rejecting the Incarnation of the Word or Christ (*mardeghut' iwn Banin*).⁹⁷

The Muslims argue, says Grigor, that since divine nature is immutable, it cannot mutate into human nature, because it will then be subject to change and degeneration. In reply, he reiterates various doctrines all based on the constancy of divine nature, and reports that his adversaries raise a more essential point about God's omnipotence. If they say that God is omnipotent and his forgiveness is unlimited, He did not have to go through the painful process of becoming man in order to save humanity. Grigor explains that Christ was a revelation of God's great love for man, and this initiative shows and justifies the extent of the sacrifice.⁹⁸ The reply is that by causing Christ's death, the quantity of evil increased in the world, and he answers that the very act of taking over of a human body and going through what He did, was in itself cause of man's deliverance.⁹⁹ Finally, the expression father and son is justified, since it also exists in the Torah of Moses.¹⁰⁰ Matt'ēos had given the same reason.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

The fourth fallacy is rejecting Christ's divinity and considering him just a *p'eghambar* or prophet.¹⁰¹

Once more, Grigor starts at the limitedness of human reason as opposed to the divine Logos/Word that is uncreated and infallible. He suggests an argument that Matt'ēos uses too: If we deny the divinity of the Word, the Spirit and the Power of God, we would then be denying God's existence altogether by denying the existence of the parts (*masunk'*).¹⁰²

In this context, he has a more interesting approach. He uses the analogy of Christ being Light. His Persian or Persian-speaking adversaries described Christ or 'Īsā, as '*Yisē nur i nurdan*', in his translation "*luys i lusoy*" or "light in light." Granting this point, Grigor asks if they consider this "light" created (*eghakan*) or uncreated (*anegh*). If it is uncreated, then it is God, and if so, "whose/what light it is that He resides in?" The angels and the heavenly bodies cannot be hosts, if they say that Christ is God's light, and since divine attributes are one with His essence, then it is true that Christ too is God.¹⁰³ He concludes: Christ is — as they say too — "light in light," and as the light of the sun is one with it,¹⁰⁴ so the essence of the father and the son are one and the same, therefore Christ is God.¹⁰⁵ However, Grigor states that the "incorporeal light of God" had a corporeal birth from the Virgin.¹⁰⁶ In other words, the Word of God became man as a single individual (*andz ew dēm*) and a single nature (*bnut'iwn*). He continues: "Christ was born immaculate from the Virgin without the sperm and as you say, he was born of the *bikr* or the Virgin."¹⁰⁷ At this point and in one of the copies of the manuscript, there is a passage which is identical with that of Matt'ēos:

Every artisan is known by his works, now since Christ is truly God, He too is known by his works. Miracles are divine works for they supersede nature. Indeed, you assert that *Yisē* is *karamatkar* [miracle-worker in Persian] who raised the dead and made the blind see, therefore He is God.¹⁰⁸

A different argument follows: If they say that just as the prophets performed miracles, as Moses did before the Pharaoh ... so did Christ. We say that the prophets acted by God's power, but Christ acted by His own

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 103

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

sovereign will,¹⁰⁹ as kings do by [their own] royal power. As prophets acted by God's orders, the Apostles performed miracles by Christ's. Paul raised the dead, Peter made the paralytic walk in the name of Christ. Christ is therefore God ...¹¹⁰ While Christ as God had divine powers, others had to be transferred such powers only temporarily.¹¹¹

The next objection raised by the Muslims is about the veracity of Christ's crucifixion. The Muslims, says Grigor, believe that Christ did not really die on the cross, but it seemed to be so. Grigor insists on the whole process of Crucifixion and the sufferings of Christ.¹¹² If the Muslims insist that He is eternal, then he is God. But since the other prophets too are in the same condition, they must be in paradise, which is an intermediate place whereas Christ is in heaven, and then he mentions the prophets Khēḏr and Elias, who are *Enovk'* and *Eghia*.¹¹³ He concludes: "If you consider Christ '*ghiamati ghadi Yisē*' [or 'Judge in the Day of Judgment', in Persian], then you are confirming his divinity."¹¹⁴

The fifth fallacy of the Muslims is that they only accept the Furqān as the True Law and reject both the Old and New Testaments.¹¹⁵

The Muslims, says Grigor, reject the Old and New Testaments. Although they say that four books are "from heaven, the Torah of Moses, the *Zabur* of David, the *Injīl* [Bible, in Arabic] and the *Furk'an* [meaning the Qur'ān, not the 25th *sūrah*, which has 77 verses] of Mahmēd, but they only accept the last as the True Law."¹¹⁶ He argues that if all four are God's words, then they must all be true, because God is immutable.¹¹⁷ But if one of these is false, then they all are, he observes. In general, Grigor dismisses the Islamic Law, because in his view it dealt only with "external" and temporal matters and not with the "spiritual" and permanent.¹¹⁸

The sixth fallacy of the Muslims is that they consider a mere man as prophet or *p'eghambar*'.

In this section the arguments are again almost identical with those of Matt'ēos. If omniscience is a divine attribute, says Grigor, then Mahmēd

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 104-106.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 106-107.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

does not qualify to be considered a true prophet, for he has no knowledge of this nature¹¹⁹ Like Matt'ēos, he says that a "prophet is for the sake of others," while "Mahmēd proclaimed that the world was created for his sake and went on boasting (*metsabanut' iwn*)."¹²⁰

Another proof against the prophethood of Mahmet, in his opinion, is his failure to perform *karamat* or miracles (*och' arar karamat*).¹²¹

The fifth counter-indication is the absence of any novelty in the "prophetic" teachings of Mahmēd.¹²² Grigor observes that he simply borrowed ideas from everybody else, while true prophets bring novelty. The sixth is that a true prophet never contradicts himself, while Mahmet was equivocal in all his advices. There are other problems too, says Grigor, but he prefers to keep silent about them.¹²³

In copy 'A' of the manuscript there is an additional paragraph, which appears in Matt'ēos verbatim.¹²⁴ It is a direct attack on the personality of the Prophet. He advises:

If they ask the reason why the name of their *p'eghambar* is absent in our book, we simply say that the Bible was written 700 years earlier [than the Qur'ān] and that it was impossible to find any mention of Mahmēd there.¹²⁵

Again, no reference is made to the so-called contamination of Christ's Gospel (as Muslims claimed, and as reported in other polemical texts). He explains that even during the time of the Apostles, there appeared sects and false apostles who misled the people and were eventually anathematized.¹²⁶

Very much in the style of Matt'ēos, in this section, Grigor continues his advice to the Armenians: "If they say that if Mahmēd was not a prophet, why was there always a canopy (*ambhovani*) over him? We answer that he went around with a large head-cover or a semi-tent called "*sukur*" made especially for him.¹²⁷ Mahmēd, [he adds] also imitated the Prophet *Eghia* (Elijah) by riding his camel and shading himself by the *sukur* to simulate Moses who walked in a shadow in sunlight and was luminous at night."¹²⁸ At this point, he briefly introduces a brief biography of Mahmet, as mentioned earlier:

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 117

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Matt'ēos, *There Arose False Prophets*, M2229, fols 190a-b.

¹²⁵ Grigor Tat'ewats'i, *Against the Tajiks*, 118.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

In the year 620, there appeared a certain Ismaelite man called Mahmēd son of Abdēlla. He was somehow familiar with the Law of Moses and had been a disciple of a monastic at the Sinai, called Bekhira, a follower of the heresy of Arius. He [Mahmēd] said that Paradise was corporeal and that there was food and marriage there. Although he had studied the Old and New Testaments, he came up with all sorts of worthless and ludicrous teachings for his own people claiming to their lawgiver and messenger ...¹²⁹

In connection with the invasions and conquests of the Prophet, Grigor brings up the subject of his “oath” and/or “decree,” almost quoting Kirakos Gandzakets’i. I cite it again in this context:

Mahmēd signed and sealed a permanent Oath to the Armenians known as the Great *Manshur* [*mets manshur* or great decree] to freely maintain their Christianity ... and instead, he imposed a tax on each house consisting of 4 *dirhams*, three *marzans* of barley, one rope (of hair) and one towel/sheet. The clergy, the nobility and cavalry were exempted of taxes. On the 20th year of the Muslim calendar Bubakr then Ot’man reigned to the 38th year.¹³⁰

[Caliph ‘Umar is omitted and the 38th year coincides with the death of Caliph ‘Alī, not ‘Uthmān.] Another Mahmēd, who was said to have occupied Lake Sewan and its island, issued another decree or *manshur*, known as the “Little *Manshur*” [*p’ok’r manshur*]. It reconfirmed the “Great *Manshur*” [*mets manshur*] by allowing the Armenians to follow their faith freely, to pay the fixed taxes, with the exemption of the clergy, nobility and the cavalry.¹³¹

The seventh fallacy of the Muslims is the belief that resurrection is corporeal and involves food, women and pleasures.¹³²

According to Grigor, in these matters, the Muslims were following the teachings of Arius, Cerinthus and Sakarinus, who anathematized the Bible and God’s Church. The Muslims, he says, argue that, since resurrection means a return to and recovery of the initial state of man, then there must be marriage and all other aspects of life must be restored.¹³³ Food and drink are part of life too and the Muslims grant them. Grigor suggests symbolic meanings to the corporeal aspects of life in the afterlife. Food, for example, is spiritual food. Similar to heavenly bodies, he says, the resurrected body is incorruptible and has no physical requirements.¹³⁴ The idea that each

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 123.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

man will be given 40 or 70 nymphs (*hūrīs*) is in turn an absurdity for moral and arithmetical reasons.¹³⁵

Grigor observes that if paradise is a place similar to earth, then the corruption of the earth will infect it too. Will there be need for another Judgment Day, he asks? "This world is anyway filled with sins, hell is the house of sinners, [by Muslims' approach to paradise] heaven will in turn become a world of injustice and sins." Furthermore, if women in paradise are not for procreation then their abundance there will lead to fornication and disease, and paradise will turn into a brothel. If Muslims, he says, fail to establish a reasonable relationship between men and women on earth, how will they manage to realize a pure life in the *pehesht*/*p'ehesht*/*behesht*, or heaven-paradise (in Persian).¹³⁶

The eighth fallacy of the Muslims is considering the angels mortal, like humans.

They argue, says Grigor, that whatever has a beginning in time must also have an end. If the angels were created like us, then they too must have an end. This assumption, he explains, entitles them to consider the angels mortal.¹³⁷ His long refutation is based on the immortality of all incorporeal beings. Like the soul, the angels are immortal.¹³⁸ The resurrection of the body, he adds, is due to the immortality of the soul.¹³⁹

The ninth fallacy of the Muslims is the rejection of the Cross and holy icons.

This was an ongoing debate with the iconoclastic sects as of the 4th century, even earlier. John of Damascus and many polemicists always dealt with the subject of icons. Grigor repeats the classic reply, that man-made objects were simply symbols. "You only see the matter of the Cross and fail to comprehend the hidden meaning," he says, "like the illiterate who only see the letters but cannot read." He then sets on a long discussion about the symbolism of the cross as man's redemption through Christ. In the Cross, he says, the matter and the form of divine power are united.¹⁴⁰

In copy 'A' of the manuscript, there are more Arabic terms like *t'aseb* (or *ta'aşşub* meaning fanaticism), *nalat* (*na'lah*, curse), *mereb* (*mur'ib*,

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

fearsome), etc.¹⁴¹ In this section he refers to the Jews as *jehud* (*yahūd*, Jews in Arabic), “a most cursed people among all the nations.”¹⁴²

The tenth fallacy is abstaining from pork while eating the meat of all other animals.

In this section Grigor has a detailed classification of those animals whose meat must not be consumed.¹⁴³ The reason why the Armenians eat pork, for which the Muslims criticized them, is simply “custom” he says, just like the “*franch*” (Franks, the Crusaders) eat rabbit and hare.¹⁴⁴ He then asks the Muslims who eat horsemeat, “how can you accept Moses as a Prophet while you disobey him by eating what he forbade [horsemeat]?”¹⁴⁵ Thus, inconsistently declaring some meats “*halal*” and others “*haram*” or impure, is a “fallacy.”¹⁴⁶

The eleventh fallacy is forbidding wine as “*haram*”

Grigor goes back to the prophets of the Old Testament who did not forbid wine and on the contrary, they found it “*halal*” or lawful. If grapes are good, then wine as their product must be too.¹⁴⁷ As usual, in the middle of the discussion Grigor gives direct advice:

If an ignorant man from the Muslims or an aggressive character ask you whether wine is *halal* or *haram*, what should our reply be? Answer very briefly that “For us it is *halal* for you it is *haram*” [forbidden, unlawful]. Also tell them that moderate drinking is *halal* but getting drunk is *haram* ... Also say that in essence [*ṭabīyat*, meaning by nature or *ṭabī’ah* in Arabic] wine is pure and *halal*, while its effects may be *haram*.¹⁴⁸

The twelfth fallacy is about ablution. The first paragraph is identical to that of Matt’ēos:

They always wash in water and think that water purges them of sins. Tell them that water cleans the dirt off the body but not that of the soul, which is sin, for the corporeal does not affect the spiritual ...¹⁴⁹ If they ask you about Baptism, tell them that there is no similarity between ablution and Baptism.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 148-150.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 156-158.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 159

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

Even though the water is the same but the functions are different. [He gives the example of a woman, who when with her husband is “halal,” but when with somebody else she commits “*haram*” or adultery].¹⁵¹

If ablution is purification, then why should the rites of “*haj*,” “*zakat*,” fasting and the “bridge” be necessary? It is good deeds, he adds, that wash away sins, not water.¹⁵² There follows a series of possible questions and their answers.¹⁵³

The thirteenth fallacy is about circumcision.

The Muslims despise us, he says, because we are uncircumcised, therefore “impure.”¹⁵⁴ “Tell them that even though we too follow Abraham, for us the law of Baptism replaced the old law of circumcision”, he says.¹⁵⁵

Then, in a style similar to that of Matt’ēos, he explains that the objective of circumcision initially was for Jews to be distinguished from pagans. In another copy there are more details about the procedure itself.¹⁵⁶ He then brings in other cases, such as the circumcision of women, Ethiopians, etc., and the answers Armenians should give about these cases.¹⁵⁷

The fourteenth fallacy is about fasting

Grigor observes that the Muslim Fast is neither that of the Old Law (Jewish) nor of the New (Christian). Fasting should be abstention from organic food, everything else is allowed. Moses and Christ really fasted for forty days, he says, but Christians fast fifty days surviving on inorganic food.

For about thirty days you eat richer food than on normal days. Consequently, yours is not fasting. All year long you eat during the day and not night, during *Ramadan* you eat at night and not day. So, this is not fasting. As far as God is concerned, there is no night and day, and practically you are still eating and not fasting.¹⁵⁸

In connection with Fasting, one of the five “pillars” of Islam, neither Grigor nor Matt’ēos seem to be aware of their special status. But at all occasions they seem to reject the strictly legalistic traditions of Islam.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 164-166.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

¹⁵⁹ The most essential of the Muslim’s duties/rites are: 1. Profession of Faith in God and His Prophet; 2. Prayer (*Ṣalāt*) 5 times a day — the number comes from Zoroastrian

The fifteenth fallacy is banning meat slaughtered by Armenians (*hayzēn*).

Angry and offended, Grigor argues that if the hand and the knife that cut the meat and the tongue that speaks are clean, what is it that contaminates the meat? They say that before we slaughter, we call on the Trinity, “In the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”, but you too he adds, say “*Ba nami Khuda* [or ‘In the Name of God’ in Persian, *besmilla rahman u rahim*] [or *b’Ism Illāh Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate]. If you say the “*besmila*” over impure animals, does the meat suddenly purify? Words neither purify nor contaminate. Therefore, meat slaughtered by Christians cannot be impure.¹⁶⁰ Grigor then makes a very interesting remark:

In the city of Demeshkh [*Dimashq* or Damascus] the *sunī* Muslims are not like you, they do indeed eat meat slaughtered by Christians ... can you deny this? Therefore, your *t’asubut’iwn* [*ta’aṣṣub*, in Arabic, or fanaticism] is newly found and it wrongly discriminates against us.¹⁶¹

As discussed previously, this “fallacy” stands as a very precious and rare case in favor of my argument concerning the Shī’ī background of the adversaries, and the “accusers” that both polemicists were trying to defend themselves against.

The sixteenth fallacy is that they consider themselves as the only lawful believers.

By “pure reason”, says Grigor, “we demonstrated the falsity of their faith.” He then summarizes the previous fifteen fallacies, then makes a brief reference to a belief that Muḥammad’s name is written on the door of the *behesht*. “If this is true, where will so many Christians go?” he asks with obvious sarcasm.¹⁶²

T’ovma Metsop’ets’i (1378-1446), the last figure of the late Middle Ages is the author of the *History of Lang-Timur and his Successors*.¹⁶³

He was from the Monastery of Metsop’, near Archēsh (on the north-most tip of Lake Van). The history begins at the arrival of Timur in the

influence; 3. Fasting in the month of Ramaḍān (*Ṣawm*); 4. Poor Tax (*Zakāt*) payable according to a definite procedure; 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) to be performed if possible at least once a lifetime; 6. Holy war (*jihād*) against unbelievers, which however was dropped later on. See Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs*, 17.

¹⁶⁰ Grigor, At, 178.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 182-186.

¹⁶³ T’ovma Metsop’ets’i, *History of Lang-Timur*.

region. A relatively modest vardapet and often primitive in his judgments, T'ovma wrote, "In the year 1386, arrived [he who is called] T'imur-lank, in the faith and laws of Mahmet, the precursor of the Neṛ ..." ¹⁶⁴ He then called him the "abominable/profane king" (*pights t'agawor*) and "the evil dragon and the precursor of the Neṛ." ¹⁶⁵ The Muslims are referred to as the "lawless" (*anōrēnk'*). ¹⁶⁶ In the context of the events around the year 1440 in Ardabil, he related the atrocities of *t'urk'man* Jahan Shāh, "the abominable despot ... who called himself the evil leader of his faith." He then cited the advice that the "abominable" Shaykh of Ardabil gave Jahan Shāh concerning the Christians:

Let all evils that you committed [so far] be forgiven, also those evils that you will commit in the next seven years. But allow me to give you an advice, if they [the Christians] utter blasphemy toward our [the Muslims] leaders, calling them bald and hairless, then impose a tax and *kharaj* ... so that they deny Jesus Christ and turn to our laws. ¹⁶⁷

D. SAFAVID POLITICS: PROPHET'S OATH RENEWED BY SHĀH 'ABBĀS I (1605/6) — NEW JULFA-ISFAHAN

In the literature about the history of the Armenians driven to the south east into New Julfa-Isfahan by Shāh Abbās I (r. 1588-1629), the granting of a Medīnan-style oath to the Christian subjects, and the Armenians in particular, is a historical fact. Writing in 1699, Zak'aria Sarkawag K'anakerṣ'i, otherwise very ambivalent about the personality and policies of Shāh Abbās, wrote that at the time, he issued an order/decreed (*hraman*) "allowing freedom of worship", which "continues to this day", he added. ¹⁶⁸ The following is a section from this alleged decree:

Now, let me tell you and write down my canons/laws to you, also anathema [on those who do not comply], if Christians become Tajiks and return [to their original faith], do not prevent or torture them. Allow them their faith, for if you kill them a light may descend upon them, at which sight, *Mohmedans* will hesitate and doubt about their own, and our numbers will decrease. ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶⁸ Zak'aria, *History*, I, 22.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. I, 21-22.

According to Yovnanyants', copies of the alleged Medīnan oaths written "by the hand" of "Mu'āwiyah" or "'Alī", were available in the 17th century. When some of these were submitted to Shāh Abbās I, he renewed and reconfirmed the initial Oath of the Prophet to the non-Muslim subjects and particularly the Armenians.¹⁷⁰

E. OTTOMAN TIMES — CONTRADICTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

1. *Avedis Bērbērian — Sultan Mahmud II (1811) — "Oath of Ēōmer" to Jerusalem Armenians (637)*

Prior to the 19th century, I have not found any references to an oath attributed to Caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The first two references were made by Avedis Bērbērian in his *History of the Armenians from the Year 1771 of the Savior to the Year 1680 with a Chronology of Significant Events* (Istanbul, 1861)¹⁷¹ and by Erwand T'op'chyan in his *Islam, Illustrated Review* (Tbilisi: 1899).

Avedis Varzhapet [instructor] Bērbērian is the continuator, of sorts, of the massive *History of the Armenians* by Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants'. The context is the long and hard disputes between the Armenians and the Greeks over the ownership of the Monastery of Surb Yakob and other holy sites at Jerusalem. According to Bērbērian, in the year 1811, and out of pity and compassion toward the Armenians, Sultan Mahmud II ordered that the issue be settled by impartial and meticulous investigation by Supreme judge, "Duri Zadē Abdullah Sheikhislam Ēfendi." A committee of around 50 members from Ottoman officials, prominent Armenians and Greeks was formed.¹⁷²

The central figure was a certain Bōghos Vardapet, the "Vēk'il of Jerusalem" (patriarchal locum tenens, delegated as the representative of the Armenian Church at Jerusalem). The meeting between the delegates and the Sultan is told by Bērbērian:

At the start of the session, Bōghos Vardapet produced a sealed/signed *ahdname* [writ of oath, agreement]. It was an order from the great Caliph Ēōmer ['Umar] of the Hagarians, who at the time of the occupation of Jerusalem [637] gave this decree to the holy monastery of Surb Yakob [Saint

¹⁷⁰ See Tēr Yovnanyants', *History of New Julfa*, II, 356-360.

¹⁷¹ *Patmut' iwn Hayots' Skseal i 1772 Amē P'rkch'in Minch'ew Ts'amn 1860 Zhamanak-agrut'eamb Ereweli Irats'* (= Bērbērian, *History of the Armenians*).

¹⁷² Bērbērian, *History of the Armenians*, the list, 67.

James] of the Armenians. He also showed a decree by King Yavuz Sultan Selim [Selim I, r. 1512-1520] who in the year 933 of the Hijrah, 25th day of Safar, captured Jerusalem. He [Selim I] summoned Patriarch Sargis of the Armenians, and Patriarch Atalis of the Greeks and read to them the decree of Great Caliph Ēōmer, written by his own hand, in which he granted the Armenians the Monastery of Surb Yakob of Jerusalem [previously done so in 637 by ‘Umar].

In this writ [‘Umar] he defined in detail the holy sites which belonged to each of the Armenians and the Greeks, both those that are owned and those that are common to both [sides].

Now, he [Bōghos] read all these [decrees] to the judges, and by fair examination explained all the locations [referred to] also by the testimony of other people and their confirmation. On their fourth meeting the judges agreed upon the correct account of events and transferred their decision to the king. [Mahmud II] He read [the decision] and was informed about everything. He then ordered to prepare a royal decree, sealed by his seal and gave it to the Armenians and the Greeks. He clearly decided that the Monastery of Surb Yakob belonged only to the Armenians, also specified those sites in which the Armenians had a share and could celebrate mass by their pastors on Christmas, while [previously] they were not allowed to. Also, the Holy grave of Christ and his prison were to belong to both peoples with no discrimination.

All this was written in the royal decree and given by the all-powerful king [Sultan Mahmud II] concerning the Monastery of Surb Yakob of the Armenians. The decree was sworn in the name of Mahmet and by a warning that there should not be disputes of this nature and great strife, and there was great joy and satisfaction among our entire nation.¹⁷³

In an obvious praise of Sultan Mahmud II, Bērbērian then related that during those days (of the granting of his favorable decree to the Armenians), the Sultan visited Ort‘agiwgh, where 210 school children greeted him with songs, and were each awarded a gold coin.¹⁷⁴

Obviously, the decrees and in particular the “signed and sealed oath” by Caliph ‘Umar made in 637, are compositions by Armenian clergy at Jerusalem. The significance of this episode is to be sought in the disposition of Mahmud II and his decision to grant the Armenians what they asked. During the proceedings, the authenticity of “Ēōmer’s Oath” and the other documents was not questioned neither by the Sultan nor the committee he assigned. They simply followed the legacy of ‘Umar, 1174 years earlier. Clearly, sultan Mahmud II wanted to please the large and prosperous Armenian community of Istanbul and wanted to do them a favor.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

As a case in the study of the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*”, this episode shows that in the 19th century there were still alleged oaths in the hands of the Armenians, but not from the Prophet himself, nor Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn, but Caliph ‘Umar, the first Muslim conqueror of the city. I have not seen any other references in Armenian literature, about other copies of an “Oath of Ēōmer” at Jerusalem. This is a very peculiar and precious fragment to be explored.

2. E. T’op’chyan — “Oath of Ēōmer” and Ottoman politics

The next reference to “Oath of Ēōmer” was made in 1899 by Erwand T’op’chyan in his booklet titled *Islam — An Illustrated Historical Review* (Tbilisi).¹⁷⁵ This is a brief account with explicit polemical intent and style. T’op’chyan introduces his topic by accounts of centuries of persecution and bloodshed that Armenians endured under Muslim rule everywhere. However, he added, “Armenian literature paid little attention to Islam, and our people have very little knowledge of the religious doctrines, whose followers have been their enemies for centuries.”¹⁷⁶

The concept of “*chēhad*” (*jihād*) or holy war is the title of a chapter placed under a fearsome photograph of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, the Red Sultan (1876-1909). T’op’chyan explained that the violence of the Muslims was the main factor in the speedy expansion of Islam.¹⁷⁷ Concerning the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muḥammad, he wrote that he started as a humble and peaceful preacher, but the unexpected number of followers and his success caused a change in his personality and he became aggressive, ruthless and belligerent. “Fight against the unbelievers”, said the *Ghuran*, and “let your faith be established everywhere”, “quoted” T’op’chyan. These and similar quotes are always supported by *sūrahs* and verses that are not accurate. He seems to have read a translation or a paraphrase of the Qur’ān but not in Arabic, probably in Russian. His sources are predominantly Russian with the exception of W. Irving’s familiar biography of Muḥammad, and an unknown German source.

T’op’chyan often quoted — but with no references — from the Qur’ān. He wrote that Muḥammad claimed that “he was sent by God with a sword”, and that “the sword is the key to heaven.”¹⁷⁸ He observed that the concepts of “*Dār al-Salām*” and “*Dār al-Ḥarb*” inevitably divided the world and

¹⁷⁵ T’op’chyan, *Islam* (Tbilisi, 1899).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

legitimized a state of war between the two.¹⁷⁹ The defeated non-Muslims had either to convert or pay taxes and obey. Any disobedience and/or refusal to pay, was a death verdict.¹⁸⁰

At this point in the book, T'op'chyan introduced a very harsh version of the "Oath of Ēōmer" (or *Shurūt 'Umar*) in twenty very restrictive and negative commands, in my translation:

1. No building of churches and synagogues on Muslim lands
2. No reconstruction or renovation of existing ones
3. Not to prevent Muslim travelers from occupying non-Muslims' homes as hotels
4. Not to pursue Muslims, and not inform the unbelievers about their affairs
6. If relatives [of unbelievers] wish to convert, they should not be prevented from doing so
7. Muslims must be respected
8. Yielding their land to the Muslims, for they are masters of all
9. Not to dress up and be ornated, similar to the Muslims
10. Not to ride saddled and bridled horses
11. Not to carry Muslim names
12. Not to carry bows, arrows, swords, rifles or other weapons
13. Not to wear seal-rings and rings with precious stones
14. Not to sell or drink wine in public
15. Not to wear pagan-style clothes
16. Not to behave like pagans
17. Not to build houses or other buildings near Muslims' houses
18. Not to bury their dead near Muslims' cemeteries
19. Not to mourn loudly in the event of an unbeliever's death
20. Not to purchase Muslim slaves¹⁸¹

According to T'op'chyan's interpretation of this version of 'Umar's oath, which he took to be the only and the authentic one, the caliph granted all Muslims the right to kill, with no consequence, all those who broke the terms of his decree.¹⁸² Instead of reconciling the peoples of different faiths, these terms imposed the concept of *jihād*, he observed, and opened a vast and free space before the Muslims to do what they wished, almost legally and no fear of punishment. He then brought the example of Turkey, and the massacres carried out by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, or the "new caliph", as he wished to proclaim himself.¹⁸³ The rest of this chapter is a direct critique of anti-Armenian Ottoman politics at the time.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 47

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 47-49.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-54.

PART FOUR

THE “ARMENIAN *GHURANS*”
IN THE OTTOMAN AND SAFAVID WORLDS
(17th TO 18th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I

THE ARMENIAN AWAKENING IN NEW WORLDS OF ISLAM

When in 1453 Constantinople, the *Byzantion* of the Greeks became Istanbul, the capital of the victorious Turks, a new era came about in Near Eastern and world history. Soon, by the 16th century, the region from Eastern Europe, and North Africa, the Mediterranean, to the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and Iran was shared between the Ottoman Empire (1453-1922/3) and the rival Persian Safavid Empire (1501-1736). Before the middle of the 16th century, alongside the Ottomans and the Safavids, the Mughal Empire (1526-1858) in India rose as the third major Muslim power by Akbar the Great (r. 1556-1605) then his son and successor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627).

By the end of the 16th century the Armenians everywhere lived in New Worlds of Islam, that the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires made together, from India to Eastern Europe.

These rival Worlds of Islam could not coexist in peace. In Asia Minor in particular, perpetual wars between the Safavids and Ottomans ended, but only temporarily, by the Peace of Amasya (1555) between Sultan Selim's son and successor, Sultan Süleyman I the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566), and Safavid Shāh Ṭahmāsp (r. 1524-1576). The pact divided the Caucasus buffer zone between the two empires. Ottoman conquests in Europe too halted temporarily.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Modern Period, the context of all things Armenian was Islamic, and the awakening of Armenian national consciousness took shape in response to these circumstances. It evolved through interactions in these worlds and at a Muslim bias. Armenian studies cannot avoid this major particularity, even though it has, so far.

As far as the Christian communities of the Near East were concerned, including the Armenians, they were all in *dhimmī* status. Throughout the Middle Ages, the relations with the Muslim states and powers were regulated by edicts or decrees and similar legal documents and royal decrees, as discussed in Part Three. After the Arab Period, these documents also sought to advertise the “fairness” of the Muslim states toward their *dhimmī* subjects also asserting the Islamic nature of the state. Divergent practices were not tolerated. In 1630s a radical jurist called Kadizāde, warned

against “un-Islamic” practices, such as the music and dance folklore of the Šūfīs.¹

Despite rivalries and conflict, commercial enterprises flourished and generated a vast extra-political world of networks from the Far East to Western Europe. They became a “joint affair”² that bypassed religious and ethnic differences. Merchants, financiers, ambassadors of all backgrounds and ethnicities — also and especially the Armenians — conducted trade and high-level administrative affairs in all three Muslim empires, for whom international trade and relations were of prime significance. “Relations with various European states ... reflected a pragmatism that surpassed religious difference”, says Norton.³ In the West, European interest in the East was wider than silk, spices and similar trades. During the 16th century, and earlier on as well, Catholic missionaries and travelers, already in the Near East, reached the Mughal lands.⁴

The Quizilbāshī Persian Empire, established in 1501 by Safavid Shāh Ismā‘īl (r. 1501-1524), had grown into the second major power almost parallel to and alongside the Ottomans. The Safavids were a Šūfī order founded by Kurdish Sunnī al-Shaykh Šafī ed-Dīn Ardabīlī (1252-1334). Ismā‘īl, a descendant of the founder, transformed the order into a political entity, which became a Shī‘ī empire with Isfahan as its capital. It lasted to 1736. The reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) is considered the golden age of the Safavids.⁵

Wars between the Persians and the Turks, the Jelālī revolts and subsequent atrocities, scattered the Armenian communities caught in the conflict. Many from the central provinces of Asia Minor moved to the west,

¹ Norton “The Ottoman Empire” in Norton and Pourjavady, “The Ottoman and Safavid Empires”, 6-7.

² Frederiks, “Introduction (CMR 7)”, 7.

³ Norton, “The Ottoman Empire”, in Norton and Pourjavady, “The Ottoman and Safavid Empires”, 1-2.

⁴ From the late 1570s, Akbar organized regular discussions with representatives of a variety of religious traditions, such as Jainism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. In 1580, three Jesuits, Rodolfo Acquaviva, Francisco Henriques and Antonio Monserrate, arrived in Akbar’s capital Fatehpur Sikri, and spent three years there teaching and discussing religion. A second Jesuit mission reached the court in Lahore in 1591 and, although it lasted less than a year, one Jesuit remained as a teacher to Akbar’s second son Murad. A third visit took place between 1595 and 1601, when Akbar invited a group of Jesuits, among them Francis Xavier’s grand-nephew Jerome Xavier, to establish schools and churches. Frederiks, “Introduction (CMR 7)”, 13.

⁵ Pourjavady, “The Safavid Empire”, in Norton and Pourjavady, “The Ottoman and Safavid Empires”, 14.

into Istanbul, Rodosto-Tekirtagh, Theodosia-Kafa in Crimea and beyond. Wars between the two empires came to an end in 1639 by the Treaty of Zuhab. The vast Armenian habitat, that also included the historical land, from the Caspian Sea to Istanbul and the Black Sea to Cilicia, was divided between the Ottomans and the Safavids, the former had what came to be known as “Western” or “Turkish Armenia”, and the latter “Eastern” or “Persian Armenia.”

A. THE MAKING OF NEW ARMENIAN WORLDS — NEW JULFA AND ALEPPO

Following his successes against the Ottomans in 1603-1605, and to fend off the Ottomans, Shāh Abbās I applied the scorched earth policy and ordered massive evacuations of over 300.000 Armenians from Julfa on the River Araxes, and other parts of Armenia, to the southern suburb of Isfahan. The Shāh also wanted to benefit from the mercantile experiences and the expertise of Julfan Armenians. The evacuees were at first stationed in Tabriz, then moved to Isfahan. In 1620, Simēon *Sarkawag* (deacon) Lehats‘i wrote in a colophon:

... having been brought to the city of Shosh at Isfahan, upon the river Zay-andarud, they remained there for three months, and then an order came from the King [Shāh Abbās I] to settle them in the city and village and in the caravansary/hostel. And there they stayed for two or three months, and, as the Prophet David declares, “They mixed with the pagans and learned their ways ...” They were [also] mixed with the Muslims, and the Christians were learning all the ways of the Muslims. And then they were given lands and places to live along the river. And they laid down the foundations of this town and built houses and dwellings and established twelve churches.⁶

In August/September of 1605, Shāh Abbās issued a decree or a *farman* (now stored in the Archives of All Savior’s Monastery of New Julfa) which explained his decision to provide the Julfans with their separate quarters south of the River Zayandarud. The Shāh implied that the previous arrangement to settle the Julfans in the Marnanan district of Isfahan alongside the Muslim population, caused some discord and conflict. The decision to move them to separate areas was taken following these events. The Shāh ordered that lodging was to be provided for the Julfans in the Royal estates of Arsabaf, Falashan and Marnanan. Some locals had to be moved temporarily, until the Armenians made their own lodgings in the areas designated

⁶ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 52.

for them. He also decreed that the people of Marnanan, who acted against them would be punished severely.⁷

Another *farman* was issued by him dated September 11–October 9 of the same year:

At this time, due to our endless Royal benevolence and mercy towards the Armenians of Julfa, and for the betterment of their life, We decided to grant them, free of charge, the land at the bank of the river Zayandarud, in the Capital City of Isfahan, which is part of our royal property, where they have already built houses. Honorable and great treasurer of the Chancery [will] delete the above-mentioned land from the list of royal properties and register it in the books as a gift to the Armenians. Vazir, Kalantar and public officials of Isfahan, [will] obey the present order and consider the said land as accorded property to the Armenians.⁸

The new location, called New Julfa, after Julfa, the native city of many of the deported Armenians, became the most significant location in Eastern-Persian Armenia. In the East, on Safavid-controlled lands, Ējmiatsin in Ayrarat and New Julfa-Isfahan, in its southeast, became cultural centers for the Armenian communities.

“Safavid rulers”, says Pourjavady, “and particularly Shāh Abbās I, launched several policies which were designed to encourage the conversion to Islam of Christians and Jews in the Safavid Empire. This was attempted largely through the provision of financial incentives, such as the legal process whereby a convert to Islam would automatically inherit the property of his deceased kin. Discrimination against and oppression of non-Muslims continued in the following decades of the century.” Christian-Muslim inter-religious discourse, as well anti-Christian polemical works appeared for the first time in the 17th century.⁹

In 1654-1657 Armenians from other parts of Isfahan, were forced to settle in New Julfa. The famous Church of All Savior (*Amenap'rkich'*) was built in 1655-1666. This Armenian city in exile generated a golden age that lasted almost a century, until in 1747 Nādir Shāh Afshar (r. 1736–1747) ransacked it. During his incumbency, however, the New Julfans managed to sabotage a rule issued earlier that gave Armenian converts to Islam priority over other heirs, concerning the property of deceased relatives. They also obtained the support of the Safavid state against Catholics.¹⁰

⁷ *Ibid.*, 52. F. 82. See the translation of this document in Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, 201.

⁸ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 53; n. 83. Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, 208.

⁹ Pourjavady, “The Safavid Empire”, in Norton and Pourjavady, “The Ottoman and Safavid Empires”, 17.

¹⁰ Koghdziejczyk, “Christians in the Safavid Empire”, 24-25.

Toward the end of the 17th century, the population of New Julfa may have reached 30,000. Between 1606 and 1620, twelve Armenian churches were built and by the middle of the century New Julfa had its own diocese. With the growth of the Julfan settlements in the Indian Ocean, the diocese extended its jurisdiction to Armenian churches and communities in India and Southeast Asia as well. The town had its printing press as early as in 1638, when one of the township's primates, Bishop Khach'atur Kesarats'i learned the art of printing and cast his own fonts and printed several books. Not satisfied with the results, Khach'atur dispatched one of his priests, Yovhannēs Jughayets'i, to Europe in 1639 to study of the art of printing. Yovhannēs traveled to Venice, Rome, and finally to Livorno, where he lived and worked for three and a half years and produced the first printed book in 1644, before returning to Julfa in 1646 with a printing press.¹¹

Aleppo

In the discussions about these times during the 16th and 17th centuries, the case of Aleppo/Halab/Beria (this author's birthplace), in north-west Syria, on Ottoman land and with an old and large Armenian community must be made a brief mention of.¹² Almost the single comprehensive source is the *History of the Armenians of Aleppo* by Ardavazt Surmeyan (1889-1951, r. 1924-1940), a prelate of the city.¹³

The history of this ancient city goes back to the third millennium BC. From the 6th century BC, it was one of the oldest cities that was inhabited continuously. Next to Antioch, also geographically close (about 100 miles) to this Christian center, it always had a large Christian community and many churches. Being on the east-west trade routes, it had a mixed population, including Armenians from the medieval times. After the middle of the 16th century, following Catholic propaganda and the precarious conditions of the Armenians in eastern Asia Minor and Cilicia, mostly converts to Catholicism and others arrived there from Mar'ash, Zeit'un and other locations. At the end of the century, Armenians from the old city of Julfa began settling there too, because obviously, it was the only choice for the merchant community.

¹¹ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 56.

¹² Simēon Lehats'i (1584-c.1636) from Poland also Arakel Dawrizhet'i have their accounts about Aleppo.

¹³ Surmeyan, *History of the Armenians of Aleppo*.

Treaties made between the Ottomans and various European powers in the first half of the 16th century turned Aleppo into the “most important entrepôt for Iranian raw silk exports to Europe” to the next century. For Venetian, English, French, and Dutch merchants, it became a distribution center for Iranian silk and spices from the East.¹⁴ The Armenian merchants in Aleppo were wealthy magnates involved in international trade. Pedro Teixeira, the Portuguese traveler who was passing through the city around 1590s, speaks of the palatial residences of the Julfan Armenians. At times of crises, the Bishopric of Aleppo, with its two churches, hosted the catholicos of Sis. Catholicos with Catholic sympathies resorted there too, the community eventually moved to north Lebanon and established a Catholic Armenian See there.

The Catholic catholicos of Sis, Azaria I Jughayets‘i (r. 1584-1636), elected by Julfan support, resided in Aleppo for a while, away from his See at Sis.¹⁵ After 1650s, the Julfan merchants of Aleppo started taking their silk to Izmir/Smyrna, because taxes and customs duties were lower there. Toward the end of the century the Armenian merchants from Egin/Akn and Arapkir in Turkey, replaced them.¹⁶

B. THE ARMENIAN CONDITION IN THE 17th CENTURY AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

The early Modern Period in Armenian history during the 17th and 18th centuries was turbulent. After centuries of political uncertainty in the Ottoman and Safavid empires, all Armenian institutions, including the church were depleted. Universal circumstances in different Worlds of Islam, posed novel and extraordinary challenges.

Clandestine movements for national liberation appeared sporadically during the middle of the 17th century as part of an awakening of national consciousness. The objective was liberation from Muslim rule through organized struggle and diplomatic contacts with the West for support and assistance. In international trade and diplomacy between the Far East, Russia and Europe via the Near East, contributed to the generation of short-cuts for the Armenians into western languages, cultures, ideologies and political institutions and ideologies. Izmir and Istanbul in the Armenian

¹⁴ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 80.

¹⁵ Dadoyan, *The Armenian Catholicosate*, 47.

¹⁶ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean*, 81

West, and New Julfa-Isfahan, and later on Tbilisi in the Armenian East, became centers for a general awakening.

As mentioned, the initial argument in this chapter is that the intellectual culture of the Awakening began at an anti-Muslim bias. Therefore, any study of the historiography of the 17th and 18th centuries must take this peculiarity as a core factor, both in the East under the Safavids, and the West under the Ottomans. Islam was perceived and reacted to as the faith of the oppressors of the Armenians, who were left with no choice but seeking liberation. At the time, the Holy See of Sis in Cilicia was under constant threats and assaults. Often, the catholicoi resorted to Aleppo in the southeast for safety. The Holy See of Ējmiatsin near Yerevan in the East, under the Persians, was not in a better condition. In 1630s, being allowed some autonomy, it was slowly reinstated and renovated by Catholicos Movsēs III Tat'ewats'i (r. 1629-1632) and his successors. This see played a key role in leading the liberation movements. The first secret council was held at Ējmiatsin in 1547, the second and the third in 1662 and 1677/8, during the lifetime and most probably by the participation of the historian Aṙak'el Dawrizhets'i from the Brotherhood of Ējmiatsin.

My argument that the intellectual culture of the Awakening began at an anti-Muslim bias, has a sequel: during this early modern period, as well as previously in the late Middle Ages, the circumstances of the urban Armenians in the cities of the Near East were very different from their condition in the rural areas, where the majority lived. The cosmopolitan environments and their rich and colorful cultures blurred ethnic and religious differences, generating eclectic and liberal dispositions among the urban Armenians.

Some of the early authors in the East and West, A. Dawrizhets'i, G. Kamakhets'i, Z. K'anak'erts'i, E. Ch'ēlēbi, A. Erewants'i, and M. Ch'amch'iants' shared the same type and level of nationalism and disposition towards Muslim rule everywhere. Their interest in Islam as an alternative faith was negligible, so was their knowledge.

1. *Grigor Vardapet Kamakhets'i-Daranaghts'i Buk' (1576-1643)*

Grigor Kamakhets'i-Daranaghts'i, also known as *Buk'* (blizzard) was born in 1576 in Kamakh/Kemakh/Daranaghi (just southwest of Erzinjān). He died in 1643, at Rodosto/Tek'irdagh, in Eastern Thrace, on the northern shores of the Sea of Marmara. He was a vardapet from the monastery of Sebuḥ Mountain in the province of Daranaghi. Like most Armenians

in central Turkey, he too fled the Jelālī revolts and subsequent violence. He took refuge at Istanbul and spent most of his life traveling.

He wrote his *Chronicle* (*Zhamanakagrut' iwn*) at Rodosto between 1633 and 1640. It was first discovered by T. Sawanalyants'. It is basically a collection of traveler's notes and narratives written in late-middle vernacular Armenian mixed with Turkish, Arabic and Persian terms (as it was the case at the time). The accuracy of the dates and the stories is questionable. In general, however, the book is useful as a valuable collection of mixed data about the Armenian Church, the clergy, circulating legends, dialogues and martyrologies. Grigor also attached a chronology of the events between 1595 and 1634.¹⁷ He travelled extensively. Visited Dewrigue, Istanbul, Cyprus, Aleppo, and Ējmiatsin. He was in Jerusalem via Egypt in 1605-1607, and met patriarch Grigor Kesarats'i in Istanbul (r.s 1601-1609; 1611-1621; 1623-1626). In 1616-17 he was at St. Makar Monastery of Cyprus. Upon his return to Istanbul, he found the Church of St. Nikoghayos converted to a mosque and the premises of the Armenian prelacy of Rodosto destroyed.¹⁸ As a traveler, he became familiar with the local languages, and his transliterations are quite close. Kamakhets'i was not too happy about the conduct of the Armenian clergy and their institutions at the time. He made negative comments about both the Sees of Ējmiatsin and Sis at Cilicia. The book ends at the reign of Sultan Murad IV (r. 1612-1640), the invasion of Baghdad and the great "*surku*" (forced migration/evacuation) in 1632-1635.¹⁹

He has disconnected information on the relations as well as conflicts between the various Armenian religious institutions, the circumstances of the Christians under Ottoman rule, the destruction of churches, Jelālī revolts and the terrible consequences on the Armenians. He made no direct polemical comments against or about the Muslims, whom he calls *aylazgik'*, but never *mahmetakank'* (Muhammedans). He reserved the traditional term *Mahmet* for the Prophet and *Muḥammad* for all others in the same name. The only time he referred to Islam, Mahmet and his "laws" is in the context of the story of the conversion of a certain Persian dervish at Edessa.²⁰ He also had the story of a mass conversion of some forty Egyptian *ulamas*

¹⁷ Grigor has a reference to the pact of 'Alī or what he calls the "treaty" of 'Alī. See H. Bērberian, "The Treaty of 'Alī in the Chronicle of Grigor Kamakhets'i", 302-304.

¹⁸ Bardakjian, "Grigor Daranaghts'i", 570.

¹⁹ Grigor Kamakhets'i, *Chronicle*, 576.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 532-540.

following their pilgrimage or *Hajj* to Mecca and disappointments at what they experienced there.²¹

In many respects, the *Chronicle* is the western equivalent of the *Book of Stories* (*Girk' Patmut'eants'*) by Aṛakēl Dawrizhets'i written in the East, at Ējmiatsin. Together, these two works make a colorful and more or less complete panorama of the Armenian condition in two worlds of Islam, Ottoman and Safavid, during the first half of the 17th century.

2. *Aṛakel Dawrizhets'i* (c.1590-1670)

Born in Tabriz or *Dawrizh* around 1590, Aṛak'el spent most of his life at Ējmiatsin. He was a student of Catholicos P'ilibbos I Aghbakets'i (r. 1634-1655), who sent him to various missions into Amasya, Sivās, Edessa, Aleppo and Jerusalem. His travels were an opportunity to see manuscripts and collect colophons. As he mentions in the colophon, the *Book of Stories* was written at the request of two catholicoi, P'ilibbos I and Yakob IV Jughayets'i (r. 1655-1680). He was exceptionally fortunate to see his *Book of Stories* printed at Amsterdam, by Oskan Erewants'i in 1669, just a year before his death.²²

The book covered only the sixty years from 1602 to 1662. Most of the events he related, wrote Dawrizhets'i, were eyewitness accounts. As a child and a young man, Dawrizhets'i was contemporary to the entire reign of Safavid Shāh Abbās. He was therefore the single most significant narrator of the mass evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Armenians into Iran in 1605. He divided the larger region into three worlds, “the world of the Armenians” or the “Christian peoples” (*ashkharhn hayots', azg k'ristoneits'*), the “world of the Persians” (*ashkharhn parsits'*) and the “world of the Ottomans” (*ashkharhn ōsmants'wots'*). He described the situation as follows:

In recent times, the peoples/nations, who were followers of the Christian faith are weakened, and those of the Muslim faith [*mahmetakan*] gained strength. In the east there are the Persians [Safavids] and in the west the *Ōsmants'ik'* [Ottomans], who captured the famous city of Constantinople from the *Hoṛoms* [*rūms* or Byzantines] in the year 902 of the Armenian era [1453].²³

²¹ *Ibid.*, 541-543.

²² Aṛak'el Dawrizhets'i, *Book of Stories*, first printed as *Girk' Patmut'eants' Sharadreal Vardapetin Aṛak'eloy Dawrezhats'woy* [Book of Stories Composed by Vardapet Aṛak'el Dawrizhets'i] (Amsterdam, 1669).

²³ Aṛak'el Dawrizhets'i, *Book of Stories* (1669), 57.

The *Book of Stories* is a collection of narratives in mixed classical and middle Armenian, spotted with idiomatic, as well as Persian, Turkish and Arabic terms. The Muslims, or the *mahmetakank'* and *aylazgik'* are depicted as aggressors. Islam is the "Law of Mahmet", and/or "the religion of Mahmet." Dawrizhets'i made no reference to the life and teachings of the Prophet in any context. The recurring themes concerning Muslim-Christian relations, are conversions, persecutions and inevitably martyrdoms in different locations, such as Amida, Gnunik', Van, Ostan, Nakhijewan. Obviously, conversions were common and continued decades after the early migrations. He related that the children of those who were driven to Persia by Shāh Abbās, chose to convert to Islam, against the will of their parents. The latter always wanted them to maintain their culture and return to their homeland in the north. Armenians converted to the "laws of the lawless Mahmet", he wrote, because of skepticism toward their own faith, but in particular because of the attractions of "theft" and "adultery" in the other faith. Surely, there were also other conversions as well to avoid persecution, pressures, taxes and expulsions of Christians (as well as the Jews).²⁴

3. *Zak'aria Sarkawag K'anak'erts'i (1627-1699)*

Zak'aria was born in 1627 in K'anak'er, a northern suburb of Yerevan. Almost three decades after the histories of Dawrizhets'i and Kamakhets'i (1627-1699), in 1699, Zak'aria Sarkawag (deacon) completed his history in three volumes at Ōhanavank' (just north of Yerevan).²⁵ Written in the dialect of Yerevan, and an inconsistent style, the book was printed at Ējmiatsin in 1870.²⁶

He described the Armenians at the time as a "headless nation" (*anglukh azg*).²⁷ The dominant motif is "Tajiks against *k'ristoneayk'*" (Christians). Some Muslim rulers, however, he wrote, were "sympathetic toward the Christians" (*sirogh azgis k'ristonēits'*), such as Jelan Shāh (probably a local *amīr*).²⁸ His comments about Safavid Shāh Abbās I are contradictory. The first time he calls him "multi-talented and ingenious."²⁹ In the year 1699, he wrote, the Shāh issued an order/decreed (*hraman*) which

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95, 345-372. See Bournoutian and Cowe, "Arak'el Dawrizhets'i".

²⁵ Zak'aria, *History* (Vagharshapat, 1870). In 1969, M. Darbinyan-Melikyan published a critical edition.

²⁶ Bournoutian and Cowe, "Zak'areay K'anak'erts'i", 676.

²⁷ Zak'aria, *History*, I, 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

allowed freedom of worship, which is still in force to “this day.” He cited it as follows:

Now let this be recorded in your laws and let those who break it be cursed. If Christians, who have converted to Islam, wish to return to their original faith, do not prevent or torture them. Allow them to maintain their faith, for if you kill them there may descend a light on their graves, and seeing it the Muslims [*mahmetakank*³⁰] may become skeptical toward their own faith and convert [to Christianity]. Our nation [Muslims] may thus lose believers.³⁰

The next time he mentioned the Shāh, he described him as a “vicious, ill-passioned, and cunning monarch.”³¹ In one of his stories, he referred to the Muslim Turkmens as *Ismayelatsik*³² and *Hagarats’ik*³³, not as just Tajiks. He spoke of relations between the Safavid rulers and the Armenian Church. Mentioned that the Ottomans considered the Armenian catholicos the *khaliphē*, or the caliph of the Armenians. Among other random notes, he also observed that at the time the Armenians preferred Islamic names. In turn, he had many stories of martyrdom. Volume Two ends with a question-answer section.³³

4. *Eremia Ch’ēlēbi K’ēōmiwrchian (1637-1695)*

Before the end of the 17th century, a history of Istanbul was written by Eremia Ch’ēlēpi K’ēōmiwrchian.³⁴ A “son of Osmania”, as he identified himself, he was originally from the province of Erzinjān/Erznka in Daranaghi. Following the Jelālī troubles, he was orphaned and with many migrated to the west. At Istanbul he was raised by his maternal uncle Ambakum Ch’ēlēpi.

Eremia was a self-taught man in things Armenian, including the language, because at the time, there were no Armenian schools in Istanbul. He became a prolific writer and translator into Turkish. He even kept a diary (*Ōragrut’iwn*) from 1648 to 1663, the manuscript is at Jerusalem. He married in 1654, had a daughter and a son. In 1659 he began a career as secretary of Armenian patriarchs, also advisor and had the occasion to meet with dignitaries and foreign missions. He also represented the interests of the wealthy merchant Abro Ch’ēlēbi, established a press and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

³³ *Ibid.*, 140-143.

³⁴ Eremia, *History of Istanbul*, ed. T’orkomian.

published two titles. The death of both his children and internal disputes in the community drove him out of public life.³⁵

Eremia referred to the Turks as Tajiks but had no comments about their faith and its founder. Written between 1861 and 1864, the *History of St'ampōl* (Istanbul) is in eight chapters, in mixed classical Armenian and western vernacular with a chaotic grammar. The book is basically a collection of notes in the format of a journey in the Ottoman capital with a certain Vardan Vardapet, to whom he dedicated the book. This is probably Vardan Baghishets'i, the abbot of the Monastery of Amrdolu in the region of Lake Van, who visited Istanbul in 1660.³⁶ The book also covers natural disasters and fires in Istanbul and surrounding provinces, Ottoman wars with Hungary, Venice, the Balkans, Iran, and stories about the Armenian Church, catholicoi, and patriarchs.³⁷ There are stories about a wide range of subjects, including hardships suffered by Christians under pressures from Muslims, relations between the Christian *millets* and Ottoman authorities, disputes at the Monastery of St. James in Jerusalem, the dependence of the minorities on the Ottoman government for all their decisions and appointments, the large sums they were required to pay, the oppression of the Janissaries of the religious minorities.³⁸

Some of the other authors of the period are: Martiros Ghrimets'i (d. 1683), Simēon Lehats'i (c.1584-1636?), Khach'atur Kafayets'i (c.1592-1659), Yakob Garñets'i (1618-?), Zak'aria Agulets'i (1630-1691?).

C. "CONFESSION" OF A NEW JULFAN CONVERT ABGAR 'ALĪ AKBAR ARMANĪ

During the 17th century in particular, earlier on as well, in all the histories and chronicles of the period, martyrdom was seen as the "bright" side of the Christian experience in the Worlds of Islam, and conversions

³⁵ Cowe, "Eremia", 456. His works, as listed *ibid.*, 457, are:

- *A Brief History of Ottoman Sultans* — (in verse) from Osman I (1299-1322) to Mehmed IV (1648-1687)
- *History of the fire of Constantinople of July 1660*
- *History of Istanbul (Stampōloy Patmut'iwn)* — 1661-1689 (1684?)
- *Diary (Oragrut'iwn)* — 1648-1662 — elaborated in: *Historical Chronicle (Taregrakan Patmut'iwn)* — years 1648-1690, (1693)
- *Calendrical Knowledge* (study of the relationship between Armenian, Jewish, Greek, and Latin calendars).

³⁶ Cowe, "Eremia", 462.

³⁷ There are excerpts in Eremian, "Eremia Ch'ēlēbi", 357-369, 473-479.

³⁸ Cowe, "Eremia", 460.

the dark side. However, while there is a great number of martyrologies, there are very few accounts of Armenian converts to Islam, with names and cases of the persons involved. The story of the renegade Armenian merchant from New Julfa-Isfahan, Abgar (in baptismal name) ‘Alī Akbar Armanī is a unique and precious paradigm case in the history of Persian Armenia at the time.

Abgar was born around the middle of the century and died after shortly January 27, 1708 probably at Isfahan. Being an exact contemporary of the historians of the period briefly referred to in the previous section, his story has direct bearing on their reports of conversions at the time. Fortunately, Abgar wrote a *Confession Book* (*I’tirāf Nāma*). He is thus the only source about himself. It seems that Armenian authors avoided recording actual conversions.³⁹ Completed in January 27, 1708, *I’tirāf-nāma*, or the *Confession Book* in Persian survived in a single manuscript 6487 (on 73 folios).⁴⁰ In simple yet embellished prose, Abgar the protagonist narrates his journey to Europe and back in semi-prophetic symbolism. Basically, his so-called Confession is the tale of a spiritual journey. It also incorporates the standard references and the tradition of “signs of prophethood” (*dalā’il al-nubuwwah*).⁴¹

Following visions and by the evidence of the Qur’ān, as related by him, in 1673 Abgar converted to Shī‘ī Islam, like many other converts in Eastern-Persian Armenia. This was during the incumbency of Shāh Sulaymān I (r. 1666-1694) and a certain local administrator (*kalāntar*) called Khwāja Pīrī at Isfahan. Alienated from his family and community, he embarked on a European journey. He was arrested in Venice, allegedly for his conversion. He visited Istanbul, Belgrade, Yerevan, Tabriz, and returned to Iran. As a Muslim, he married many women and had several children from them. His first wife was from Istanbul, where according to him, his Shī‘ism was not welcome. Always according to his own testimonies, his Islamic identity developed gradually. He had “miraculous dreams about ‘Alī, Imām Riḍā, the People of the House of the Prophet and ... other visions that subtly allude to the Twelve Imāms.”⁴² Abgar does not leave the impression of being someone who has solid knowledge about Islam and the basic literature. Tiburcio says that he shows “familiarity with

³⁹ Tiburcio, “Abgar”, 256-259.

⁴⁰ Central Library of the University of Tehran (Tehran M 6487, 1708; microfilm 4585). Abgar, *Confession Book*, ed. Šifatgul, Introduction, 49. Tiburcio, “Abgar”, 257-258.

⁴¹ Tiburcio, “Abgar”, 258, source: Abgar, *Confession Book*, ed. Šifatgul, 62-63.

⁴² Tiburcio, “Abgar”, 256.

practices of popular piety such as chanting and *dhikr*, references to the members of the Prophet's family. Having been in the circles of some 'ulamā' and married into their families", he probably had a chance to learn some "rudiments of scriptural knowledge." Abgar suffered some harassment from his compatriots, as expected. "At the end of his memoir, he claims to have engaged in a quasi-ritual cursing of Armenian priests."⁴³

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 257.

CHAPTER II

THE “ARMENIAN *GHURANS*” — POLEMICAL SIDE-SCRIPTS AND APPENDICES — CIRCUMSTANCES AND OBJECTIVES

A. QUR’ĀN TRANSLATIONS IN THE WEST

Alcoran was the title of the first translation of the Qur’ān into Latin in the 12th century at Toledo by the initiative of Robert of Ketton (1110-1160).¹ In all respects, this was a deliberate paraphrase. Almost four centuries later, Theodor Biliander (Zurich, 1509-1564) took the bold initiative to publish it. Often remembered as a major scholar of the Reformation, but essentially a Renaissance linguist, Bibliander, also studied Arabic. He believed that Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, Aramaic, Latin and Greek, originated from a single common language, and probably shared a single underlying faith. He argued in favor of commonalities between Christianity and Islam and commissioned a printed edition of the first Latin translation of the Qur’ān at Basel in 1543 (and 1550 in Zurich). This edition included *Doctrina Machumet*, a translation of the Arabic theological tract known as the *Book of a Thousand Questions*. Through this initiative, the Qur’ān was made available to wider audiences.² Despite the new versions and publications which followed, Robert of Ketton’s *Alcoran* remained the standard translation for Europeans until the 18th century. In many respects, it was also an implied polemical text. The objective, also that of all the treatises and commentaries of the Qur’ān and Islam, was to present the Prophet Muḥammad and his “laws” to the Christian public in negative light and inferior to Christianity.

Around the time of the printing of the first Qur’ān, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had already read this Latin version and wrote critical pamphlets on Islam, which he called “Mohammedanism.” Despite his negative disposition, he supported the publication of this first translation, because he wanted to make it available for study and critique, at least. The *Alcoran* was followed by an Italian translation four years later.³ In 1697, the bishop

¹ In Latin, Robertus Ketenensis, Robert of Ketton was an English astronomer, translator, priest and diplomat active in Spain. He translated several works of Arabic into Latin, including the first translation of the Qur’ān into any Western language.

² See Frederiks, “Introduction (CMR 6)”.

³ Matar, “The Qur’an in English Writings”, 9.

of Norwich, Humphrey Prideaux, published his influential biography of the “imposter” Muḥammad. Anti-Islamic “notions were fortified by new prejudice.”⁴

“In 1480-1481, a Sicilian Jewish convert to Christianity named Flavius Mithridates (*alias* Guillelmus Raymundus de Montecathero) translated *sūrahs* 21 [*al-Anbiyāʾ*, the Prophets] and 22 [*al-Ḥajj*, the Pilgrimage] ... into Latin for Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. They are set side by side with the Arabic text in two columns, accompanied by a commentary in a deluxe manuscript now preserved in the Vatican.”⁵ Interest in Semitic languages and fascination with the exoticism of the east could have been incentives for most translations.

Three other Latin Qurʾān translations appeared at this time with the Arabic text on the opposite pages and scholarly commentaries attached. Mithridates himself made no polemical comment nor a warning against the teachings of the Prophet. The “lack of polemical apparatus”, says Burman, was an indication that the objective was to make the scriptures of the Muslims available to scholarship, just as previously Luther had seen it necessary. However, until the mid-17th century, the first Latin translation of Robert of Ketton in the 12th century was copied prior to its first prints in 1543 and 1550. An Italian translation in 1547 became the basis for further vernacular translations into German and Dutch.⁶

Only in the mid-17th century, after André du Ryer’s readable French translation, based directly on the Arabic original was published, Robert of Ketton’s translation receded. This French version was used for further translations into English, Dutch, German and Russian.⁷ Ludovico Maracci published *Alcorani Textus Universus Arabicè et Latinè*, in two volumes, at Padua in 1698. His version of the Qurʾān included a biography of Muḥammad, with notes, and refutations of Muslim doctrines. It was the result of forty years of labor and research. In 1691, he published a refutation of the Qurʾān in Latin, titled *Prodromus Ad Refutationem Alcoran*. Maracci also had a role in editing the Arabic Bible in 1671 in three volumes.

It is at this point in the discussion of Qurʾān translations — and Armenian translations in particular during the 17th century — that the subject of their polemical aspects forcefully enters the context. Burman rightly wrote: “Christian polemic is never far removed from European Qurʾān

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ Burman, “Qurʾān”, 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

reading throughout this period, as is clear in the two other complete Latin translations. In the mid-17th century the Observant Franciscan, Dominicus Germanus of Silesia (d. 1670), produced a complete Latin translation of the Qur'ān which, though lacking an edition of the Arabic text, did offer the reader a learned commentary, much as Egidio da Viterbo's Latin Qur'ān had."⁸ He continues: "Marracci's *Alcorani textus universus* is, without doubt, a monumental scholarly achievement, but just as polemical motives intermixed with philological concerns in the work of both Iohannes Gabriel Terrolensis and Germanus of Silesia, so Marracci's careful consultation of Qur'ān commentaries was of a piece with defending Christianity and attacking Islam."⁹ Not only is the first volume of this massive work an elaborate refutation of Islam, but after the *notae* that comment on each section of the Qur'ān from a philological point of view, Marracci added an equally lengthy set of *refutationes* or *refutata* with the same purpose."¹⁰

B. THE FIRST ARMENIAN TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN FROM LATIN BY STEP'ANOS LEHATS'I IN 1680

After the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375, the *dhimmī* status was universal to all the Armenians scattered over the entire Near East. Depending on circumstances, degrees of segregation, exclusion, harsh taxation, religious persecution, conversions and loss of land and sovereignty were aspects of this condition. It predetermined their civil circumstances, and the cultural politics of their institutions, and the church in particular. To the 19th century, and everywhere, the church was in control of education and to an extent the entire intellectual culture as well. The last decades of the 17th century saw a completely novel genre in Armenian literature. It was the translation of the Qur'ān, or what I call the "Armenian *Ghurans*" with appendices and side-scripts on the margins.

Under the circumstances, the translation of the Qur'ān and its study were politically complicated matters. The first translation was delayed by a millennium. The sudden appearance of the Armenian *Ghuran* in 1680 at Ējmiatsin under the Safavids, reflected circumstances that did not exist during the previous centuries. The new factors were the awakening of national

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

consciousness, liberation struggles, generally an intellectual renaissance of sorts. The improvement of the condition of the See at Ējmathsin after 1630 following more tolerant Safavid policies, was a very significant development.

Another, and often overlooked factor, was the problem of literacy among Armenians. To the end of the 18th century and some of the next too, it was the absolute privilege of the clergy. The choice of books for translation was among their prerogatives, also an aspect of their cultural policies and practices. Obviously, to the 17th century, catholicoi and directors of the monastic centers found the translation of the Qur'ān problematic and not a necessity for the education of clergy, not even for polemical needs. The linguistic challenge and limitation among the clergy may have been a reason, but it could have been resolved. Greek, Syriac and Latin were taught, even though on elementary levels, but there is no mention of Arabic being in the curriculum of the great monastic schools. In the case of the Qur'ān, it seems that Syriac-Christian sources were deemed sufficient.

From the first translation in 1680, to the end of the 18th century, in addition to the first translation and its copy within a year, three copies of a translation from Arabic (now lost) were made. Between 1909 and 1912, three translations were published two from Arabic one from French. A third group of translations was published in 2003, 2006 and 2014, from Arabic, Persian and Turkish respectively. As much as the delay of a millennium in translating the scriptures of the Muslims into Armenian is strange, equally uncommon is the absence of commentaries and studies of the Armenian *Ghurans*.

My hypothesis, rather argument about all the Armenian *Ghurans*, from the *Ghuran* of Lehat's'i to the last in 2014 from Turkish by a convert, is that the motives were seldom scholarly or academic.

In the Awakening, and during the few decades prior to the Ottoman massacres (at the end of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century), the Armenian *Ghurans* were occasions to understand and more importantly to refute both political and cultural Islam. Prolonged periods of hardship were seen as the consequences of the Armenian condition under Islam. Liberation from Muslim rule was the objective of the early Awakening in the 17th and 18th centuries. Showing Islam and its founder in unfavorable light, thus dissociating themselves from this culture and world, was and still is part of the nationalist agenda. This limited vision of things Armenian continues to some extent, and it is one of the reasons of the near-absence of Islamic-Armenian studies in Armenian intellectual culture at present.

The next and more direct argument is that the Armenian *Ghurans* of the 17th and 18th centuries had double functions, also objectives. The first was to obtain direct information about the faith of their Muslim rulers/oppressors of all ethnicities. Knowledge of the Qur’ān was to be used as part of the arsenal for the liberation struggles. In other words, the Armenian *Ghuran* was a weapon of sorts. Previously, Grigor Tat’ewats’i placed polemics in this perspective as a “weapon”, as he put it, against the Shī’ī Muslims in his region.

The *Ghurans*, their side-scripts and appendices were polemical tools to be read and deployed by Armenians. The first copy of the *Ghuran* of Lehots’i (M3019), made within the year 1680-1681, has a hitherto undiscovered and unstudied Sequel of equal length as the *Ghuran* itself and four texts. Three of them are essentially polemical treatises.

As per the colophons of the scribe, the four texts of the *Sequel* are copied at the same time as the *Ghuran* and as a single text. The side-script of M2826, a later copy of the Arabic translation of the Qur’ān, is a deliberately planned and written comprehensive polemical treatise. Previously, the comments of Lehots’i on the margins of his *Ghuran* made a less sophisticated yet strongly polemical side-script. All the Armenian *Ghurans* of the early 20th century had biographies of the Prophet, and one of them had a polemical treatise attached. The strategy was to offer the polemical text and additional information together with the *Ghuran* as a package.

Step’anos Lehots’i, This is the book of laws of the Hagarians or the Ismaelites called Ghuran, meaning collection of precepts

In 1680, and most probably by the instruction of Catholicos Yakob IV Jughayets’i known for his flexibility, and the respect he gained at the Safavid court, Lehots’i made the first translation, but of the *Alcoran* of Robert of Ketton. Neither Lehots’i himself, nor anyone of his contemporaries and later authors provide any information about the circumstances of the first translation.¹¹

Only recently I found the missing link in the *History* of Zak’aria K’anak’erts’i. This is an intriguing account of an alleged dialogue about Christianity between Shāh Abbās II (r. 1642-1666) and Catholicos Yakob IV a typical *amīr*-priest *majlis* of sorts. According to the story, the explanations of the catholicos in response to the questions of the Shāh, convinced the latter of the legitimacy of the claims for the divinity of Christ. However, his more “orthodox” aids intervened. They discouraged and warned

¹¹ Dadoyan, “Step’anos Lehots’i”, 631-648.

him. Nevertheless, the Shāh issued a decree for the safety of the See of Ējmiatsin and allowed some freedom, according to Zak'aria. Indeed, as a result, upon his return, Yakob IV launched a broad project of reform and renovation.¹² The translation of the Qur'ān was most probably by his initiative. Feeling somehow more secure in his position, Yakob IV may have wanted to learn about Islam. He must have seen the moment appropriate and the task of translating the Qur'ān a necessity. Probably not finding anyone fluent enough in Classical Arabic, he asked Lehats'i, who did what he could. He translated a Qur'ān he could read, and it happened to be not the Qur'ān but Robert of Ketton's *Alcoran* of the "Saracens" in Latin.

Within a year, as mentioned, in 1681, a copy was made of this first *Ghuran*, with an attachment, rather a *Sequel*, as I call it, of equal length, containing four hitherto unknown and unstudied anonymous texts about and against Islam and Mahmet. The *Sequel* is as important, if not more important than the copy of the *Ghuran* of Lehats'i, as I shall discuss in detail below.

At the Matenadaran, there is a large collection of 120 Qur'ān manuscripts and fragments in Arabic. They are mostly prepared in Iran and Turkey between the 17th and 19th centuries. Many of these Qur'āns have attachments of great relevance. There are versions of the alleged oaths of the Prophet, oaths of 'Alī" and 'Umar. Recently a trilingual book was published by the Matenadaran about this collection.¹³

The first Armenian *Ghuran*, in the handwriting of Lehats'i himself, is preserved in M934. The first part was damaged and rewritten at a later period. "Stepa'nnos Vardapet" was a native of Lvov, Poland and knew Latin. Despite the first impression, it should not be surprising to see the first publication of the Qur'ān in Latin (printed in Basel, 1543) find its way to Ējmiatsin, probably by New Julfan merchants.

Step'anos came from a prosperous Armenian family of Lvov. In his hometown, he had a solid education in elite schools, he knew Latin well, and learned Armenian in his youth. In order to avoid pressures to convert the community to Catholicism, his family decided to send their son away. Nicknamed Lehats'i or Polish, (after *Lehastan* or Poland) and Ilovats'i (or from the city of Ilova/Lvov), Step'anos joined the Brotherhood of Ējmiatsin in his twenties. He was ordained celibate priest before 1652, and became a *vardapet* (doctor of divinity) between 1653 and 1656.¹⁴ He died in 1689.

¹² K'anakerts'i, *History*, vol. I, 59-61.

¹³ *Catalogue of the Qur'ān Manuscripts of the Matenadaran*.

¹⁴ Akinian, "Step'anos Lehats'i", 62.

Arak'el Dawrizhets'i, a senior colleague, is his only biographer. The translation of the *Ghuran* is not mentioned in the passage, because it was made in 1680, ten years after the death of Dawrizhets'i in 1670. The following is the passage about Step'anos in my translation:

Let me tell you about the studiousness of a virtuous man. He was an Armenian from the metropolis of Ilova, from a wealthy family and the son of pious parents. He went to the best schools, studied in the Polish language and learned Latin and the arts of grammar and rhetoric. At the time, Bishop Nikol put pressure on the Armenians [to convert to Catholicism] exposing them to dangers. Out of their piety and orthodoxy, the parents of Step'annos sent him away to the Holy See of Ējmiatsin, during the incumbency of Catholicos P'ilippos [I, Aghbaketsi, r. 1633-1655]]. As soon as he arrived there, he began learning the Armenian language and literature, studied the Psalms, the *sharakans* [hymns] and other ecclesiastical subjects. He could read the Bible [in Armenian] and the twelve vardapets and philosophers [?]. Previously he knew only Latin, the language and literature of the Ilovians, he now knew Armenian and could compare the two and train himself to think and talk in both [languages]. He was very keen and studious, and far superior to his colleagues. He was by nature sharp, quick in his apprehension and capable of retaining new knowledge. He was also an avid reader, pure in conduct and a decent person. All the vardapets witnessed [in his favor] before Catholicos P'ilibbos about his knowledge and [exemplary] conduct. Already aware of the worthiness [of Step'anos], he [P'ilibbos] ordained him celibate priest and soon granted him doctoral authority [made him a vardapet]. He continued to study and train himself in sciences and ethics, and by the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit, he translated four books from Latin into Armenian. One of these is the history of Eusebius [History of Eusebius of Caesarea] but not all of it, only those parts that concern Jerusalem and the wars of the Jews in six volumes. The second is the book of Dionysius the Areopagite [Epistles of Dionysius the Areopagite]. While the previous translation [of this book] by Step'annos Siwnets'i was cryptic and hard to comprehend, that of Step'annos Lehats'i, which though the same [text] was much easier to follow, because interpretation [?] is always easier [to follow?]. The third book is the Book of Causes, or Book of Beyond-Naturals [*ver zbnakans*, or metaphysics], which is theology, in 36 booklets [*Book of Causes* or *Liber de Causis*, once attributed to Aristotle, now to Pseudo-Aristotle, mostly taken from *Elements of Theology* by Proclus]. The fourth is a book of parables to instruct everyone in good conduct and behavior, in Latin it is called *Mirror of Ethics*. The same title was kept in the Armenian as *Hayeli Varuts'*. This is a book of very pleasant and interesting content. This is all I have concerning his [Lehats'i] contribution to the church.¹⁵

The *Ghuran* of Lehats'i is not published. In this study, the discussion is based on Manuscript 934 of Matenadaran (M934). It is preserved by

¹⁵ Arak'el Dawrizhets'i, *Book of Stories* (1669), 398-400.

seven manuscripts and in five collections.¹⁶ New Julfa-Isfahan seems to be central to the copies of the *Ghuran* of Lehats'i. The first was made within the same year in 1680-81, at Isfahan. With the exception of the Jerusalem Ms 2782, the remaining five (M3019, New Julfa Ms 361, Bzommar Ms 649, Vienna Ms 575 and Ms 576) were made at New Julfa-Isfahan. All the manuscripts have the same title as the original, different epithets are added to Lehats'i's name and the number of the *sūrahs* (*azoaras*) vary. *Azoara* is borrowed from the Latin version, it is a distorted transliteration of the Arabic *al-sūrah*, pronounced as *as-sūrah*.

There is no doubt that with no prior knowledge about the Qur'ān, Step'anos was completely confident about the authenticity of the first printed version of Robert of Ketton's Latin Qur'ān. Also, he had no way of knowing the difference between the Qur'ān and the Latin version. He showed no knowledge of Islam and Islamic religious culture in general. Furthermore, he did not seem to be familiar with the apologetical-polemical works of Grigor Tat'ewats'i in particular, and references to Islam by earlier Armenian authors, nor by Syrian Christians. He had, or was given, a copy of *Alcoran* and made a literal and meticulous translation.¹⁷

The subtitle of the Latin Qur'ān is: Book of laws of the Saracens called *Alcoran*, meaning collection of precepts of Machumet pseudo-prophet [*Libro Legis Saracenum, quem Alcoran, id est, Collectionem præceptorū, quæ Machumet pseudopropheta*].

Similarly, the title of Lehats'i's *Ghuran* is: *This is the book of laws of the Hagarians or the Ismaelites called Ghuran, meaning collection of precepts* [*Ays ē girk' orinats' hagarats'wots' kam ismaēlats'wots' or koch'i ghuran, aysink'n havak'umn patwiranats'*]. Lehats'i replaced the *Saracens*

¹⁶ M934 and M3019 of Matenadaran of Armenia; Ms 2782 of St. Yakob Monastery of Jerusalem; Ms 649 of the Armenian Catholic Monastery of Bzommar, Lebanon; Ms 575 and Ms 576 of the Mkhitarist Library of Vienna; Ms 361 of the Monastery of the Holy Savior of New Julfa-Isfahan. In addition, there is a mystery manuscript discussed in some detail in an article by its owner M.Y. Sēt'iants' (in 1924); Bogharian, *Mother Index of Saint Yakob*, vol. VIII, 404-405; Minassiants', *Index New Julfa*, 53; Akinian and Oskian, *Index of the Armenian Manuscripts*, 255. Oskian, *Index of Manuscripts*, vol. I, Bk. C, 8-10.

¹⁷ The original text is Ms 1162 at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal by Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny and has a great number of annotations. It was published in 1543, four centuries later in Basel, Switzerland, by Theodor Biliander, who contracted with Johannes Oporinus, a scholarly printer at Basel. This first publication was initiated by Martin Luther, who found a complete manuscript copy of Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'ān in Wittenberg, and more importantly someone to publish it. Despite the secrecy, the edition was seized, and the printer arrested, but released, and the book was issued in 1543, on condition that publisher and location would not appear on the title page. It was sold mainly from Wittenberg and provided with a preface by Luther with a very elaborate title.

by *Hagarians*, or the *Ismaelites*, the two terms in which Armenians referred to the Muslims in medieval literature. “Precept” is correctly translated as *patwiran* or commandment/law. For obvious reasons, Lehots’i omitted the “Muḥammad the false prophet.”

In form, sequence, relative length of the 124 *sūrahs* (instead of the 114 of the Qur’ān), the Armenian translation is identical with the Latin text. Lehots’i followed it very closely. Thus, on page 94 of the first Latin print, just after the 28th *azoara*, there is a centered sentence that marks the middle of the text, “*Medium Alcorani.*” Similarly, on page 153b, after *azoara* or *glukh* (chapter) 28 of his *Ghuran*, Lehots’i wrote in the middle of the page: “Half of the *Ghuran* is completed” (կեսն Ղուրանին կատարեցաւ). He also translated the note at the end of the Latin *Alcoran*: “At the end of the Arabic text there are some verses that are not translated, I do not know the reason.” Lehots’i wrote: “At the end of the *Ghuran* there are some verses (*otanawork*’), which are not translated in the Latin [version], I do not know the reason.”

The original manuscript M934 is in satisfactory condition. It has 256 sheets (21×12.5 cms). The text is on folios 2a-285b (approximately 570 folios) The first third of the manuscript (fols 10a-128b) seems to have been damaged and was copied by a scribe on white paper. In this part, the *azoaras* are translated as *glukh* or chapter, they start with a title in red ink, which consists of its number and the number of the verses or *āyahs* (*hamar*). The verses are marked with an initial red letter, the number of the verse appears in the margin. The first part, that is a later copy, ends at *āyah* 17 of *sūrah* 23. After some missing pages, that are coarsely cut out, the text resumes in Lehots’i’s handwriting on folio 129a, at verse 3 of *azoara* 24, and on yellowish smooth paper. The *azoaras* are just numbers at the center of the line, the number of the verses/*āyahs* are on the margins. No red letters are used in this part. Lehots’i has no colophon but two paragraphs on the last page, on folio 285b. The first concerns the missing verses at the end of the Qur’ān, as mentioned previously. The last paragraph is a modest signature of sorts:

The Ghuran is [now] completed [it is] translated from Latin into Armenian by the hand of Lehots’i [Polish in vernacular] philologist Step’annos. [Կատարեցաւ Ղուրան թարգմանեալ ի լատինացոց բարբառոյ ի հայոց լեզու ձեռամբ Լէհցի Ստեփաննոս քանասիրի:]

The list of contents, which has caused some controversy among few manuscript scholars, is on six folios at the beginning fols 2a-4b. It has the

following heading, literally: “This is the list of the contents of the *Ghuran*, which are *suras*, 124 in all.” The Qur’ān has 114 *sūrahs*, the error comes from the Latin version which in turn has 124 “*azoara*”s (probably because of an “editorial” intervention by R. of Ketton). The list of contents is in the handwriting of a third person. It is very different from that of the scribe of the first part, as well as that of Lehots’i, which starts on folio 129a. The list is interrupted in the middle of folio 4a at *sūrah* 67, obviously with an intention to continue, because the grids for new paragraphs are drawn to the bottom of the page, and eleven pages are left blank, showing that more was expected to be added but was not.

In my opinion, the third person who wrote the list of contents is the missing link to resolve the confusion related to the discrepancies between the list of contents and the text. Unlike the copier of the first part — who seems to be just an ordinary scribe — and Lehots’i himself, the writer of the list not only knows perfect Arabic, but has a copy of the Qur’ān in Arabic before him. The sixty-seven *sūrahs* are accurate translations, including the number of the *āyahs* or the verses in each *sūrah*. He has also provided accurate Armenian translations of the Arabic titles, such as *al-nisa’*, into *kanayk’* in Armenian, *tawbah* into *zghjal*, so on. However, he has kept the error in the title concerning the number of the *sūrahs*, probably because he himself was looking at the Qur’ān for the first time and did not bother to check the actual number of the *sūrahs*.

In addition to being the first, what makes the *Ghuran* of Lehots’i a very significant text are his 215 notifications or comments on the text. Together, they constitute a virtual polemical side-script. In order to present a coherent and first-hand text, also, instead of interpreting his position toward Mahmet and his “laws”, I have made a selection of 70 of the more significant comments. As always in this study, my translation is strictly and deliberately literal. I have maintained the idiomatic forms, and the original format, but written the proper names in capital, while in the text all words (even God sometimes) are in minuscule. As mentioned, the numbers of the *azoaras* and the verses in Lehots’i’s *Ghuran* follow the Latin original and not the Qur’ān itself.

The comments on the margins are classified under six categories: Reader’s notes; False (*sut*) claims of prophethood; The character and conduct of Mahmet; The *Ghuran*; Mahmet’s ideas and comments about the Christians; Apologetical-polemical comments. On the list below, the first number is that of the *azoara* (*sūrah*), the next is the folio page number, then the manuscript page.

1. *Reader's notes* — These have no relevance to this study.
2. “*False*” (*sut*) *claims of prophethood*
27. 141b/282 — He says ... that God snatched him from Madena and took him to Jerusalem, and then to heaven, and this is false.¹⁸
28. 148b/296 — If he is prophet, why could he not understand a small matter such as this.¹⁹
40. 200b/400 — Who will verify your words, if they are true, do not praise yourself.²⁰
57. 243a/485 — Why God did not give Mahmēt the power to comprehend the human heart.²¹
62. 250b/500 — He swears that he was taken to Heaven where he learned these ideas, look at this falsity.²²
64. 251b/502 — He relates that he cut the moon into two and then restored it, why then he repeatedly says that he was not sent to work miracles.²³
62. 250a/499 — He speaks of how he rose to Heaven.²⁴
78. 268a/535 — He swears by the pen and the written word that he is divine messenger and not a magus.²⁵
82. 271b/542 — Look at the falsity, he claims that previously he used to rise to Heaven, but the latter closed before him.²⁶
92. 278a/555 — He swears that his teaching is certain/true.²⁷
3. *The personality and conduct of Mahmēt*
34. 177b/354 — Do not swear recklessly.²⁸
36. 186a/371 — He praises himself, and this is not acceptable.²⁹
39. 197a/393 — While arguing, it is necessary to maintain one's modesty.³⁰

¹⁸ Իւր համար ասէ թէ Աստուած զնա ի Մատենու յերուսաղէմ յափետակեաց և անտի յերկինս որ է սուտ:

¹⁹ Եթէ մարգարէ էր, վասն է՞ր ոչ կարաց իմանալ զայնչափ թերև իր:.

²⁰ Բանք ով վկայեն վասն քո, եթէ համարիտ են, դու մի գովեր զքեզ:.

²¹ Վասն է՞ր ոչ տուալ յԱստուած տեսանել զսիրտ մարդկան:

²² Երդնու թէ յերկին յափետակեցաւ և ընդ ուսաւ գիտորհուրդս զայստսիկ, տես զստութիւն:

²³ Ատասպելաբանէ որպէս թէ զլուսին յերկուս բաժանեալ վերստին նորոգեալ ապա վասն է՞ր բազում անգամ ասէ թէ ոչ առաքեցայ սփանչելիս առնել:

²⁴ Որպէս զինքն ասէ համբարձեալ յերկինս:

²⁵ Երդնու ի գրիչ և ի գրեալն թէ աստուածային պատգամաւոր է և ոչ մոգ:

²⁶ Տես զստութիւն, իբրև թէ յառաջ սովոր էր յելանել յերկինս, յետոյ նմա փակեցաւ:

²⁷ Երդնու թէ իր ուսումն ստոյգ է:

²⁸ Մի վայրաբար երդնուլ:

²⁹ Զինքն գովէ որ ոչ է ընդունելի:

³⁰ Ի հակաճանդակ համեստութիւն պահելի է:

43. 205a/409 — What you do not wish to happen to you, do not do unto others, you Mahmēt why do you covet the women of others.³¹
43. 205b/410 — Let this be known about Mariam, the wife of the king of the Assyrians, whom he loved very much, corrupted her and then took her in marriage, look at the deeds of the prophet³²
46. 212a/423 — He only praises himself and the *Ghuran*, look who of all the prophets has done so?³³
58. 244a/487 — He threatened those Arabs, who refused to be soldiers.³⁴
59. 245a/489 — Mahmēt had a shaved head like the monks.³⁵
60. 247b/494 — It is a duty to instruct, not to violate.³⁶
72. 262b/524 — Mahmēt was from the illiterate folk.³⁷
80. 270a/539 — Look at the lasciviousness of Mahmēt.³⁸
116. 284b/568 — The men of *Koraks* [Quraysh], of whose tribe was Mahmēt.³⁹

4. *The Ghuran*

15. 72b/144 — Look at the confusion in words, he speaks (about himself) in the plural then in the singular.⁴⁰
36. 186a/371 — Scolds the poets, while he wrote the *Ghuran* in rhyme.⁴¹
39. 198a/395 — He speaks of whatever comes to mind and without order, how would his prophethood show.⁴²
39. 195a/389 — He praises the *Ghuran*.⁴³
39. 196b/392 — So many times he said the same thing about sodomites.⁴⁴
45. 211b/422 — He calls the *Ghuran* a legacy for the good man.⁴⁵
46. 214b/428 — Look, he lies again, for he wrote the *Ghuran* in rhyme.⁴⁶

³¹ Ջոր ոչ կամիս լինել քեզ այլում մի առներ, ապա դու Մահմէտ վասն է՞ր այլոց կանանց ցանկաս:

³² Այս իմացեալ լինի վասն Մարիամու, կնոջ արքային ստորոց, զոր յոյժ սիրէր և զնա պղծեաց և յետոյ կնուրեան էառ, տես զգործ մարգարէին:

³³ Միայն զինքն և Ղուրանն զովէ, տես քէ ոք ի մարգարէիցն այսպէս արար:

³⁴ Սպառնայ արաբացոց որք հրաժարին ի զինուորութենէ:

³⁵ Մահմէտ գերծեալ էր որ արեղայ:

³⁶ Զմարդիկ ուսուցանել պարտ է և ոչ բռնադատել:

³⁷ Մահմէտ էր ի տգէտ զրոց ազգէն:

³⁸ Տես ի պղծաւորութիւն Մահմէտի:

³⁹ Մարդիկ Կորակսեայ, յորոց ցեղէն էր Մահմէտ:

⁴⁰ Տես, այլայլութիւն բանին, զի նախ յոգնակի ապա եզակի ասէ:

⁴¹ Զֆերթոյն պարսաւ և ինքն ռախ գրեաց զՂուրան:

⁴² Ինչ միտս եկն սաաց, ուստի երևին իր մարգարէութիւն:

⁴³ զՂուրանն զովէ:

⁴⁴ Քանիցս անգամ զնոյն բան յիշեաց վասն Սոտոմայեցոց:

⁴⁵ զՂուրանն կոչէ ժառանգութիւն բարի մարդկան:

⁴⁶ Տես, զի սուտ ասէ բանզի Ղուրան ռտանաւոր գրեաց:

50. 224b/448 — Swears by the *Ghuran* that it was given to him by God.⁴⁷
50. 226b/452 — So many times he tells the same fable.⁴⁸
52. 232a/463 — Look at his unstable mind and ways, he speaks of nothing in rational order.⁴⁹
54. 237a/473 — He says that the *Ghuran* was given in a night of redemption.⁵⁰
55. 239b/478 — He says that the *Ghuran* was written by the hand of God.⁵¹
56. 241b/482 — [He says that] the demons were converted by the *Ghuran*, what can be falsier.⁵²
61. 248a/495 — If the *Ghuran* is by God, how does it become him to swear/curse like this.⁵³
64. 252b/504 — He told so many stories about the camel until one is bored of hearing them.⁵⁴
107. 283a/565 — He calls the night, in which, he says, the angels came to him and brought the *Ghuran*, is the night of *aghk'ider* [*laylat al-qadr*].⁵⁵

5. *Mahmet's comments/opinions of the Christians*

10. 59b/118 — He gave the Christians an oath.⁵⁶
- 199b/398 — He says that the followers of the *Ghuran* must not converse with unbelievers.⁵⁷
71. 262b/524 — He calls the Christians white-clad.⁵⁸

6. *Apologetical-polemical comments*

4. 32b/63 — He insults marriage.⁵⁹
15. 70b/140 — Look, he speaks of God's Spirit.⁶⁰

⁴⁷ Ի Ղուրան երդնու որ Աստուծոյ տուեալ է ի նմա:

⁴⁸ Քանիցս անգամ նոյն առասպելաբանութիւն դնէ:

⁴⁹ Տես անհաստատ և զբանս սորա, զի ոչինչ ըստ կարգի խօսի:

⁵⁰ Ասէ թէ Ղուրան փրկաւէտ գիշերի ետաւ:

⁵¹ Ասէ թէ Ղուրան Աստուծոյ ձեռամբ գրեալ է:

⁵² Դեւս ի ձեռն Ղուրանին դարձան, քան զայս ինչ առաւել սուտ:

⁵³ Եթէ յԱստուած է Ղուրան, զիարդ վայելեցուցոյ յայսպիսի երդնուլ:

⁵⁴ Այսքան պատմութիւն վասն ուղտոյ ասաց, մինչև մարդ զգուի լսելով:

⁵⁵ Զգիշեր աղբիւտեր կոչէ, յորում ասէր թէ հրեշտակք առ նա եկին և զՂուրան բերին:

⁵⁶ Քրիստոնէից ուխտ եւէտ:

⁵⁷ Ասէ թէ առակերտաց Ղուրանի ոչ պարտ է լինել խօսակից անհաւատից:

⁵⁸ Զքրիստոնէայս կոչէ սպիտակագեւտ:

⁵⁹ Զամուսնութիւն նախատէ:

⁶⁰ Տես, զի հոգի Աստուծոյ ասէ:

29. 154a/307 — He speaks of tidings to Mariam contrary to the Bible.⁶¹
31. 166b/332 — He wishes to speak of the Virgin Mariam but impiously.⁶²
32. 168a/335 — He says that Christians corrupted the Bible, and that is false.⁶³
33. 174a/347 — Mindlessly he says that God has no son, as many did, and there was conflict among them.⁶⁴
35. 181a/361 — It is good deeds that make man blessed and worthy of the Paradise.⁶⁵
36. 181b/362 — God does not impose faith by force.⁶⁶
38. 192b/384 — He speaks of one god but refers to many and places himself as an associate to him, look at this mindlessness.⁶⁷
38. 193a/385 — We have the Book of Moses, those of the prophets, and the Bible, but they [Muslims] do not accept us.⁶⁸
42. 202b/404 — Look at this heretic, he places the soul of man in God's Spirit.⁶⁹
43. 206b/412 — Look at the laws of divorcing women, they do not correspond to those of Moses and to human nature.⁷⁰
47. 215b/430 — He speaks of the passions of the body and promises the same in paradise, without ever thinking of the spiritual wonders of the heavenly kingdom.⁷¹
49. 223a/445 — His opinion of the soul is impious.⁷²
49. 224a/447 — The holy apostle Paul teaches differently.⁷³
49. 224b/448 — A thousand times he said that only God is judge, he now calls the angels judges.⁷⁴
50. 227a/453 — He calls the book of Moses the legacy of the people of Israel.⁷⁵

⁶¹ Յաղագս Մարիամու աւետեաց պատմէ ընդդէմ Աւետարանին:

⁶² Վասն Մարիամու քանի անել բայց ամբարշտօրէն:

⁶³ Ասէ թէ քրիստոնեայք փոխեցին զԱւետարան, որ սուտ է:

⁶⁴ Անամօրաբար ասէ թէ Աստուած ոչ ունի որդի, զի այսպէս բազումս ասէին և խռովութիւն լինել ի մէջ նոցա:

⁶⁵ Բարի գործք զմարդ երանելի առնեն և ժառանգ դրախտի:

⁶⁶ Աստուած ոչ բռնութեամբ ածէ ի հաւատս:

⁶⁷ Աստուած մէկ և բազմաորակի խօսի, և զինքն գործակից դնէ, տես անամօրութիւն:

⁶⁸ Մենք ունինք զգիրս Մովսէսի և Մարգարէից և զԱւետարան բայց ոչ ընդունին:

⁶⁹ Տես զհերձուածն որ ասէ զհոգի մարդոյ ի հոգոյն Աստուծոյ դնէ:

⁷⁰ Տես, զորէնս արծակելոյ զկանայս որք ոչ Մովսէսի և ոչ մարդկային բնութեան համաձայնին:

⁷¹ Որում ցանկայր ի մարմնի ասա, զնոյն խոստանայ և ի դրախտին, ոչ երբեք խորհելով զհոգեւոր զմայլումն զերկնից արեայութեան:

⁷² Յաղագս հոգւոյ այս կարծիքս ամբարիշտ է:

⁷³ Այլ կերպ ուսուցանէ սուրբ առաքեալն Պօղոս:

⁷⁴ Բազում անգամ ասաց թէ Աստուած միայն դատէ, իսկ այժմ զհրեւոսակ դատաւորս կոչէ:

⁷⁵ Զգիրս Մովսէսի կոչէ ժառանգութիւն Իսրայէլի:

53. 236a/471 — Those who do not believe in Christ will be punished⁷⁶
 57. 242a/483 — There is a law of war against the unbelievers.⁷⁷
 57. 242a/483 — The reward of soldiery is Paradise.⁷⁸
 58. 243b/486 — Look at the arrogance, he promises salvation even for future sins.⁷⁹
 61. 248a/495 — Being good is bliss itself.⁸⁰
 65. 254a/507 — They will still pursue the passions at paradise, let this bliss perish.⁸¹
 65. 254a/507 — Everything is false and contrary to divine Scriptures.⁸²
 67. 257a/513 — He confirms/accepts fate/destiny.⁸³
 71. 262a/523 — Christ predicted the coming of Mahmēt, indeed he said that there will come false prophets.⁸⁴
 76. 266b/532 — He praises the holy Virgin Mariam.⁸⁵
 86. 274b/548 — Look at the wine that God will provide in Paradise, how can Muslims say that Mahmēt prohibited wine.⁸⁶
 122. 285a/569 — Never stops denying the Son of God.⁸⁷

C. THE FIRST COPY OF LEHATS'I'S *GHURAN* — OCCASION AND PLATFORM
 FOR A *SEQUEL* OF FOUR TEXTS (M3019, DATED 1681)

While studying the first a copy of Lehats'i's *Ghuran* (M3019), made within a year after the translation, by sheer curiosity I continued reading the rest of this 840 page manuscript. To my great surprise, the *Ghuran* was followed by the largest, ever and since, collection of narratives, and systematic polemical-apologetical texts related to Islam, the Prophet and other themes. Both the copy of the *Ghuran* and what may be called a *Sequel* of four texts (almost 400 pages) were written at New Julfa-Isfahan, by the same scribe, who on three occasions presents himself as “*znak'ea*

⁷⁶ Որք ոչ հաւատան Քրիստոսի պատժեցին:

⁷⁷ Օրէնք պատերազմելոյ ընդդէմ անհաւատից:

⁷⁸ Վարձն զինուորութեան դրախտն:

⁷⁹ Տես յանդգնութեան, ապառնի մեղաց ևս թողութիւն իւր խոստանայ:

⁸⁰ Գոյն բարի է նոյն ինքն երանութիւն:

⁸¹ Տակաւին ի դրախտին պորտոյ և ցանկութեան ծառայեցեն, կորիցէ այսպիսի երանութիւն:

⁸² Ամենայն ինչ սուտ և ներհակ աստուածային գրոյն:

⁸³ Հակատագիր հաստատէ:

⁸⁴ Քրիստոս գուշակեց թէ Մահմէտ գալոց է, արդարև ասաց թէ եկեացին սուտ մարգարէի:

⁸⁵ զՍուրբ Կոյսն Մարիամ գովէ:

⁸⁶ Տես զինին որ Աստուած ի դրախտին տայ, զիւրոյ ասեն մահմետականք թէ զգինին հարամ արարեր Մահմէտն:

⁸⁷ Ոչ դադարի ուրանալոյ Որդին Աստուծոյ:

[decorated one] Amir Sargis *Dpir* [secretary/scribe] of Shosh-Isfahan.” The first two of the colophons are at the end of his copy of Lehots‘i’s *Ghuran*:

[Here] is completed the Ghuran translated from the Latin language into the Armenian language by Polish [Lehots‘i] Step‘annos wise vardapet and philologist, may God reward him.

And [may God also reward] the scribe of this [text] *znak‘ea* mere *Dpir Amir* Sargis. I ask God on your behalf, that if you happen to see or read it, or think about, do not learn any of its falsities, but go in the way of truth, embrace Christ our lord, who is blessed by the Father and the Holy Spirit to eternity, Amen.⁸⁸

The *Sequel* is basically a collection of texts, with no table of contents, authors, dates and provenance. The titles are:

1. Teachings/doctrines of Mahmet of the extremely honorable and acceptable *mahmetakank‘*, which a certain Arab wrote (30 pages, fols 231b-246b/pp. 466-496)
2. The vision of Mahmet (3 pages, 246b-248a/496-499)
3. Refutation/disputation/contradiction of the ideas/words of the *Ghuran* (200 pages, 249a-347a/501-700)
4. Story of Mahmet, and counterarguments against Mahmet (140 pages, 347b-417a/700-840). At the end, there are two brief sections: “Concerning the visit of Mahmet [Umayyad Muḥammad Ibn Marwān] to the holy bishop of R̥shtunik‘ [Catholicos Sahak III]; “Repentance of Vard R̥shtuni [son of T‘ēodoros R̥shtuni]

With one exception, the authors of these texts are Christian and probably Armenian, or at least translators of certain texts into Armenian. Sargis the scribe is not the author of any of them, he has a colophon at the end, and on few occasions, he apologizes for “missing sheets” in his “original copy” (*orinak*). His handwriting is good but because of the poor quality of the paper and the ink, the writing is diffused into the other side of the sheet, sometimes making the reading impossible. He has maintained the

⁸⁸ *Sequel*, M3019, fol. 231a/465. The two colophons by the scribe Sargis:

- Կատարեցաւ Ղուրան թարգմանեալ ի լատինացոց թարգմտոյ ի հայոց լեզու ձեռամբ լեհացի Ստեփաննոս Վարդապետի իմաստնոյ և բանասիրի Տէր Աստուած վարձաւատոյց լինի:
- Եւ զգծողն սմա զնաբաւ սոսկական դպիր Ամիր Սարգիս յիշեալ ի Տէր ձեռնջ մաղրեմ. Որք հանդիպողք լինիք կամ սակս կարդալոյ կամ զաղափարելոյ ոչ վասն ուսանելոյ ինչ ի նմանէ այլ սորին ստուրին զնամարիտն ընթացցուք ի Քրիստոսի Տէր մեր հայեացուք որ է օրհնեալ ընդ Չօր և ամենասուրբ Հոգոյն անեղբաւ յաւիտենիւ, Ամէն:

same style of writing and format in his copy of the *Ghuran* and the *Sequel*. The *sūrahs* or *glukhs* (chapter), the parts or “volumes” (*hator*), “sections” (*mas*) and the first letters of the paragraphs are in poor quality red ink, which is absorbed in the paper and sometimes lost the script. Almost 100 pages of the 840 pages of M3019 are completely damaged. Another group of 100 pages is blurred and barely legible. I have tried my best and made a great deal of time and effort to come up with the following account of this invaluable mystery manuscript.

Text 1: fols 231b-246b/466-496 (30 pages) *Teachings/doctrines of Mahmet of the extremely honorable and acceptable Muslims, that a certain Arab wrote [Vardapetut'wn Mahmedi yuyzh patweli yew ěduneli mahmeta-kanats' zor omn arap greats']*.

In the Armenian literary tradition at least, this is a hitherto unknown dialogue between the Prophet Muḥammad and the heads of the Jewish tribes at Medīnah, as per the story. In the traditional question-answer format, it is a comprehensive apology for Islam as a superior and more enlightened faith than Judaism. Sitting with his closest Medīnan entourage and encouraged and supported by the divine angel Gabriel/Jibrīl, Mahmet is a Socratic but more pedantic figure. He is referred to as “messenger” (*patgamawor*) [of God].⁸⁹ Predictably, the location is Mahmet’s “hometown of Yasrib” (Yathrib, Medīnah, an error found in many Armenian texts). It must be during the early periods of the *Hijrah* to the city. The interrogators are four “princes” (*ishkhan*) or sages of the Jewish tribes of the city, led by a certain “Abdiu Ibn Saghon.” The meeting ends with the total satisfaction, persuasion and subsequent conversion of the Jews.

The themes range from cosmological, to biblical and social-moral matters, such as the formation of the universe, the expulsion of Adam from Heaven, the relationship of Abraham to the Virgin Mary, life and death of Moses, the reasons for the prohibition of wine and pork. The text is written in a direct and lively question-answer format. Specific questions by Abdiu are followed by elaborate answers by Mahmet, punctuated by interjections by his interrogator for more details, objections, and/or additional information. There are occasional notes by the scribe Sargis on the margins, most are reader’s notes. Some, however, are comments on the text,

⁸⁹ *Sequel*, fol. 231b/466.

like the following: “Look at the myth about the sun”,⁹⁰ or, “Look at the inappropriate fable-making.”⁹¹ The dialogue ends as follows:

Now the Jew Abdiu raised his voice and said, you conquered/overcame [me] brave Mahmet, rise and accept me as witness/convert. I believe and see/understand that there are no other gods but one God omnipotent, and verily you are His messenger and Prophet.⁹²

[A note by the scribe Sargis] Completed [are] the teachings of Mahmet full of falsities and fable-making.⁹³

Text 2: fols 246b-248a/496-499 (3 pages). *The vision of Mahmet which he invented and told with myth-making* [*Tesil mahmeti zor ink'n hnareats' ew patmeats' li araspelabanut'eamb*].

While the text is the familiar narrative about the Prophet's ascent to Heaven, the title seems to be added by the scribe, or a non-Muslim. “In the *Ghuran*”, begins this text, “chapter 27 [*glukh* or *sūrah*, must be 17, not 27] ... which is called “Children of Israel”, it is written: “Glorified be he who carried his servant by night from the place of worship of the house of Mak'ay to the remote place of worship which is the house of Holy Jerusalem.”⁹⁴

After this introduction, the writer never refers to “Chapter 27.” Enters Mahmet, surrounded by some people at Mecca, and begins his account of the journey into the highest heavens led by the angel Gabriel. The other characters in the “vision” are the talking-horse/mount *Ēlimbarak* (*al-Burāq*), ancient prophets, angels, Moses and God, in whose presence Mahmet rises. After much debate, eventually the matter of the number of daily prayers is settled by the advice of Moses. The narrative ends as follows:

Extending his arm to his neck, all the way to his back, tells Mahmet, God told me “behold we gave you the measure of prayers for you and your people.” When I descended into the fourth heaven Moses gave me advice to

⁹⁰ Տես առասպելին յաղագս արեգակն: *Ibid.*, fol. 231b/466.

⁹¹ Տես անպատեանն առասպելաբանութիւն: *Ibid.*, fol. 243b/490.

⁹² Արդ իրեայն Ապտիու գծայն եբարծ և ասաց, յաղբեցիր ի աջդ Մահմէտ, կաց և զիս խոստովանող ընկալ, ես հաւատամ և տեսանեմ զի ոչ են աստուածք այլ մի Աստուած ամենակարող որոյ դու ես հեմարտապէս պատգամաւոր և մարգարէ: *Ibid.*, fol. 246a/496.

⁹³ Կատարեցաւ վարդապետութիւն Մահմէտի լի ստուրեամբ և առասպելաբանութեամբ: *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Ղուրանին մէջն զլուի Ինճ [27] որ կոչի Որդուցն Իսրայէլի այսպէս է գրեալ թէ գոհութիւն Աստուծոյ որ փոխեալ զծառայն իւր միում զիւրի յաղօրարանէն տանն Մաքէնայ մինչև ի հեռաւոր աղօրարանն որ է Սուրբ Երուսաղէմ: *Ibid.*, fol. 246b/499.

lighten/reduce the number of prayers for the people could not tolerate it. And finally, the number of prayers was five ... I returned to the mount Ēlimbarak, sat on it and came [back] to Mak'ay.⁹⁵ [The author of the “Vision of Mahmet” takes over and concludes] When Mahmet told this, a thousand people, who followed his laws, were powerless and left. When some [of them] asked him “why don't you not ascend the heavens [again] in daytime, for us to see how the angels welcome you?” He then said that he does not have the capacity [to do so] and said that “I am only a mere man from amongst all men [but] a messenger of God.”⁹⁶

Sargis the scribe considered this text part of the *Ghuran*. He ended it by two colophons:

O reader, look how he is revealed/caught by his words, the so-called prophet. You should be a follower of truth [and] God [*astust*, God in some Eastern Armenian dialects] will be a weapon/shield for your assistance and be a witness against them.

This *Ghuran* was written by the hand of a certain *znakea* mere Amir Sargis Dpir ... at the city of Shosh which is Ēsbahan [Isfahan] in the year ԻՇԽԴՄ [1680/1].⁹⁷

Text 3: fols 249a-397a/501-700 (200 pages). *Refutation/disputation/contradiction of the ideas/words of the Ghuran* [Ēnddimadardzut'awn banits' Ghuranin].

This *Refutation/contradiction* (Ēnddimadardzut'awn), as it is titled, is a hitherto unknown collection of apologetic-polemical texts on two hundred pages. It is a most precious trove for Islamic-Armenian scholarship. Written almost three hundred years after the polemical treatises of Grigor Tat'ewats'i and Matt'ēos Jughayets'i, this anonymous text is the largest

⁹⁵ Եւ ասաց ինձ Աստուած ահա ետ քեզ զչափ աղօթից ի վերաց քո և ի վերայ ժողովրդեանդ քո, և յորժամ ի իջի ի չորրորդ երկին իբրատ ետ ինձ Մովսէս զի անդրէն դարձոյց աղաչել զԱստուած զի քեքեցուցանէ զքիւն աղօթից ժողովրդեան որ այսփան աղօթս տանիլ ոչ կարէր ... և ի վերջոյ Ե [5] չափ միայն մնաց զքիւն աղօթից ... Դարձայ առ զրաստն էլ իմբարաք նստեալ ի վերայ եկի ի Մաքէն: *Ibid.*, fol. 297b/498.

⁹⁶ Իբրև զայս պատմել Մահմէտ ամենայն ժողովրդեան հազար հոգիք յօրինաց նորա, անգորն ի բաց գացին: Եւ յասել ոմանց ցնա քէ ել յերկին ցերեկ զի հայեցուիք և որպէս դու գիրեւտակս քեզ ընդ առաջ ելեալ, և ոչ իմացաւ զօրութիւնն իւր այլ ասաց փառք Աստուծոյ իմում միքէ ես այլ ինչ եմ քան զմարդ իբրև զմի մարդկանէ և առաքեալ Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 298a/499.

⁹⁷ Ո՛վ ընթերցող տես զիարդ բանիցն իւրոց ըմբռնեալ անուանեալ մարգարէն, և դու լեր նճարառութեան հետևող և Աստուտ քեզ զէն օգնականութեան և վկայութիւն յղիցի ընդդէմ նոցա: Գրեցաւ Ղուրանն ձեռամբ ունեմն զնաքեա լոկ անուն Ամիր Սարգիս ... ի քաղաքն Շօս ալիսինքն խալսահան ի բուականիս ՌձԹ [1680/1681]: *Ibid.*, fol. 248a/499.

and most systematic collection of polemical texts in Armenian literature about Islam, the Prophet and Armenian-Islamic relations. The author seems to be an educated and informed person, much more knowledgeable about the Qur'ān than Grigor, Matt'ēos, as well as other Armenian authors in the medieval and modern literature.

The *Refutation* is in four parts or “volumes” (*hator*), as they are labeled, as stated at the bottom of each page. Amir Sargis is the scribe, and maintains the format and the style of the previous and subsequent texts, including the *Ghuran*. It is intended to be a comprehensive polemical work presented to the reader. In order to form a general idea about this exceptionally original and novel text, the following is the list of the titles of chapters that I made from the text:

*Part One. (“hator” or volume one) That the Ghuran is not from God*⁹⁸

1. The true story of Mahmet.⁹⁹
2. What is the objective of the *Ghuran* according to its followers?¹⁰⁰
3. What the *Ghuran* contains according to sages and sublime minds?¹⁰¹
4. That the *Ghuran* is not credible, for it contradicts divine scriptures.¹⁰²
5. That the Gospel is superior to the *Ghuran*.¹⁰³
6. That the followers of Christ are superior to all.¹⁰⁴
7. That the *Ghuran* incorrectly calls the Christians infidels.¹⁰⁵
8. Clearly, we show that Christ is Son of God.¹⁰⁶
9. That Christ did not call himself God but Son of God.¹⁰⁷
10. The *Ghuran* praises Christ but despises Christianity.¹⁰⁸
11. Demonstration that Christ is the Word of God the Father.¹⁰⁹
12. Refutation-contradiction of the *Ghuran* and analysis of it.¹¹⁰
13. That being the Messiah Jesus is the Son of God.¹¹¹

⁹⁸ Թէ Ղուրանն ոչ է յԱստուծոյ:

⁹⁹ Ստոյգ պատմութիւն Մահմէտի: *Ibid.*, fol. 249a/501.

¹⁰⁰ Զի՞ցն է դիտաւորութիւն Ղուրանին ըստ հետեւողաց նորին: *Ibid.*, fol. 250a/503.

¹⁰¹ Զի՞ցն է պարունակի Ղուրան ըստ մտաց կատարելոց իմաստնոց: *Ibid.*, fol. 252a/505.

¹⁰² Զի Ղուրանն ոչ է հաւատալի զի հակառակ է աստուածային գրոց: *Ibid.*, fol. 252b/506.

¹⁰³ Թէ Աւետարան զՂուրան գերազանցէ: *Ibid.*, fol. 252b/508.

¹⁰⁴ Զի Քրիստոսի հետեւողքն վեհագոյն քան զամենայնսն: *Ibid.*, fol. 254b/512.

¹⁰⁵ Թէ Ղուրանն ոչ բարւոք կոչէ բրիստոնեայք անհաւատս: *Ibid.*, fol. 255a/513.

¹⁰⁶ Յայտնապէս ցուցանէ թէ Քրիստոսն է Որդի Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 257a/517.

¹⁰⁷ Թէ Քրիստոսն ոչ անուանի զինքն Աստուած այլ Որդի Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 257b/517.

¹⁰⁸ Գովեալ Քրիստոսի և ասեաց բրիստոնէութիւն: *Ibid.*, fol. 258a/519.

¹⁰⁹ Յուցումն թէ Քրիստոսն որ է Բանն Աստուծոյ Հօրէ: *Ibid.*, fol. 258b/520.

¹¹⁰ Ընդդիմութիւն Ղուրանին և լուծումն նորին: *Ibid.*, fol. 259b/522.

¹¹¹ Թէ Յիսուս Մեսիահ զոյլ է Որդի Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 260a/523.

14. That since Christ was the Word and great Messenger He was [therefore] the Son of God.¹¹²
15. As per the testimony of the *Ghuran* Christ is Son of God.¹¹³
16. It is necessary to know the *Ghuran*, which studies the soul and breath of the animals.¹¹⁴
17. How Christ is a good and a most good man and ... of all.¹¹⁵

Part Two. No title

1. Concerning speculative theology according to which God is unknowable.¹¹⁶
2. That God is one and three.¹¹⁷
3. How we can see divine action through intelligible nature.¹¹⁸
4. How we see the divinity of three persons through the creatures.¹¹⁹
5. (Missing section)
6. The divinity of Three Persons is manifest in the Scriptures.¹²⁰
7. Demonstration-proof of the Holy Trinity.¹²¹
8. Other matters concerning the Trinity. [next few pages damaged]¹²²
9. That it is necessary for the Muslims to accept the Trinity.¹²³
10. That Christ verily was crucified and died.¹²⁴
11. Illegible (fol. 273b/553)
12. How God transformed and received the spirit of Christ into Himself.¹²⁵
13. Concerning Resurrection.¹²⁶

¹¹² Թէ Քրիստոսն այնու զի էր բան և պատգամաւոր մեծի ...է Աստուծոյ Որդի: *Ibid.*, fol. 61a/525.

¹¹³ Հստ վկայութենէ Ղուրանի Քրիստոսն է Որդի Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 262a/527.

¹¹⁴ Թէ զիա՞րդ պարտ է իմանալ զՂուրան որ քննէ հոգի և շունչ կենդանեաց: *Ibid.*, fol. 261b/528.

¹¹⁵ Թէ զիարդ Քրիստոսն է այր բարի և ամենաբարի և ... ամենեցուն: *Ibid.*, 263a/530.

¹¹⁶ Յաղագս խորհրդական աստուածաբանութեան ըստ որում Աստուած է աննառելի: *Ibid.*, fol. 264a/531.

¹¹⁷ Թէ Աստուած մի է և երբեակ: *Ibid.*, fol. 265a/533.

¹¹⁸ Թէ զիարդ ներգործութենէ իմանալի բնութեան տեսանեմք զաստուածային ներգործութիւն: *Ibid.*, fol. 266a/535.

¹¹⁹ Թէ զիարդ ի ստեղծագործս տեսանեմք զաստուածութիւն երեք անձանց: *Ibid.*, fol. 267a/537.

¹²⁰ Յայտնի է երեք անձանց աստուածութիւն ի ձեռն գրոց: *Ibid.*, fol. 268a/539.

¹²¹ Յուցումն Սուրբ Երրորդութեան: *Ibid.*, fol. 269a/540.

¹²² Յաղագս երրորդութեան: *Ibid.*, fol. 269b/541.

¹²³ Թէ պիտոյ է մահմետականաց խոստովանիլ զԵրրորդութիւն: *Ibid.*, fol. 271a/548.

¹²⁴ Թէ Քրիստոսն համարտապէս խաչեցաւ և մեռաւ: *Ibid.*, fol. 272a/550.

¹²⁵ Զիարդ Աստուած զհոգին Քրիստոսի առ ինքն փոխեցաւ և ընկալաւ: *Ibid.*, fol. 274b/555.

¹²⁶ Յաղագս Յարութեան: *Ibid.*, fol. 276b/559.

14. Concerning Christ's ... and death.¹²⁷
15. Concerning ... the death of Christ.¹²⁸
16. Concerning paradise.¹²⁹
17. Admonition/reproach [*yandimanut' iwn*] of the *Ghuran*.¹³⁰

Part Three. No title

1. That the *Ghuran* follows the ideas/beliefs of the sects.¹³¹
2. That Mahmet did not know what to select/adapt [for himself].¹³²
3. That *Mahmat* [a form used only twice] established his laws by the sword.¹³³
4. That God ... the *Ghuran* ...¹³⁴
5. That God in the *Ghuran* ... more than all things.¹³⁵
6. That Mahmet inhumanly ... against God's order persecuted the Christians.¹³⁶
7. It seems that Mahmet believes in fate.¹³⁷
8. Illegible (293a/592)
9. That Mahmet sometimes calls Christ God and sometimes man.¹³⁸
10. That Mahmet always leaves a gap/difference between the word and the object.¹³⁹
11. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are not laws ...¹⁴⁰
12. The *Ghuran* speaks well of pious Abraham and tells the true story.¹⁴¹
13. Concerning the promise made to Abraham¹⁴²
14. Illegible (300b/607)
15. Illegible (301b/609)

¹²⁷ Յաղագս Քրիստոսի ... և մահուան: *Ibid.*, fol. 277b/561.

¹²⁸ Յաղագս ... մահուան Քրիստոսի: *Ibid.* fol. 280a/566.

¹²⁹ Յաղագս դրախտին: *Ibid.*, fol. 282a/570.

¹³⁰ Յանդիմանութիւն Ղուրանին: *Ibid.*, fol. 283b/573.

¹³¹ Թէ Ղուրան ամենայն աղանդից կարծեաց հետևի: *Ibid.*, fol. 285a/576.

¹³² Թէ Մահմետ ոչ գիտէր զինչ պարտ էր նմա առնել: *Ibid.*, fol. 286a/578.

¹³³ Թէ Մահմետ զօրէնս իւր հաստատէ սրով: *Ibid.* fol. 287b/581.

¹³⁴ Թէ Աստուած ... Ղուրանը ... : *Ibid.*, fol. 288b/583.

¹³⁵ Թէ Աստուած Ղուրանին ... քան զամենայն իրս: *Ibid.*, fol. 290a/586.

¹³⁶ Թէ Մահմետ անմարդաբար ... դէմ Աստուծոյ հրամանին հալածեաց քրիստոնեայս: *Ibid.*, 291a/588.

¹³⁷ Երևի թէ Մահմետ զնակատագիրս հաւատայ: *Ibid.*, fol. 292a/590.

¹³⁸ Թէ Մահմետ երբեմն զՔրիստոս Աստուած ասէ երբեմն մարդ: *Ibid.*, fol. 283b/593.

¹³⁹ Թէ Մահմետ միշտ զանգաւնէ զքանս և զօրինակ: *Ibid.*, fol. 284b/595.

¹⁴⁰ Թէ օրէնք Ղուրանին չեն օրէնք: *Ibid.*, fol. 596b/599.

¹⁴¹ Թէ Ղուրան զպատուօք ասէ զԱբրահամ զաստուածապաշտ և զնա զին ճշմարիտ պատմութիւն: *Ibid.*, fol. 297b/601.

¹⁴² Յաղագս խոստման որ եղև Աբրահամու: *Ibid.*, fol. 299a/604.

16. That the Muslims know nothing about the laws of Abraham and indeed offend them.¹⁴³
17. That the Jews supersede the *Ghuran* concerning Abraham.¹⁴⁴
18. If anyone can be blessed without Christ¹⁴⁵
19. That Christ made the Christians worthy of immortality.¹⁴⁶
20. That the name of *Mahmat* is not written in the divine scripts.¹⁴⁷
21. ... the Prophet ... one riding a camel ...¹⁴⁸

Part Four. No title

1. Who should talk to the Muslims?¹⁴⁹
2. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are not divine because neither the Old nor the New Testaments testify to them.¹⁵⁰
3. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are not divine, for they have neither the style nor the form [of divine laws].¹⁵¹
4. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are not divine for they do not correspond to other [areas] of knowledge.¹⁵²
5. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are not divine for in many places it contradicts themselves.¹⁵³
6. That the laws of the Muslims establish nothing admirable.¹⁵⁴
7. That the laws of Mahmet are outside/alien to the natural [laws].¹⁵⁵
8. That the laws of the *Ghuran* are outside/alien to reason.¹⁵⁶
9. That the laws of Mahmet are not rational and worthy in order to be imposed.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴³ Թէ մահմետականք բնաւ ոչ զիտեն զօրէնս Աբրահամու և հալածիչ են նոցունց: *Ibid.*, fol. 302b/611.

¹⁴⁴ Թէ հրեայք ի Ղուրան յաւելեն յաղագս Աբրահամու: *Ibid.*, fol. 304a/614.

¹⁴⁵ Առանց Քրիստոսի զոք կարէ զոլ երանելի: *Ibid.*, fol. 305b/617.

¹⁴⁶ Քրիստոսն քրիստոնէայս արժանաւորեաց անմահութեան: *Ibid.*, fol. 306b/619.

¹⁴⁷ Թէ անուն Մահմատին չէ գրեալ ի գրաբառոյն Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 308a/622.

¹⁴⁸ Մարգարէն ... մի հեծեալ ուղտու: *Ibid.*, fol. 308b/623.

¹⁴⁹ Թէ ով է պարտ խօսիլ ընդ այլազգն: *Ibid.*, fol. 310a/626.

¹⁵⁰ Թէ օրինադրութիւն Ղուրանին ոչ է աստուածային զի ոչ հինն և ոչ նոր կտակարան վկայեն զնմանէ: *Ibid.*, fol. 311b/629.

¹⁵¹ Թէ Ղուրան ոչ է օրինադրութիւն աստուածային այնու զի ունի ոչ և կերպ: *Ibid.*, fol. 313b/634.

¹⁵² Թէ Ղուրան ոչ է օրինադրութիւն աստուածային զի ոչ համաձայնի ընդ այլում ումէք ըստ ուսման: *Ibid.*, fol. 315b/637.

¹⁵³ Թէ Ղուրան ոչ է օրինադրութիւն աստուածային զի բազում տեղիս ինքն ինքեան ընդդիմանայ: *Ibid.*, fol. 317a/64.

¹⁵⁴ Թէ օրէնք մահմետականաց ոչինչ սքանչելիօք: *Ibid.*, fol. 318b/643.

¹⁵⁵ Թէ օրէնք Մահմետի արտաքոյ բանականութեան են: *Ibid.*, fol. 320b/647.

¹⁵⁶ Թէ օրէնք Ղուրանին արտաքոյ բանականութեան են: *Ibid.*, fol. 321a/650.

¹⁵⁷ Թէ օրինադրութիւն Ղուրանին ոչ է բանական վասն զայս հրամայէ: *Ibid.* fol. 322a/650.

10. That the laws of the *Ghuran* ...¹⁵⁸
11. That the *Ghuran* contains obvious falsity. [Sections on: the Christians, Jews, Apostles, prophets, demons, angels, Virgin Mary, Christ, God].¹⁵⁹
- 12-23 (fols 330a – 339b/699-700) are completely illegible.¹⁶⁰

Text 4: fols 347b-417a/700-840 (140 pages). *Story of Mahmet, and Counterarguments against Mahmet* [*Patmut'iwn Mahmeti; ėnddimadardzut'iwn Mahmeti'*].

The author of this part is the least academic and the most violently hostile author to Muḥammad and his laws. The initial disagreement between the people of Mecca and Muḥammad, the subsequent conflicts, his return to, or “capture” of his hometown Mecca, are occasions to depict him and his laws in negative terms. The historical information is often inaccurate and semi-legendary.

The *Story of Mahmet* consists of twelve unnumbered yet distinct sections. The second half of the text is completely damaged. The subjects of the first six chapters can be summarized as follows:

1. Concerning the devious ways and proposals of Mahmet to the Meccans during the war between them¹⁶¹
2. On how Mahmet captured the city of *Mak'ay*, and the atrocities and violence he committed against the people. 178. *Ibid.*, 349b/705.
3. Concerning the Meccans again, and the conversion of some to the false laws of Mahmet.¹⁶²
4. Mahmet's falsity in bringing the testimony of the ancient prophets.¹⁶³
5. The ... nature of Mahmet.¹⁶⁴
6. Testimony of Meccans themselves that Mahmet was not a prophet.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁸ Թէ օրինադրութիւն Ղուրանին ... *Ibid.*, fol. 323b/653.

¹⁵⁹ Թէ Ղուրան պարունակէ յայտնի ստորին վասն բրիստոնէից, հրէից, առաքելոցն, նահապետաց, դիւաց, Կուսին Մարիամու, Քրիստոսի, Աստուծոյ: *Ibid.*, fol. 326a/658.

¹⁶⁰ 12. (330a/666); 13. (331a/668); 14. (332a/670); 15. (333b/673); 16. (334b/675); 17. (335b/677); 18. (337a/680); 19. (338a/683); 20. (338b/683); 21. (339b/685); 22. (341a/688); 23. (344a/694)

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 347a/700). Folio 347b/701 is left blank, at the bottom Sargis begs forgiveness for a missing “sheet that had fallen off the original.”

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, fol. 352b/711.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, fol. 352b/711.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 360a/726.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The *Story of Mahmet* ends on folio 412b/831 with a brief paragraph about the Prophet's family and successors. The scribe Sargis concluded this text by an urgent appeal to Armenians:

... do not be defeated by the pleasures of the body, do not be deceived by the vain/futile promises of the *Ghuran*, do not follow falsehood, do not be scared of threats, do not abandon truth, but reach out to all the goodness promised in order to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. Now glorify ... for eternity, Amen.¹⁶⁶

After a blank page (fol. 346b/699) the last section of Part Four bears an intriguing title in red: “Concerning the coming of Mahmet to Armenia and going to meet the most ... Ṛshtuni bishop’ [Catholicos Sahak III Dzorap’orets’i, r. 677-703].¹⁶⁷ This is an unexpected and account of the contact between Umayyad general Muḥammad Ibn Marwān and Sahak III in 703 in north Syria, and the renewal of the initial alleged Prophet's Oath. This section is followed by the story of the “betrayal” of pro-Arab general Vard Ṛshtuni, a son of the T’ēodoros Ṛshtuni, his victory over the Byzantine troops, the death of many, then his repentance and withdrawal to monastic life.¹⁶⁸ Sargis ended the *Sequel* as follows:

By the hand of *znak’ea* mere person named Amir Sargis Dpir was this book done/completed the year 1129 [of the Armenian era, or 1680/1] November 20.¹⁶⁹

The last blank page of the *Sequel* (fol. 417a/840) is a true find. At the very top, there is the classic *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* in Arabic by an experienced hand. This is followed by a line of unconnected Arabic letters with diacritics, then a partial copy. Then comes a version of the first part of Q5:5 (*Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, *Āyah 5*, or *The Table/Table Spread/Feast*”, verse 5), written with an experienced hand as follows “*alladhīn ū'tū al-kitab ṭa'āmukum ḥilla lahum wa-ṭa'āmahum ḥillu lakum.*” In the Qur'ān it is: *Al-yawma uḥilla lakum al-ṭibatu wa-ṭa'āmu alladhīna ūtū al-kitaba ḥillu lakum wa-ṭa'āmukum ḥillu lahum.*¹⁷⁰ The writer has

¹⁶⁶ Մի յաղթիցոյ ի հետոյն մարմնոյ, մի խաբեցոյ ի սնոտի խոստմանց Ղուրանին, մի հետեւեցոյ ստուրեան, մի զարիւրեցոյ ի սպառնալեաց, մի թողցոյ զհեմարտութիւն, զի խոստացեալ բարիոցն հաւցոյ ի երկնից արեւոյնէն արժանի լիցոյ, արդ փառաւորեցոյ զամենայն յախտենիւ, ամէն: *Ibid.*, fol. 346a/698.

¹⁶⁷ Պատմութիւն զալստեան Մահմետին ի հայս և զնալն ընդդէմ սրբոյն ամենա... Ռեւոլուցիոն եպիսկոպոսին ... *Ibid.*, fol. 413a/834.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 416b/838.

¹⁶⁹ Զնախնայ սոսկական անուն Ամիր Սարգիս Դպրի ձեռամբ կատարեցաւ զիրքս ի քին ՌՃԹ նոյեմբեր 20. *Ibid.*, fol. 416b/p. 839.

¹⁷⁰ “Today the good things are made lawful for you, and the food of the ones to whom the Book was brought is lawful to you, and your food is made lawful to them.”

provided a translation, it starts by an abbreviated word ‘*t’arg*’ (թարգ. meaning translation). It is in Eastern Armenian and seems to have been written at a much later period than the copy made by Sargis in 1680/1681. “Ինչ որ ազգ որ սուրբ գիրք ունի այդ ազգի հացը դուք կերե՛ք և ձերը նրա տու՛նք:” Literally: “Any nation/people that has a holy book, eat the bread/food of that people and give them yours.” At the bottom of this peculiar page, there is a personal seal, with Armenian initials DT’ (ԴԹ) and the word “ընթերցայ” or “I read” in Classical Armenian.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ See the discussion of Q5:5 in Part Three, Chapter I.

CHAPTER III

THE 18th CENTURY — CIRCUMSTANCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY ARMENIAN *GHURANS* FROM ARABIC AND COPIES

A. CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE SAFAVID AND OTTOMAN WORLDS

The 18th century witnessed changes on all levels and as a people with no political sovereignty at least since the fall of Cilicia in 1375, the Armenians were the most impacted. In addition to different policies towards the non-Muslims in each empire, Christian-Muslim relations were aspects of regional developments as well. Already, by the end of the 17th century the Ottomans were overcome by the Habsburg Empire. The Catholic Christians had religious freedom by the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. Emperor Leopold I (r. 1658-1705), the Holy Roman emperor, had a pretext to intervene to protect them.¹ Safavid rule in Persia ended in 1722 and both the Ottomans and the Russians took advantage of the chaos that led to the Russian-Persian War in 1722-3.

By the Treaty of Constantinople with the Russian Empire, large territories under Iranian control were divided between them. Armenia and Georgia were open to new occupations by the Ottomans and the Russians. While the former moved into more lands, Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725) increased his control over the Georgian Kingdom. The treaty of Georgievsk in 1783 between Erekle II (of Kartalinia-Kakhetia, eastern Georgia) and Catherine the Great (r. 1762-96), led to Georgia's annexation to Russia in 1801.²

In Iran, the Afshārid dynasty, established by Nādir Shāh (r. 1736-1747) in 1736, replaced the Safavids. Probably in an attempt to win over his Christian subjects, and the Armenians being the largest community, on June 13, 1735, he went to meet Catholicos Abraham Kretats'i (1734-1737) at Ējmiatsin. Being from Crete, Greece, as his name indicates, basically a "foreigner" and not familiar with Persian royal protocols, instead of welcoming Nādir in person, Abraham sent a deputy to meet him a day later. Realizing his mistake, he apologized to the Shāh in person, was forgiven even given a "velvet mantle embellished with gold and trimmed with fur." Furthermore, in an attempt to make up for unjust rewards to converts (with

¹ Ryad, "Introduction (*CMR* 12)", 3.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

inheritance benefits) arranged by Safavid Sultān Ḥusayn, Nādir decreed that Armenian converts would lose their rights of inheritance.³

Around 1726, one of the most significant cultural developments on the Ottoman side was the introduction of printing press. Previously, Jewish, Greek and Armenian printers in Constantinople were printing books in their native languages. During the 16th century in Europe, growing interest in Arabic studies had produced Qur'āns and other texts in Arabic script. Ottoman 'ulamā' began to see benefits of printing to Islam. Other scholars at al-Azhar in Egypt, "issued *fatwās* against printing religious books, particularly the Qur'ān. These remained active till late in the reign of Muḥammad 'Alī (1805-1848)".⁴

Another, and as far as the Armenians were concerned at the time, unwelcome development was the arrival of Catholic missionaries, with the "aim of persuading many Christians of the Islamic world to change their denomination, and probably their political allegiances as well." There were lesser numbers of Protestant missionaries. "As new Catholic churches and communities were coming into being in the Ottoman Empire, the Greek and Armenian patriarchs in Istanbul reacted by requesting the Ottoman authorities to introduce more centralization of authority by means of the establishment of the Armenian and Greek Orthodox *millets* under 'the sultan's writ'."⁵

On June 28, 1798, 28-year-old Napoléon Bonaparte, with a massive French fleet of 400 ships carrying 36,000 men appeared off the coast of Alexandria. Among them there were scientists and artists too.

Described differently, this three-year campaign (1798-1801) was one of the most spectacular encounters between the Western and Eastern civilizations at the end of the Enlightenment. In Egypt, Napoléon dealt with religious affairs with pragmatism. On the one hand, he showed sympathetic attitudes toward Islam, and on the other he promised the Coptic leader Jirjis al-Jawharī (d. 1810) to improve the conditions for the Christians if they supported the French. Indeed, some Christians joined the French army. After the French occupation, Muslim intellectuals started actively to witness the "marvels" of Western technological

³ *Ibid.*, 4. See Bournoutian, "Abraham III, Kretats'i", 380-385.

⁴ Ryad, "Introduction (CMR 12)", 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

inventions, while they seriously debated the penetration and imposition of European ideas on their cultures and religions. In the following century, however, colonial Europe started to gain more pervasive power over Muslims, which meant the gradual vanishing of the attitude of self-sufficiency and the growing perception of Europeans as the ‘external enemy’.⁶

In Safavid Iran, the 18th century began with the reign of Safavid Sultan Ḥusayn (r. 1694-1727) a peculiar yet in many respects, an incompetent monarch. His thirty-three year incumbency was controversial, at least with regard to the Muslim-Armenian relations, also to the non-Shī‘ī Muslims.⁷ This was mostly a function of a weak ruler unable or unwilling to stand up to the voices of intolerance in his entourage, either from hardline jurists or from zealous and opportunistic administrators.⁸ Brought up at the royal harem, “Sultan Ḥusayn became known as a ruler whose acts were all in accordance with the *Sharī‘ah*. Rather than restoring the depleted military, he spent large sums on religious causes, constructing multiple *madrasahs* and showering funds by way of *waqf* (religious endowment) especially on the Shī‘ī shrine in Mashhad, which he visited in 1706-7. Yet his religious policy was filled with paradox, like that of his forebears.”⁹ “He allowed the Shī‘ī ‘*ulamā*’ to promote a doctrinaire agenda, which included enacting measures against non-Shī‘īs, as seen in the forced conversion of Zoroastrians, the imposition of the *jizya* on Jews and Christians, tax increases imposed on the New Julfan Armenians, pressure to convert, and decrees forbidding non-Shī‘īs from going out during times of rain lest they pollute Shī‘īs. Most of these measures were either bought off with bribes or, in the case of the Armenians of New Julfa, blunted through the intervention of Maryam Begum, the patron of the suburb. Still, the increasingly intolerant atmosphere thus created had a negative effect in that it undermined the loyalty of Iran’s non-Shī‘ī inhabitants to the Safavid state.” In 1722 Sultan Ḥusayn surrendered to the Afghans, and was executed in 1727, thus bringing Safavid rule to an end.¹⁰

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ Matthee, “Sulṭān Ḥusayn”, 282.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

B. LITERATURE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

1. *Yovhannēs Jughayets’i Mrk’uz (1643-1715 or 1726)*

Not a historian, but a theologian and philosopher, Yovhannēs Jughayets’i Mrk’uz, also known as Yovhannēs Vardapet, was born in New Julfa in 1643. There are two dates for his death, 1715 and 1726.¹¹ Persian sources refer to him as *Hovannas Khalifeh*, *Avānūs khalīfa*, *Vānīs Khalīfa*, *Khalīfa Āvānūs*. He became a vardapet in 1669, at age 26. In two colophons written in 1687 and 1696, he speaks about himself.¹² Mrk’uz wrote in Armenian, Persian and Arabic, and according to Mirzoyan, most of his works were completed before 1696. Only a third survived.¹³

He was involved in debates in defense of the Armenian Apostolic Church against the Catholic Unitarians and their Armenian followers.¹⁴ He was a painter too. He worked on some of the murals of the Church of All Savior and other buildings at New Julfa. In addition to the Unitarians, he was also engaged in disputations with Persian Shī‘ī scholars. “Among his students was Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn Lāhījī (1692-1766), who studied the Gospels with him. Ḥazīn Lāhījī reported that his teacher was well versed in both Arabic and Persian and was well-read in Muslim thought, as told.¹⁵ “When Shāh Sultan Ḥusayn (r. 1694-1722) visited the All Savior Monastery in New Julfa, Yovhannēs was among the monks with whom the Shāh had religious-theological discussions.¹⁶ The latter asked him to write down the proceedings of their meeting in Persian and Armenian.¹⁷

The Persian and Arabic works of Mrk’uz have not been studied. While these writings are extant in bilingual manuscripts with Armenian on the recto folios and Persian or Arabic on the verso folios, namely *Kitāb-i Avānūs Khalīfa-yi Masīhī* (*The book of the Christian Yovhannēs Khalīfa*) others on the principles of the Christian faith and its practical aspects, appear to have circulated only in monolingual Persian manuscripts. According to

¹¹ Halft, “Hovhannēs Mrk’uz”, 260-264; Mirzoyan, *Mrk’uz*.

¹² Mirzoyan, *Mrk’uz*, Appendix, 221, 224.

¹³ *Ibid.* 38-39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn Lāhījī, *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin*. Translated by F.C. Belfour (London, 1830), 62-63; Muḥammad ‘Alī Ḥazīn Lāhījī, *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin*, ed. F.C. Belfour, (London, 1831), 57-58; also see Khachatur Jughayets’i, *History of Persia [Patmut’iwn Parsits’]* (Vagharshapat, 1905), 204-6. In: Halft, “Hovhannēs Mrk’uz”, 260.

¹⁶ Ghougassian, *The Emergence*, 160.

¹⁷ Mirzoyan, *Mrk’uz*, 5.

Halft, one of these treatises provoked Twelver Shī'ī responses. It seems therefore, he suggests, that at the time in Safavid Iran, and New Julfa in this case, “indigenous Christians did not abstain from engaging in interreligious debates.”¹⁸

For their unique interest, and the complete obscurity as far as Armenian scholarship is concerned, including Mirzoyan's monograph on Mrk'uz, I gratefully cite in summary Halft's description of these two treatises below. (The correct transliteration of Եովհաննէս is *Yovhannēs*, not *Hovhannēs*, as it is made in Halft's article.)

Kitāb-i Avānūs Khalīfa-yi Masīhī or *The book of the Christian Yovhannēs Khalīfa* — The date appears once as 1688 and in another copy as 1691, the original language is Armenian.¹⁹ Otherwise untitled, this text circulated in this title in several monolingual Persian manuscripts and a bilingual Armenian-Persian manuscript. It is basically an apology of Christian doctrines, particularly the compatibility of divine unity and the Trinity. A facsimile edition of the only known bilingual manuscript (187 fols; Armenian on the recto folios, Persian on the verso folios; date unknown), held by an unknown private collector in Armenia, was printed in 1998 under the editor's title *Ēghdzali K'ristosi Ōrenk'ē* (The Desirable Law of Christ). Halft's references are from this edition, the verso folios only.

“The Persian text is structured in three parts *juz*’ with a varying number of chapters (*faṣl*). Following the introduction (fols 1v-5v), the headings of the three parts are as follows: *Az adilla u az qaḏāyā u natīja ki yaqīnī bāshad* (‘On the proofs, the propositions and the conclusion which are certain’, fols 5v-26v); *Dar bayān-i shinākhtan-i vājib al-vujūd bi-vāsiṭa-yi mumkināt* (In explanation of knowing the necessary existent through contingents’, fols 26v-97v); and *Dar bayān-i mu’jaza-yi Haqq* (In explanation of God's miracle, fols 97v-186v). While Parts 1 and 2 focus on the apprehension of God (*ma'rifat-i Khudā*) by means of philosophy, Part 3 is dedicated to the biblical “testimonies” to the coming of Christ and his divine nature. In Part 3, fols 123v-155v, Hovhannēs references, given here in order of appearance, the Psalms, Isaiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Micah, Habakkuk, Malachi, Deuteronomy, Amos, Zechariah and the Wisdom of Solomon in an Arabic translation of the Septuagint (the same translation is also included in the bilingual Armenian-Arabic London Ms BL — Or. 15894, 68 fols, which contains Hovhannēs's collection of Old Testament verses). These references are accompanied by an interlinear word-for-word translation in Persian. Based on the Old Testament verses, Hovhannēs argues that the advent

¹⁸ Halft, “Hovhannēs Mrk'uz”, 260.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

of Jesus Christ was announced by the biblical prophets.” To date, says Halft, no Muslim refutation of Hovhannēs’s vindication of Christianity has been identified.²⁰

Uṣūl-i dīn-i ʿisavī u furūʾ-i ān, or *The Principles of the Christian Faith and its Practical Aspects*, is the other treatise of Mrkʿuz. It is written in Persian, may have been initially written in Armenian, and bears no date. Mrkʿuz “illustrates fundamental doctrines of Christianity, based on the concept of “Word of God” (*qawl-i Khudā*) and the words of the biblical prophets (*naql-i anbiyāʾ*). The author draws extensively on the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, from which he quotes in Persian to substantiate his arguments. Although there is no direct indication of whom the work is addressed to, the author’s emphasis on the “Oneness of God” (*vāḥid dar khudāʾī*) and His simple, uncomposed nature (*vāḥid dar ṭabīʿat bi-dūn tarkīb u murakkab*) suggests a Muslim scholarly audience. His philosophical reflection is grounded on the Muslim frame of reference.”²¹

The references are from the only known copy of *Uṣūl-i dīn-i ʿisavī u furūʾ-i ān*, Persian, Tehran Ms, Malik 2620. The manuscript covers 60 folios (paginated) and is structured in two parts, each divided into 14 chapters (*qism* or *faṣl*). Following the author’s introduction (1-3):

- Part 1 (3-66) focuses on the principles of faith (*uṣūl-i dīn*). From Chapter 1.1 to 1.4, Hovhannēs discusses several divine attributes: God is existent (*mawjūd*) (*qism* 1.1, 8-11); He is one (*vāḥid*), without any companion (*lā sharīk lahu*) (*qism* 1.2, 11-19); He is omnipotent (*qādir*), knowing (*ʿālim*) and speaking (*mutakallim*) (*qism* 1.3, 19-28); He is living (*ḥayy*) and just (*ʿādil*) (*qism* 1.4, 28-30). Chapter 1.5 affirms a multiplicity of attributes within a single divine essence (*qism* 1.5, 30-5). In Chapter 1.6 and 1.7, Hovhannēs reflects on a prophet as mediator (*vāsiṭa*) between God and his creatures (*qism* 1.6, 35-7), as well as on the resurrection (*qiyāmat*) from the dead (*qism* 1.7, 37-41). The remaining chapters are dedicated to the life and death of Jesus Christ, namely the Immaculate Conception (*qism* 1.8, 41-5); the virgin birth of Jesus (*qism* 1.9, 45-9); the passion of Christ (*qism* 1.10, 49-57); his harrowing of hell (*qism* 1.11, 57-9); his resurrection on the third day (*qism* 1.12, 59-62); his ascension into heaven (*qism* 1.13, 62-3); and the Day of Judgement (*qism* 1.14, 63-6).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 262.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 263

- In Part 2 (66-120), Hovhannēs elaborates on the practical aspects of the Christian faith (*furūʿ-i dīn*). His argument is based on the ethical principles of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 (*faṣl* 2.1-9, 68-100) and portions of the Decalogue in Exodus 20:13-17/Deuteronomy 5:17-21 (*faṣl* 2.10-14, 100-20).

“The explanatory character of his comments supports the assumption that *Uṣūl-i dīn-i ʿīsavī u furūʿ-i ān* was composed as an introduction to Christianity for a Persian-reading non-Christian audience”, says Halft. Furthermore, he continues, the work has been referred to and identified by Twelver Shīʿī authors of the 18th century. The latter are also aware of confessional differences and arguments between the Armenian Apostolic and the Catholic churches.²²

2. *An unusual contemporary apologist-polemicist of Mrkʿuz in Aleppo—Makirdīj al-Kassīḥ Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Mukhallāʿ al-Armanī (d. after 1733)*

Very little is known or yet discovered about Armenian apologists-polemicists, who wrote in local languages, such as Persian, in the case of Mrkuz, or Arabic, in the case of a certain Makirdīj al-Kassīḥ (or Mkrtichʿ the “handicap”).

Carsten Walbiner’s article was a revelation to me and an intriguing one at that.²³ A native of Kilis (about 40 miles north of Aleppo, in Turkey), Deacon Makirdīj was born in a Catholic family of Kilis, he died after 1733, probably in Aleppo, where he moved at a young age and studied there. He was also tutored by Muslim scholar Sulaymān al-Naḥwī. “Makirdīj was part of a circle of Christian, mainly Catholic, intellectuals who are regarded as the forerunners of the *Nahḍāh*, the literary Renaissance that took place in the Arab lands in the 19th century. He was especially close to Jirmānūs Farḥāt and Niqūlā al-Ṣāʿigh.

His first known work dates from 1690 and the last from 1733, which sets the *terminus post quem* for his date of death. As far as this study is concerned, Makirdīj was the first Armenian author to write exclusively in Arabic. He was celebrated among his contemporaries as a “great scholar and writer. His writings belong mainly to the spheres of ascetics, pastoral praxis and general education, and he also composed three treatises on Islam.”²⁴ Three copies of now lost treatises by Makirdīj, written between 1690 and

²² *Ibid.*, 264.

²³ Walbiner, “Makirdīj”.

²⁴ Walbiner, “Makirdīj”, 169.

1733, were discovered by Paul Sbāth. They were in the possession of the heirs of Greek Catholic merchant Rizqallāh Bāsīl in Aleppo.²⁵ It might also be added that judging by the audacity of polemic in all three texts, and their survival in single copies it seems that they were not meant to be put into circulation in the Ottoman world at the time. As Christian Arabic texts from early modern times, all three are the first in their kind and highly significant for Islamic-Armenian studies of the period in Syria.

Aḥādīth al-Hadīth (Traditions of the *Ḥadīth*) — Written in Arabic between 1690 and 1733, this text has survived in one copy, the manuscript is lost. It is divided into 24 chapters and focuses on the “ridiculous” fables of the *Ḥadīth* as seen by the author. It is the “first known Christian Arabic text from early modern times written on the subject”, and obviously of great importance.²⁶

Al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh fī l-Qurʾān (The abrogating and the abrogated in the Qurʾān) — Sbāth summarizes the text as the contradictions of the Qurʾān and the wrong principle of the abrogating and the abrogated. The treatise deals with the subject of controversy between Christianity and Islam, the principle of abrogation (*naskh*) applied by Muslim jurists and theologians to explain the overt contradictions and inconsistencies to be found within the Qurʾān, and between the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. It is the first known treatise specifically devoted to this topic.²⁷

Ṣidq al-Injīl wa-kidhb al-Qurʾān (The Veracity of the Gospels and the Falseness of the Qurʾān) — Other than the title, nothing is known about this text.²⁸ But judging from the title, it should not be hard to have an idea about its content and objectives.

3. Abraham Kretatsʾi (d. 1737)

Catholicos Abraham III Kretatsʾi (from Crete, r. 1734-1737) also *Ṭodostotsʾi* (from Rodosto) or *Tʾekʾirdaghtsʾi* (from Tekirdagh) at Ējmiatsin, was born from a Greek mother at Crete, his date of birth is unknown. He became the prelate of the Armenians of Trakia (Thrace), or Rodosto/Tekirdagh, spent two years at Jerusalem, from 1719 to 1720. In 1734,

²⁵ Sbath, *Al-fihris*, 86. This note is borrowed from Walbiner, I have not been able to access and check this source as it stands.

²⁶ Walbiner, “Makirdij”, 170.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

Abraham went on a pilgrimage to Ējmiatsin and other holy sites in Armenia. At the time, the Ottomans had occupied the region since the fall of the Safavid dynasty. While Abraham was in the area, Abraham II Khoshabets'i (r. 1730-1734) passed away and the Ottoman *pasha* urged Abraham, who was an Ottoman subject, to assume the position of catholicos. But soon, in 1735, Persian Nādir Khan recovered that part of Armenia and drove the Ottomans out of the southern Caucasus. As a friendly gesture of gratitude for the assistance of the Armenians of Yerevan in the battle of Yeghvard, the Shāh went to Ējmiatsin with gifts and paid his respects to the catholicos. In 1735, Nādir Khan summoned Abraham to Tbilisi, where he entrusted the Holy See to the Khan of Yerevan, saying, "Make sure you do not insult or distress the *khalifa*/caliph [the catholicos] for he prays [for us] and is our *tevachi* [prefect] ... [The Armenians] have served me sincerely ... Do not dare to oppress the Armenian people or to harm them, for I shall punish those that do severely. If you do not wish [my wrath], all taxes, save for the *jizya*, should be evenly divided between the Armenians and the Muslims."²⁹ A year later, Abraham was invited to attend Nādir's coronation as the new Shāh (r. 1736-47) of the Afsharid dynasty.³⁰ Abraham travelled with Nādir Khan, who showed respect for his position and age, sending him back to his monastery and telling him to pray for him.³¹

This catholicos seems to have managed to develop a balanced position between the Ottomans, whose citizen he was, and the Afsharid Persians. Both sides regarded the catholicos as the *khalifa* of the Armenian people and treated him with respect. During times of conflict, the catholicos acted as an intermediary and often succeeded in his mission in reducing hardship. He was the only Christian, besides the Russian envoy, to be an official guest at the assembly and the coronation of Nādir Shāh Afshar.³² Abraham died at Ējmiatsin and was buried there. His *History* covers the period from April 1734 to November 1736 in the south Caucasus.

4. Abraham Erewants'i (1680-1740)

Very little is known about the life of the author of *History of Wars During the Years 1721-1736* or *History of the Persian King of the History*

²⁹ Bournoutian, "Abraham III, Kretats'i", 382.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 380.

³¹ Abraham Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Bournoutian, 43.

³² *Ibid.*, 383.

of Wars, or *History of the Persian King* — 1721-1736 (written after 1738). The “Persian king” (*t’agayor parsits’*) is “Shāh T’ahmaz Khan”, or Tahmasb II (r. 1722-1732), son of Safavid Ḥusayn (r. 1668-1726).

Abraham was the son of a certain Yovhannēs from Yerevan, “the center of Persian defenses against the Ottomans in the south Caucasus.”³³ He is barely literate, his grammar and spelling are poor, he uses Turkish, Arabic and Persian terms in their original forms (such as *mataris*, Arabic for barricades). According to Bournoutian, his knowledge of Western terms, military terminology and descriptions of battles and tactics, “suggests that he may have been either a soldier or proficient in a trade that was utilized by the army.”³⁴

The running motif is perpetual wars between the Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians, the conquests of the former and the withdrawal of the latter. The “*Ōsmānī*”s are always the brutal persecutors of Christians. The Armenians are referred to as Christians, *k’ristonēk’*, and sometimes as *k’ristons*. Abraham believed that the evils that befell them were punishments for their godlessness and moral failure. For the Muslim side, he called the Safavids “*ghzlpash*” (*Qizibāsh*), the Turks “*ōsmants’i*”, or “*ōsmānī*”. He made no comment about Islam or the Prophet, but he seems to be aware of the Sunnism of the Turks and the Shī’ism of the Persians.³⁵

“Until 1970”, says Bournoutian, “Abraham’s *Chronicle* was the only known eyewitness account of the Ottoman siege and the capture of Yerevan. In 1970, another account in Ottoman Turkish by a Turkish military commander, Kamani Mustafa Agha, was located in the former Ottoman Archives and published in Istanbul as the *Fath Name ye Iravan* (The Conquest of Yerevan). This work was later translated into Persian and published in Tehran in 2014. Mustafa Agha presents the battle of Yerevan from the Ottoman point of view, while Abraham’s account presents it from the Iranian and Armenian perspective.”³⁶

³³ Bournoutian, “Abraham Erewants’i”, 386.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 386.

³⁵ There are two manuscripts of the *History of Wars*: the narrative begins with the Afghan invasion of Iran in 1721 and ends with the conquest of Qandahar by Nādir Shah Afshār (r. 1736-47) in 1738. This manuscript consists of 90 folios in three different sizes, and is entitled *Patmut’iwn t’agay[w]ori Parsits’* (History of the Persian King). Jemjemian’s critical edition is based on two manuscripts and includes an appendix for the years 1736-8. These manuscripts are in print, the first is the original, in Venice Ms 2717, and a modernized-corrected yet deformed one by Matt’ēos Ewdokats’i, at St. Lazar, Venice Ms 2681- 90-174), 69. Also see Abraham of Erevan, *History of the Wars, 1721-1738*, annotated critical edition plus an appendix with events from 1736 to 1738.

³⁶ Bournoutian, “Abraham Erewants’i”, 389.

The most significant aspect of this narrative is the cooperation of the Armenians with the Persians in defending the city and the fortress of Yerevan against the Ottomans, the common enemy. As always in the medieval and modern history of the Armenians, there were soldiers in the armies of both sides

5. *Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants' (1738-1823)*

We find the same apparent indifference, or probably reservation, toward the Prophet and his teachings in the works of the next historian of the late 18th century, Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants' (1738-1823). Often called the “father” of modern Armenian historiography, a native of Istanbul, he was a member of the Mkhitarist Order. The three massive volumes (in six books, 3200 large-set pages) of his *History of the Armenians from the Beginning of the World to the Year 1784 of the Lord*, were published in Venice between 1784 and 1788.³⁷

The purpose was to record the past, as he said, “fully, free from inaccuracies, fiction, exaggerations, and linguistic impurities accumulated over centuries.”³⁸ He is said to have been urged and encouraged by his contemporaries to start a project of these dimensions. For his generation the knowledge of the past was considered an essential factor in the promotion of national consciousness.³⁹ Ch'amch'iants' set the model for expansive and so-called “universal” Armenian histories for the Modern Period. He genuinely wanted to continue the Armenian classical tradition of historiography in the strictly classical language and almost medieval pre-modern nationalist perspective and formats. Less than a century after his *History*, in the same spirit but in less perfect language and much smaller scope, Avedis Bērbērian (1802-1870) wrote its continuation titled *History of the Armenians from 1772 to 1860*.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ch'amch'iants', *History* (3 vols.: Venice, 1784, [actual 1786], 1785 [actual 1787], and 1786 [actual 1788]). It was published in an abridged edition titled *Khrakhchan Patmut'ean Hayots'* (Venice, 1811): Ch'amch'iants', *Enjoyment of the History*. Probably at the request of non-Armenian speaking Armenians, Ch'amch'iants' wrote a Turkish summary of 495 pages in Armenian script titled *Gulzari Tevarikh — Hay Millet'inē Dayir Hik'ayēler ilē Dōnanmish* (Venice, 1812): Ch'amch'iants', *Historical Garden*. English translation: Ch'amch'iants', *History*, trans. Avtall (Townsend, 1827). Also Eastern Armenian translation: *Patmut'iwn Hayots' Skzbits' Minch'ew 1785* (Ch'amch'iants', *History to 1785*). Dadoyan, “Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants'”, article in press at CMR, 19th century volumes.

³⁸ Ch'amch'iants', *History*, vol. I, 3.

³⁹ The earliest was the history of Aṙak'el Dawrizhets'i in the previous century. Esayi Hasan-Jalalean, Abraham Erewants'i, Simēon Erewants'i, Khach'atur Jughayets'i and Abraham Kretats'i were contemporaries.

⁴⁰ Bērbērian, *History of the Armenians*. See above Part 3, Chapter IV. E.

The *History* of Ch'amch'iants' is written in a loosely chronological style. Dates and sources are recorded in brief in the margins, with no bibliographic details. The early Arab invasions into Armenia and eastern Asia Minor are first mentioned in Chapter 55 of Book III. Extracting the views of Ch'amch'iants' about Islam, Muslims, Christian-Muslim relations, and more importantly, defining his understanding and depiction of the Armenian condition in the Islamic world, is like trying to put together pieces of a large picture-puzzle, the essential pieces of which are blurred or missing. The analysis has to be carried out by derivation and in a peace-meal manner from his narratives of individual cases. Unlike other medieval Armenian historians, whom he wanted to follow and did, Ch'amch'iants' avoided making direct references, or even mentioning terms related to the Prophet, Islam and Muslims. Nowhere we find the words Islam, *margarē*, *p'eghambar*, *Mahmēt*, *Ghuran*, feasts, prayer, fasting, and the like. Muslim peoples are referred to as Hagarians and *aylazgik'*, never as *Ismayelats'ik'*, as it was customary, not even as *mahmetakank'* in modern Armenian. One of the reasons for this intentional avoidance was probably lack of information. It is hard to tell if he had any knowledge of Islamic sources, the Prophet, the Qur'ān, and the religious culture. Being a Turkish citizen and a native of Istanbul, he seemed to have no dislike for the Turks. Also, and obviously, he may have avoided censorship and ban. Whatever the reason, his work suffered greatly.

The Armenians in the *History* of Ch'amch'iants' are a small, internally divided, but an ancient and heroic Christian nation surrounded by powerful neighbors and aggressors. This is a simple paradigm, which inevitably generated narrow and fragmented vantage points. The Muslim-Christian relations are restricted to individual cases of oppression, discrimination, forced conversions, torture, high taxation, evacuations, anarchistic whimsical rulers, and the like. Even though this strongly nationalist history in rigid classical Armenian — almost inaccessible to the average reader — was never translated into modern Armenian, for a long time it dominated the intellectual culture as the only reference and textbook.

The focus on primarily Armenian narratives was the legacy of Ch'amch'iants', and became a rule of sorts, unfortunately. Very few historians, even those who used eastern and western non-Armenian sources, did not make an attempt to look at things Armenian in their interactive aspects with the Islamic environment and in the light of Arab sources. Ch'amch'iants' would not see that from the 7th century, Armenia and Armenians gradually became organic and interactive parts of the bigger

World of Islam. Instead, he distinguished and drew two worlds in conflict, a small, central-Armenian world, and a blurry peripheral-Islamic world. The images and his “facts” about Islamic-Armenian encounters, on the vast stage of a rambling Armenian condition, are carefully selected and placed with an intention to highlight the message of the author: the impossibility of coexistence and/or submission to Muslims, hence the importance of national progress, unity and struggle for liberation and sovereignty.

C. THE FIRST ARMENIAN TRANSLATION OF THE QUR’ĀN FROM ARABIC
(LOST) IN THE 18th CENTURY — THREE COPIES WITH THE WILL/EDICT OF
MAHMET AS APPENDIX

1. *Ghōran Mahmetin* — First translation from Arabic “by the hand of” *Aristakēs Erēts’ Hamadants’i*, 1706 (M 6984, date 1706) — *The “Will of the Prophet” as Appendix*

A quarter of a century after the *Ghuran* of Lehots’i and the *Sequel* within the same year, the next *Ghuran* translated from the Arabic original entered the literature before 1706, when a copy was made “by the hand” of humble Presbyter (*erēts’*) Aristakes Hamadants’i, as per his colophon. This *Ghuran* ends at Chapter 104, “The Elephant”, instead of number 105, because it starts at the second *surah*, “The Cow”, not counting *al-Fātiḥah*. The last nine *sūrahs* are missing, and the error is repeated in the two other copies, that were taken from the first copy made in 1706. This *Ghōran* (M6984) ends as unassumingly as it started. The colophon is squeezed at the end of the last page, just before the appendix, first in red ink, and barely legible, then in black ink. It is as follows:

[here] ... ended the *Ghōran* of Mahamat’ at the city of Hamadan, in the year 1706 [RĒCHZ] of the Lord and 1155 of the Armenian era [RCHTSE] the first of January, by the hand of Aristakēs Erēts’ [presbyter] of Hamadan. Whoever reads this falsehood ... verse by verse, will understand [its falsehood], let him remember God ... me the sinner, Amen.⁴¹

Unlike the *Ghuran* of Lehots’i, the title of this “*Ghōran*” is written most unassumingly, in minuscule letters, squeezed at the top of the page as “*Ghōran Mhmētīn*.” It is in black ink, small letters, and a different

⁴¹ “... Աւարտեցաւ դօրան մահամատին որ է ի Համատան քաղաք ի քրին Փրկչին ՌէճՁ [1706] իսկ հայոց ՌՃԾԷ [1155] յունուարի սկիզբն առաջին, ձեռամբ Արիստակէս Երիցոյ համատանցոյ, ով ոք կարդայ և ստուրուն մէք ... տուն առ տուն իմասցի, Աստուած ... գնեղաւորս յիշեցէ, Ամէն:” *Ղօթան*, M6984, fol. 303a/593.

handwriting. This identification of sorts on the top of the page is repeated but inconsistently, as *Ghōran Mahmēt*, *Ghōran Mhmēt*, *Ghōran Mhmēti*, *Ghōran Mahmēti* to about the middle of the manuscript. Just beneath the title is the “Introduction” (or *al-Fātiḥah*), again written in a narrow space.

The manuscript is on 305 folios, 598 pages, on yellowed paper. The sheets are badly worn on the edges, but the writing is mostly legible. The titles are in red ink, the script in black, and the handwriting not too neat. The text is between two red columns drawn on the two sides, yet often surpassed. The numbers and the titles of the *sūrahs*, as well as the location are surprisingly accurate, with the exception of the last nine missing *sūrahs*. The titles of the *sūrahs* are satisfactorily close to the Arabic text, with occasional errors. There are more errors in the location of the *sūrahs*, between Mecca and Medīnah. The number of the verses, translated as “*tun*”, is generally correct with minor errors in some cases. There are no transliterated terms from Arabic, Persian or Turkish, as is the case in most texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The translator knows classical Armenian well, also uses literary terms from modern Armenian as well, but never any idioms or vernacular.

While the *Ghuran* of Lehats‘i was a literal translation of Robert of Ketton’s version in Latin, and remotely related to the Qur’ān, this *Ghōran* is a close paraphrase of the Qur’ān. Almost no sentence or paragraph is overlooked or omitted. On the contrary, whenever possible, there is an effort to add elaborations, sometimes in a deliberate attempt to emphasize an implication, especially a negative one. The descriptions of the Quranic paradise, hell, punishments (for non-believers) and rewards (for believers) are such cases.

Despite its novelty as the very first translation of the Qur’ān from Arabic, also copied at least twice, as I discovered, this book did not have an echo in literary circles. I have found no reference to it and no indication that anyone had seen or used it in any type of study. In fact, those who did some studies of Islam in the late 19th century and the translators of the early 20th century, always complained of near ignorance among Armenians concerning Islam and the necessity to have a translation of the Qur’ān. They claimed to be the first translators of it. This translation is also distinguished by its appendix, which was copied verbatim in its two known copies, M8056 and M2826. The appendix is a version of the alleged Edict of Mahmet, written “by the hand” of Mu‘āwiyah, as cited fully in Part Three, Chapter III.

2. *Book called Ghuran (Girk' or Koch'i Ghuran, M8056) — The first known copy of Ghōran Mahmetin from Arabic*

This copy is made from the 1706 copy from a translation from Arabic (M6984). The scribe has followed his text verbatim, with no corrections on his part, unlike the scribe-commentator of M2826, the second copy (that I have found so far). It seems to have been commissioned by a wealthy, Russian-Armenian client, judging from the quality of the paper and ink. It is on 240 folios, 480 pages. The Appendix is also copied meticulously. The text is neatly arranged in a double frame in red ink. On the title page there is an awkward top-design in mixed Persian-Armenian style by a beginner. On the right margin there is the primitive, miniature-style drawing of a rather aggressive looking Arab, with a long, arched sword on his belt and holding a spiky whip in his right hand. The title is, *Book Called Ghuran (Girk' or Koch'i Ghuran)*. On the first blank page appear the names of the consecutive owners of the “translation of the Ghuran”, mentioning that it is a translation (*t'argman*, instead of *t'argmanut'iwn*). Sultan Beki Ōrbli, or Ōrbelyan, acquired it on January 1, 1872, then, it was the property of Manas Keuch'arov and Artem Keuch'aryants'.⁴²

3. *Book Called Ghuran (M2826) — A second copy of M6094 and a comprehensive polemical side-script*

M2826 at the Matenadaran is one of the most unique and peculiar texts of the late 18th century, or probably early 19th century. It bears no dates and colophons. It is in turn a copy of the translation from Arabic (M6954) as discussed above, or a copy of a later copy, probably M8056. It carries the title of the latter, not that of the first copy of 1706. However, the three texts are identical, including the appendix of the original Will/Edict of the Prophet (*vasi p'eghabarin*) by the handwriting of Maviē (Mu'āwiyah) in M6984. In general, the two copies, and especially M2826, are in more refined form and grammar than the first.

M2826 is definitely the most recent and the most intriguing. The text is on 482 pages, folios 4a-244b. The appendix is on the last three pages (243a-244b/479-482). It is in good condition, the handwriting is clear, legible, and consistent, the text and the comments are written simultaneously,

⁴² Գիրք որ կոչի Ղուրան. (M8056), Թարգման. Ղուրանի ի մատենից Մելիի Մանուչարի Օրբլին; Այս է թարգման Ղուրանի ի մատենից կու պատկանի Սուլթան Բէկի Օրբլին; ... Սուլթան Բէկի Օրբլեւան ի 1872 ամի յունուար մէկին [same in Russian]; Այս թարգման զուրանի ի մատենից կու պատկանի Մանաս Կեչարովին; ... Արտէմ Կեչորեանցին.

by the same hand and by a deliberate plan. The *sūrahs* are labeled *glukhs* (chapter), as in M6954, *al-Fātiḥah*, titled “Introductory Chapter” (*Glukh Yarajabanut‘ean*). It is not numbered, therefore *Sūrat al-Baqarah* is the first chapter. Like the original, the last chapter is *al-Fil* (The Elephant), numbered 104, instead of 105.

In general, this manuscript deserves a separate and extensive study. The copier-commentator, or as I call him and will refer to as the Mystery Writer, is a person of a high level of the literacy. He has carefully and in good handwriting added 420 comments on the margins. Collectively they make a very novel polemical side-script and a significant text in Islamic-Armenian literature. His comments vary from just a sentence to a long paragraph that fills the entire margin. In addition, there is a set of 22 reader’s notes on the margins in the Eastern Armenian dialect, in large and ordinary handwriting by another and nineteenth century person.

Novel polemical strategies and tools separate and distinguish the Mystery Writer from other Armenian polemicists, both medieval and modern. Most medieval authors deployed the Armenian Mahmet as a polemical tool. They accused his followers, the Muslim invaders, of ruthless practices, imposition of high taxes and especially of religious intolerance and primitive ideology. The later polemicists of the 19th and 20th centuries invested on the sharp dichotomy Islam created between Muslims and non-Muslims. In their view, it reflected the inherent intolerance and militancy of Islam and broke the world into rival camps in a state of perpetual war.

In a strange way, the Mystery Writer was more original and surely very radical. His strategy of placing Islam in the framework of Zurvanist-Manichean dualism, was a tactic never used before in Armenian literature. He thus expanded the polemical circle and included the political background of the Armenian experiences with Zoroastrian Persia, the Manichaeans and other dualistic sects that the church fought for centuries.

Before the end of the 4th century, Armenia was virtually divided between the Greeks and the Persians, the latter had the larger part, and by returning them to their pagan faith, and later on to Nestorianism, the Sasanians were trying to separate them from the Byzantine camp, at least by their religious culture. Furthermore, during the Middle Ages, religion was the political façade of states and empires: Zoroastrianism of the Persians, Chalcedonianism of the Byzantines, Catholicism of the Latin-Crusader West, and Islam for the Caliphate. In Armenian medieval literature, it was common practice to look at the Arabs as simply those who replaced the Persians, only more alien to them in their culture and provenance. As far as the Armenians

were concerned, religious persecutions were aspects of political domination, Zoroastrianism for the Persians, Chalcedonianism for the Byzantines, Islam for the Caliphate. The Mystery Writer mentions Yazdegerd II (r. 438-457), the Sasanian emperor, who was notorious for his extreme pressures to convert the Armenians into Zoroastrianism. The Mystery Writer depicted him, as ancient Armenians did, as the demonic monarch at the center of the semi-epic narrative of the Battle of Awarayr in 451 between the Persian army and a small army of Armenians, who chose to be martyrs for their Christian faith, and indeed were.

In line with this strategy of widening the framework of his polemics and placing Islam in the sphere of Sasanian religious persecutions, and in order to provide ideological grounds for his polemical strategies, the Mystery Writer re-structured, rather re-interpreted Islam on a Zurvanist dualistic metaphysics. Thus, according to him, ideologically, Islam was based on the traditional dualistic grid. However, technically original this approach reflected a Christian dualistic metaphysics on his part. This is alien to the official creed of the Armenian Church. The Mystery Writer drew two opposite and hierarchical worlds, each with its own metaphysical principles and systems. The first was the Christian world of God's creation with a good plan for humanity, with the Trinity of the Father, Son and Spirit at the apex and active in human history. The other world was the World as depicted by Mahmet with its own laws. This stage of a cosmic war set by him is a true battlefield. Man's fate depends on his choice between two worlds, it may end at heaven by deliverance through Christ, or at final destruction and to "eternal fire" through Mahmet. I strongly suggest that this copy with a very selective vocabulary and rhythmically recurring themes, terms, also a huge number of comments in the margins, was made with the intention to be used as a platform for a polemical initiative, and not as an object of interest.

PART FIVE

ISLAM, THE PROPHET AND THE QUR'ĀN
IN LATE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

DAWN OF “ISLAMOLOGICAL” SCHOLARSHIP — PHILOLOGY, BIOGRAPHY, CRITIQUE, POLEMICS AND APOLOGY

The parallel and simultaneous recession of Iran and the massive penetration of Tsarist Russia into Asia Minor caused radical shifts in the circumstances and the fate of the Armenians in particular. In 1828, the Treaty of Turkmenchay (in northwest Iran, between the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia) concluded the war between Russia and Iran. It also established the rights of the Russian Empire to encourage the settling of Christian Armenians from Iran in the newly acquired Russian territories. A year later, in 1829, the Treaty of *Adrianopolis* with Turkey, granted Russia more rights for mass settlings. Many Armenians chose to migrate. As large numbers moved to the “other side”, under Christian rule and “protection”, with the demographic changes there were changes in their disposition towards Islam and the Muslims. Ottoman persecutions and massacres of the Armenians began after the Russian-Turkish war in 1878 and continued with force through 1890s, the Great Massacre of 1915 and the final evacuations from Cilicia in early 1920s.

These circumstances were reflected in the literary culture in most unexpected manners. During the last two decades of the 19th century, from 1879 to 1899, five Armenian texts appeared related to Islam in Moscow, Tbilisi, Armenia and Istanbul. They ranged from philology, to a translation of W. Irving’s *Life of Mahomet*, to polemics, to political analysis and finally, a genuine apology for Islam and a praise of “Mohammēt.”

The period, from 1904 to 1912 was the “golden decade” of Armenian *Ghurans*. Three translations were published, both in the Armenian East and West, all with biographies of the Prophet attached, and one of them with a polemical treatise as well.

An indirect, or what I call an “implied Islamology” describes the texts related to Islam during the next decades to 1980s. They can be classified under philology, Arab-Armenian studies and political studies. The period after 1990s is the third phase of Armenian *Ghurans*, two partial and three full translations. Together with a number of studies, constituted a peculiar mixture yet a phenomenon, which however was neither scholarly nor historiographic.

During the 19th century, also earlier, the circumstances of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, also censorship, allowed only barely noticeable shadows of Islam and the Prophet in the literature of the high Awakening. At Istanbul, and as referred to earlier, Avedis Bērbērian, the continuator of the *History of Ch'amch'eants'* made no references to Islam and related themes in his detailed history that covered the 91 years (from March 3, 1769 to May 24, 1860, the day the Armenian National Constitution was completed and signed by the National Council). As discussed earlier, his account of the episode of the renewal of "Ēōmer's Pact" (allegedly by Caliph 'Umar in 637, to Jerusalem Armenians) by Sultan Mahmud II in 1811, was in many respects a deliberate and positive testimony of not only the Sultan, but Caliph 'Umar, the second successor of the Prophet. The episode clearly implied that centuries apart, these two Muslim figures were compassionate Muslim rulers.

A prolific author Yovsēp' H. Kat'rchian (1820-1882), great scholar and patriotic poet Ghewond Kerovp'ē Alishan (1820-1901), and philologist Parsegh Sarkissian (1852-1921), three Mkhitarist Catholic scholars continued the tradition of Ch'amch'iants' in the previous century. They maintained a safe distance from all Islamic-Armenian themes. Patriarch of Istanbul Maghakia Ōrmanian was not an exception.

In the East, the major figures of the Awakening, and to the first decades of the 20th century, were not Ottoman citizens and subject to any censorship. However, they shared the same academic indifference toward Islam. Some of these figures were Step'anos Nazaryants' (1812-1879), Mik'ayēl Nalpanyan (1829-1866), Catholicos (of Cilicia) Garegin I Yovsēp'yants' (1867-1952), Karapet Tēr Mkrtch'yan (1866-1915), Karapet Kostanyan (1853-1920), Manuk Abeghyan (1865-1944), Nikoghayos Adonts' (1871-1942), and Yakob Manandyan (1873-1952).

Karapet Tēr Mkrtch'yan wrote a minor essay titled "Muslim Rule and the Armenian Seminaries that Flourished Under its Yoke." He described the types and dimensions of oppression and unfair segregation by the Ottomans. He then recorded the success achieved by the Armenians, and the clergy in particular in the monastic centers. The reason, he explained, was their ideal to subsist and prosper and produce (literature) above all. "Liberation from the yoke of Muslim rule, even at the highest price, is a bliss not only for the Christian, but even for the Muslim", he concluded.¹

¹ Tēr Mkrtch'yan, "Muslim Rule", 591.

With the exception of passing remarks, Byzantine scholar, Nikoghayos Adonts' found no margin for Islam and the Prophet in his extensive studies. Yakob Manandyan made some adjustments in traditionally accepted dates of Arab invasions.² Manuk Abeghyan, the author of the monumental *History of Ancient and Medieval Armenian Literature*, saw clear influences of Arab culture on domestic life and urban folklore such as items of luxury, comfort, ornamentation, décor, lifestyles, clothing, utensils, motifs, and luxurious materials. However, he did not elaborate.³ Lēō,⁴ an exceptionally perceptive historian, was the first and only one in this generation to dedicate chapters to Islam and Islamic times in Armenia. To his contribution I shall refer below.

Only during the last decade of the 19th century in the Armenian East, and almost unexpectedly, interest in Islam as an alternative faith and a religious-political culture appeared in the literature. Four works, unprecedented in form, content and orientation marked a true dawn of Islamological scholarship.

A. K'EROVBĒ PATKANYAN'S PUBLICATION OF SIX ACCOUNTS OF MAHMET AND ISLAM, AS APPENDICES IN THE *HISTORY OF MKHIT'AR ANETS'I* (ST. PETERSBURG, 1879)

The credit for being the first philologist to locate and publish some medieval texts on the Prophet Muḥammad goes to K'erovbē Patkanyan in his publication of the *History of Mkhit'ar Anets'i* in 1879.⁵ Probably prompted by the longest reference to Mahmet in the *History* of Mkhit'ar, he took the initiative to identify similar references in medieval literature. In the Appendices he published these sections in the histories of T'ovma Artsruni, Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i-Daskhurants'i, Samuēl Anets'i, Vardan Arewelts'i and Kirakos Gandzakets'i.⁶ Together with Mkhit'ar's account, these six texts made a partial anthology of sorts, which however did not develop into a separate initiative in Islamic-Armenian studies. But in intent, this collection marked the beginning of Armenian Islamology.

Patkanyan's initiative did not meet the interest it deserved and needed among literary circles, at least in the East. Few decades later, in the next

² Manandyan, *Minor Studies*; Manandyan, *History of Armenia*.

³ Abeghyan, *History of Ancient and Medieval Armenian Literature*, vol. II, 4-9.

⁴ Lēō, *Collected Works*, vol. II.

⁵ Mkhit'ar, *History*, ed. Patkanyan.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 49-70.

century in the Ottoman world, then Vardapet Pappēn Gulēsērian started where Patkanyan left off. He planned to publish a series on *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*. Circumstances did not allow him to continue and after the first two texts (in one volume), published in Vienna, 1930, his work was interrupted by the call of duty to establish the Catholicosate of Cilicia (exiled from Sis, Cilicia in 1915) at Antelias in Lebanon in that year.

B. P'ILIBBOS VARDANYAN — TRANSLATION OF WASHINGTON IRVING'S
LIFE OF MAHOMET (TBILISI, 1894)

In Tbilisi, the center of the Armenian Awakening in the East, several works appeared just before the end of the 19th century. P'ilibbos Vardanyan published his translation of *Life of Mahomet* by Washington Irving (1783-1859).⁷ Vardanyan's *The Life of Mahmet*,⁸ in the Eastern Armenian dialect, reflected Irving's Western orientalist perception of Islam. A dedicated translator, Vardanyan simply wished to introduce the Armenians to world literature, from the Classics to Charles Dickens. He seemed to have come across a western biography of the Prophet and in a language he knew. Otherwise, Irving is positively disposed toward Muḥammad and his biography is a typically 19th century orientalist writing for a wide audience, with no scholarly interests and knowledge. Despite his critical and sometimes negative comments, Irving was genuinely fascinated by the person of the Prophet, the circumstances of the writing of the Qur'ān, life on the Arabian Peninsula, and the rise of Islam.

In his introduction Vardanyan wrote that it is surprising to see that nothing was ever written in Armenian literature about the life and teachings of someone like Muḥammad (betraying little acquaintance with the literature). He nevertheless added that he simply found the subject of Irving's book so interesting that he decided to translate it by personal initiative. A concise version of this translation was first published in *Nor Dar* in 1885, then in 1894 the complete translation.

C. A PIONEERING STUDY OF ISLAM — POLEMICS REVISITED BY
ERWAND T'OP'CH'YAN (TBILISI, 1899)

The very first and small study of 70 pages titled *Islam*, with a biography of Muḥammad by E. T'op'ch'yan was published in Tbilisi in 1899. The

⁷ Irving, *Life of Mahomet* (1850).

⁸ Irving, *Life of Mahmet*, trans. Vardanyan (1894).

subtitle is *An Illustrated Historical Survey*.⁹ He reminded the reader of centuries of persecution and bloodshed Armenians endured under Muslim rule. However, he added, “our literature paid little attention to Islam, and our people have very little knowledge of the religious doctrines, whose followers have been their enemies for centuries.”¹⁰

This very broad subject contained in a very small book has the following titles: The land/birthplace of Islam; Mahmet; What does the *Ghuran* preach? *Chēhad* (*jihād*) or holy war; The sects/heresies of Islam; Islam and science. At the end, there is a brief bibliography, or “sources”, as he put it. These are predominantly Russian authors, with the exception of Irving’s *Life of Mahomet*, which he probably read in Vardanyan’s translation in 1894.

T’op’chyan does not know Arabic, his citations are inaccurate and the transliterations randomly borrowed from Russian sources. In the first chapter about the “land/birthplace of Islam”, he described Arabia’s geographic location. Islam means to “surrender”, he explained.¹¹ He then briefly wrote about tribal life, ancient faiths, such as the Sabaeen religion in the south, paganism in Mecca, the status of the temple prior to Islam, pilgrimages and perpetual wars. “Mahmet is the great Prophet of the desert”, whose Islam was an “ingenious move” to unite the tribes, he concluded.¹² The biography of the Prophet is the theme of the next chapter. T’op’chyan’s Mahmet is a true and dedicated Prophet, also a shrewd and intelligent man, who knew how to reach his primitive people, unite and lead them to success and prosperity. He had to manipulate and lie, he added, but all for a worthwhile cause.

T’op’chyan simply demythologized Islam and the Prophet. Even his “Bahira” is an ordinary Nestorian monk at a monastery in Boşra, near Damascus, on the south-north route of the caravans. As a merchant, Mahmet met this monk in his travels.¹³ The role of “*Varaqa*” Ibn Naufal (a “relative” of Khadijah) and Mahmet’s supporter, are told as significant factors in the early phases of the latter’s mission. At age forty, related T’op’chyan, Mahmet had a visit from the Angel Gabriel, who gave him a scroll ordering him to “read” or “*ikra*.” The rest of this episode is narrated with matter-of-factness. Khadijah instantly accepted him as a “true Prophet.”¹⁴ Concerning

⁹ T’op’ch’yan, *Islam* (1899).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

his alleged miracles, wrote T'op'chyan, Mahmet had no choice but to stage fake miracles to persuade and impress the simple folk to accept his teachings and adopt Islam.¹⁵ Even the story of his visit to the heavens and meeting with God was an imaginary and intriguing tale made to impress his followers, and it did,¹⁶ so were his other tales of Paradise and martyrdom. Unlike almost all other previous Armenian biographies of Mahmet, T'op'chyan's version makes no mention of any Jewish involvement.

He then described a change in the personality and the strategies of the Prophet. Once left alone with his associates and the loyal followers of this city, wrote T'op'chyan, Mahmet changed his tactics from "the word" (*khōsk'*), as was the case in Mecca, to the "sword" (*sur*) as an "instrument of faith."¹⁷ In addition, he made diplomatic contacts and corresponded with the Byzantine and Persian states. He was also flexible in changing and shifting positions, such as allowing polygamy, while in the beginning he was in favor of monogamy.¹⁸ At his death, Mahmet had already prepared the foundations of an organized Muslim state. The "great Prophet" died in 632 by poisoning by his servant "K'aybar", said T'op'chyan categorically.¹⁹ His followers the Muslims, he added, simply continued what he started, and at the present (in 1899) there are eight million Muslims in the world.²⁰

In the next chapter titled "What does the *Ghurān* Preach?", he explained that the word *Kuran* comes from "*kora*", which means "reading" (establishing the fact that he did not know Arabic).²¹ Over a long period, he added, Mahmet dictated the verses to his scribes and listed four unfamiliar names. In time, a great volume of verses written on all sorts of subjects accumulated. T'op'chyan had a summary of the basic tenets and practices of Islam, always citing specific *sūrah*s and verses, almost all of which are inaccurate.

The title of Chapter 4, "*Chēhad*" or *jihād*, is printed beneath a sinister photograph of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, the "Red Sultan". The concept of *jihād*, he said, summarized the attitude of the Muslims toward the non-Muslims, and was the main factor in the speedy expansion of Islam.²² At the beginning of his career, Mahmet was a humble and peaceful preacher,

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 41-42.

he explained, but the unexpected number of followers and the success of his mission caused a shift in his personality. He became aggressive, brutal and belligerent. “Fight against the unbelievers”, said the *Ghuran*, “and let your faith be established everywhere” (according to him, Q8:40). As is the case of all his citations, there is no correspondence between the quoted verse and the given reference from the Qur’ān.

In the opinion of T’op’chyan, the Islamic concepts of *Dār al-Salām* and *Dār al-Ḥarb* inevitably divided the world. They gave supremacy to the first and legitimized a state of war between the two.²³ The vanquished non-Muslims had either to convert or pay taxes and obey. In case of refusal, they were exterminated.²⁴ At this point T’op’ch’yan introduced the famous “Oath of Ēōmer” (*Shurūt ‘Umar*) in 20 points (as discussed in Part Three, Chapter IV).

In view of the Muslims’ understanding of *jihād* and the laws imposed upon the non-Muslims, he observed, a vast space was opened before them to carry on destruction and inflict suffering with no impunity. He then brought the example of Turkey, and the massacres ordered by the new “caliph”, as Abdul-Hamid II proclaimed himself.²⁵ The rest of this chapter is a direct critique and accusation of Turkish politics at the time.

A survey of the sects/heresies of Islam — even though inaccurate — appears for the first time in Armenian literature in Chapter Five. T’op’chyan started by the rise of the Shī’īs, the supporters of the successors of ‘Alī (following debates of succession). He then briefly presented the Khārijīs, the Qarāmīṭah, the Fāṭimids, Wāhhābīs, al-Mu’tazilah, Alī-Ilāhīs, Bābists (*Bābiyyah*), Kearimkhanis (?). This chapter is a random collection of notes from various sources. The objective, as he gradually revealed, is to show the more progressive nature of the “heresies” in Islam as opposed to the reactionary Sunnī Ottoman establishment.²⁶ The relationship of Islam to the sciences, humanities and the arts is also discussed in Chapter 6.

D. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SHARĪ‘AH BY ATRPET (TBILISI?, 1899)

The first analysis of the *Sharī‘ah*, or Islamic Religious Law, or “*Sheriat*” (as used in the Turkish pronunciation in the book) was made in 1899 by Atrpet (Sargis Mubahyachian 1860-1937), a Hnch‘ak progressive intellectual

²³ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-67.

and author who came from an affluent family. He was born in Kars 1860, studied and lived in Istanbul, then migrated to Soviet Armenia and died in Giumri-Leninakan in 1937. He was the author of the *Tzhvzhik*, a masterpiece in Armenian black comedy.

Atrpet was a progressive activist, intellectual, and playwright with the objective to eliminate the Ottoman sultanate and establish a secular, democratic republic in Turkey. Born in a wealthy family of Kars, he studied in Istanbul. His father, a lawyer and prominent businessman, was a founding member of the Hnch'ak liberal party. After migrating to Armenia, Atrpet was exiled to Rostov with Ghazaros Aghayan and Shirvanzadē. Upon his return, he established and wrote in several periodicals, in addition authored a great number of studies, novels, short stories, and plays.

The title of his book is *Caliphate. Historical Investigation [Khalifat'. Patmakan Hetazotut'iwn]*.²⁷ This unprecedented study has a wide historical scope. It covers the events at the beginning of the 19th century, the consecutive reform projects in the ailing Ottoman Empire, the constitutional reforms, the Armenian "National Constitution" (*Azgayin Sahmanadrut'iwn*), constitutional ratifications and suspensions, and finally the massacres in 1990s. Atrpet focused on the chances of the institution of the Caliphate or "khalifat'", as he calls it, in the Ottoman Empire, the status of the *dhimmīs*, and the Armenians in particular. According to his information, at the end of the century there were seven million "Alevīs" (or Shī'ī Muslims), and hundred and fifty million Sunnīs worldwide.²⁸

In the first part, and in order to illustrate his comments, he cited quotations from the Qur'ān, which however, are inaccurate. He must have had a poor non-Arabic, probably Turkish version of the Qur'ān, which he does not mention. He wrote about the extreme efforts of Sultan Abdul Hamid II to acquire the title of "caliph", and his failure. He remained a self-acclaimed one to the end,²⁹ observed Atrpet, because he lacked the powers and jurisdiction in religious matters. Furthermore, given the nature of Islam as a political-religious system, all attempts to reform, modernize or democratize are doomed. He then listed some of the atrocities and oppressive measures of the sultans and their associates.³⁰

Atrpet granted the historicity of the "Oath of 'Umar", as presented in T'op'chyan's *Islam* in twenty points (cited previously). Among the

²⁷ Atrpet, *Khalifat'* (New Nakhijewan, 1899).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

illustrations in support of it, he quoted the story of a sultan reminding a Christian boy that he was not allowed to wear bright colors, as the Muslims did.³¹ This was just an example of stipulations about *ghiyār*. In order to demonstrate that the Ottoman sultan is not and cannot claim to be “Caliph” in Turkey, where the religious institution is powerful and independent, he listed some aspects of the position of the caliph in Islam and some debates in this respect. These are double duties, he said, both secular and political, such as the duty to preserve and defend the Qur’ān, as he says. He believed that the debate about the sultan’s claims of being a caliph are inconclusive. The Ottoman sultan is just a deputy, he said. The caliph is the sole authority in Mecca and all other locations, the sultan is not. The Ottoman sultan has no jurisdiction over religious matters.³²

In Part II, titled “*Shēriat*” (*Sharī‘ah*) Atrpet clearly stated that under the circumstances, all reformist efforts were doomed because they were faced with unsurmountable obstacles presented by Islam.³³ Even after the fanatical and brutal “*Yenich‘eris*” (Janissaries) were liquidated, nothing changed, he wrote. Basic Islamic rules and norms dominate the public mind, and it is impossible to introduce any reform, he concluded.³⁴ He then observed that Mahmet shrewdly succeeded in creating a community that had the potential, and indeed did develop into a powerful state, with the Qur’ān as its constitution, or the Codex.³⁵ As things are, the Muslim community considered itself “God-chosen.”

He concluded that the Christians found themselves in a desperate position in any Islamic state.³⁶ The Islamic religious law is a divine constitution and cannot be trespassed or altered for any reason, even for reform or modification.³⁷ God is one and eternal, so is the “*Shereat*’.”³⁸ Consequently, the sultan and all public officials must make sure that the status quo is maintained as per the Qur’ānic laws.³⁹ The “decrees” (*hrovartak*) issued to liberate the Christian population are superficial and ineffective. In the Ottoman Empire, the *jizya* on non-Muslims, said Atrpet, was re-named as “*bedelet askariyē*” (meaning that the Christians were not allowed in the

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³² *Ibid.* 16-29.

³³ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 43.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

army, and instead paid a tax). Practically, he concluded, the Christians are not protected by the law.⁴⁰

E. A GENUINE APOLOGY FOR AND PRAISE OF ISLAM BY DAWIT'
ROSTOMYANTS' (BAKU? c.1880s)

Probably the most unexpected work on Islam and the Prophet in the entire Armenian literature is an apology for Islam and a high praise of the "true Prophet" "Mohammēt" in particular. This is *Mohammēt and the Birth of Islam* (*Mohammēt ew Islami Tsnundē*) by Dawit' Yarut'iwnyan-Rostomyants', written in 1880s.⁴¹

This obscure booklet of forty-one pages, has no date, no publisher and no place of publication. Originally from Tbilisi, Rostomyants' was a resident of Baku. He was a medical "head-physician" (*bzhshkapet*), a philanthropist, and a staunch believer in the importance of education. He was active from 1860s to early 1910s. In 1864, his name was mentioned as one of the founding members of the Philanthropic Society of the Armenians of Baku, and its president from 1864 to 1869.

There is some indirect information about him in Gēorg Step'anyan's *History of the Armenians of Baku*.⁴² The section on the "Philanthropic Society of the Armenians of Baku" (*Pakwi Hayots' Mardasirakan Ėnkerut'iwn*). The society lasted from 1864-1920. There is no other positive or negative reference, as far as I am aware, to the book of Rostomyants'.

The society he founded was the first in its kind, it was initiated by the Russian imperial authorities and was subject to its regulations. The constitution was prepared by Dawit' Rostomyants' and Movsēs Zohrapyan. It was ratified by the Russian authorities in May 21, 1864. In 1870 the board had eight members, who also raised a modest fund by their own donations in order to start its programs. Step'anos Nazaryants', a prominent figure of the Eastern Armenian Enlightenment, wrote an article supporting this society in *Hiwsisap'ayl*. There is a summary of their constitution in S. Aṙak'elyan's article. According to her, as part of Tsarist persecutions of Armenians, the Society was suspended, and its cultural activities and institutions closed. The Armenian language was prohibited, intellectuals persecuted and jailed. Only after 1906 these measures began to be lifted.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 87.

⁴¹ Rostomyants', *Mohammēt and the Birth of Islam*.

⁴² Step'anyan, *The History of the Armenians of Baku*, 189-196.

⁴³ See Aṙak'elyan, "Concerning the Constitution", 186-188.

Mohammēt and the Birth of Islam has no introduction, it is written as a running text, with no titles and structure. It is in the Eastern Armenian dialect, mixed with vernacular and in barely acceptable grammar and spelling.

This is probably the only work of Rostomyants'. His name does not appear anywhere in the literature of the period. It is obvious that he has had no formal education in the Armenian language and literature. Muḥammad is transliterated inconsistently as Mohammēt, Mohamēt, Mōhammet and Islam as "Muhammedism" or *Mohamētakanut' iwn*. Nowhere in the book he explained, even indirectly, his objective, or the reasons and circumstances of his unprecedented initiative. He simply gave to the press a bold apology for Islam and a high praise for its "true Prophet" Muḥammad. He avoided political Islam and Ottoman politics in the region, also the accounts in Armenian literature of the experiences of the Christians, and the Armenians in particular, in the Islamic world past and present.

Rostomyants' does not know Arabic. His sources are western and primarily French orientalis. Other than some obscure names, he makes no specific references. The first few pages are devoted to the beginnings of Western interests in Islam, hostile attitudes as well as historical approaches, such as Voltaire's, as he indicated. He rejected all offensive comments about the Prophet and efforts to discredit his teachings.⁴⁴ He is also unaware — at least in the book — of texts and comments about Islam and the Prophet in Armenian literature.

In order to establish the superior character of the Prophet, he introduces many tales, again with no mention of sources, about the Prophet's life and relationships. He seems to have read the Qur'ān, but in a western language, probably French, the proper names are in poor and inconsistent transliterations. He has no doubts about the prophethood of Muḥammad, and considered his mission "holy and legitimate" (*surb ew ōrinawor*).⁴⁵ He repeatedly asked his reader not to compare Islam with the mystical and grand Oriental religions, Greek mythology and Christianity. Islam, he explained, is a unique and authentic religion for a specific people in a specific part of the world and time. It is an "open", "liberal" and "down-to-earth" religion, which has its roots on the surface, nothing hidden, nothing mysterious and nothing supernatural.⁴⁶ The Qur'ān is what it is, a "holy book."

⁴⁴ Rostomyants', *Mohammēt*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

According to his story, the verses of the Qurān were written on bones, clothing, planks. The fragments were brought together by Caliph ‘Umar. It was he who defined the political role and aspects of Islam and the necessity to spread it into the entire world. He considered Caliph ‘Umar the Apostle Paul of Islam and practically its “founder.”⁴⁷ Waraqa, he said, an “uncle” of Khadījah, was Islam’s John the Baptist, for he predicted, identified and supported Muḥammad⁴⁸ as the “expected one” the Messiah for the Arabs.⁴⁹ Sadly, however, he added “the real *Ghuran* will never be known”⁵⁰ and doubted the credibility of the *Ḥadīth*.⁵¹ “Mohammēt” is doubtlessly a real historical figure, he said. He was a modest man, who epitomized the Arab genius and the Arab noble ethos.⁵² Unlike many peoples, the Arabs, he explains, had no mythology, because they were “down-to-earth people.” It was by historical necessity that “Mohammēt” had to appear at a time when Arabia was at the climax of its “intellectual excellence.” A strictly monotheistic and simple faith, as Islam is, was a timely development.⁵³

Ṛostomyants’ found it necessary to include a brief biography of the Prophet, his early life and travels to al-Shām (which he calls *Assyria* or *Asorestan*, a medieval term). Truly, he says, he was called “*al-Amīn*” or “the loyal one.” He then stopped at length at *Mohammēt*’s tenderness toward his grandchildren Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, the sons of ‘Alī and his daughter Fātimah, and lamented their “barbaric assassinations.”⁵⁴ The Prophet had two weaknesses, he said, love of women and perfumes and asked his reader to be tolerant toward these insignificant faults. He believed that the Prophet knew the Old and New Testaments well,⁵⁵ and chose to preach a “simple and moderate faith.”⁵⁶ Finally, he praised conversions and martyrdoms — both ways — as “sweet” and genuine expressions of true faith.⁵⁷ Ṛostomyants’ is particularly critical of all the “renegade” Islamic sects, such as, the Qarāmiṭah, the Fāṭimids, the Ismā‘īlīs, the Drūze, and the “Ḥashshāshūn.” There is a strong possibility that he was familiar with T’op’ch’yan, who was at Tbilisi at the time.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

At the end, he highly praised the language and the style of the Qur'ān. It maintained the high standards of the literary traditions of the Arabs at the same time shifting to prose, he said. "Mohammēt", he added, did not know the art of poetry well and made some errors, but his prose was superb.⁵⁸ The concluding section is the most unexpected: "The true faith of the masses", wrote Ṛostomyants', "is not sufficient to preserve a religion and insure its continuity." It is therefore necessary, he concluded, to unite the religious and secular powers in the head of the state. He stopped short of suggesting the classic model of the early Caliphate as the ideal form of governance.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

CHAPTER II

THREE ARMENIAN *GHURANS* AND BIOGRAPHIES OF MAHMET — 1909-1912

The 20th century started with a sudden interest in the Qur'ān and the Prophet. Three full translations of the Qur'ān were published from 1909 to 1912, two in Varna (from Arabic), and one in Istanbul (from French). Each translation had a biography of the Prophet attached. Together they made the second group of translations, the first one being in the 17th-18th centuries. The third group of translations was made a century later, at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the next.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II launched his project of ethnic cleansing in the empire as soon as he took office in 1876. After the end of the Russian-Turkish war in 1878, the population of the Armenian provinces was already in a state of terror. By 1890s, sporadic massacres of various dimensions in the Armenian provinces were escalating.

I suggest that in the aftermath of the Hamidian Massacres of 1894-1896, and the massacres in Cilicia in 1909, the motives of the Qur'ān translations and biographies of the Prophet during the first years of the twentieth century, were politically motivated.

A. ABRAHAM AMIRKHANYANTS' AND AN ISLAMIC "TRILOGY": A BIOGRAPHY OF MUHAMMAD, THE GHURAN AND A POLEMICAL TREATISE (TBILISI, VARNA, 1904-1910)

Abraham Amirkhanyants' (1838-1913), was the author of three works related to Islam, an "Islamic trilogy" of sorts, published at Varna in 1909. The first book was a relatively modern polemical biography of the Prophet, titled simply *Muhammēd* (first published in Tbilisi, 1904).¹ The centerpiece of the trilogy was a full translation of the Qur'ān from Arabic, in the modern Eastern Armenian dialect, titled *Ghuran* (as promised in the biography). The third volume of this trilogy is a polemical treatise entitled *What is the Ghuran, do you Know? (Inch' ē Ghuranē Gites?,* also published separately).

¹ Amirkhanyants', *Muhammēd*; Amirkhanyants', *What is the Ghuran?* (Varna, 1909); *Ghuran*, trans. Amirkhanyants' (from Arabic); 2nd ed. (Varna, 1910).

Originally from Karabagh, Amirkhanyants' was a protestant pastor, established at Varna, and free from Turkish censorship. After the Russian Turkish war of 1877-1878, Bulgaria was nominally under Ottoman suzerainty, it was officially independent in 1908. Amirkhanyants' was actively involved in relief work and assistance to Armenian refugees fleeing persecution and massacres in Turkey during 1890s.

Muhammēd

Published in 1904, *Muhammēd* was the first in its kind in modern Armenian literature. This relatively small book of hundred and twelve pages was prepared as an introduction to the translation of the *Ghuran*, that appeared five years later. His source, said Amirkhanyants', was Muslim "historian Rovzet ul-Ahbab", and "some prominent European orientalisks."² In his Introduction he wrote: "Even though we Armenians are surrounded by the followers of *Muhammēd* and for 1300 years we have suffered many evils at their hands and still do, very few of us know about the biography of that Arab Prophet."³

Following "Rovzet", Amirkhanyants' mentioned that there were numerous unfavorable biographies, and listed only "four credible biographers of Muḥammēd: Ibn Ishāq (d. 151), Ibn Hishām (d. 213), al-Wāqidī (d. 207) and Ibn 'Uqbā (? , d. 230)."⁴ According to his sources, Muḥammad was born in Mecca in 571, and died at Medīnah on June 8, 632. He then includes a very long citation from "Rovzet" without references, about the visions/revelations of "Muḥammēd", and the episode where the angel asked him to read, or "*ikra*",⁵ also other proofs of his prophethood.⁶ He also lists other types of revelations.⁷ "Muḥammēd's life had two major phases", he wrote, the first is to age 41 in Mecca, the second to the year 632 at Medīnah and death there. In his description of the second phase, Amirkhanyants' introduced some arguments against his prophethood.⁸

The second part of the book is a direct critique, based on elaborate accounts — as he considered them — of the Medīnan decade of the

² The latter's book is in Persian, titled, Alā' u'llāh bin Faḍlullāh, *Nuskah-yi Rauzat al-Aḥbāb fī siyar al-Nabī va al-āl va al-Aṣḥāb*, 3 vols (Aminabad, 1880).

³ Amirkhanyants', *Muhammēd*, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, the quotation is on 17-22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

Prophet's life. In 623, he wrote, the Medīnans were already weary of the "followers of Muḥammēd", who supported themselves by robbing the caravans passing through the city. Muḥammad however, justified these acts by issuing special "*surē*"s (*sūrahs* in Turkish pronunciation), and making warfare part of religious ethics. He then achieved consecutive victories at the battles of Badr, Uḥud and al-Khandaq. In 627, continues Amirkhanyants', Muḥammad sent letters to the Greek and Persian emperors explaining his claims and demands.⁹

During the next year, in 628, he carried out minor excursions in the surrounding areas.¹⁰ In the seventh year of al-Hijrah to Medīnah, in 629, Muḥammēd made his famous pilgrimage to Mecca, and in 630 he entered the city victoriously.¹¹ In 632 there were already disputes over his succession. It was at this time that Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd was sent to military missions.¹² Quoting his source "Rovzet", Amirkhanyants' warned his readers of vicious stories about Muḥammēd and added that his book was just for information and a reference to compare him with Jesus.¹³

Ghuran

In form and content, the *Ghuran* of Amirkhanyants' was the first translation from Arabic in modern times. He wrote in the spoken modern Eastern Armenian dialect. His style, grammar and vocabulary in finding appropriate words and phrases for the Arabic originals, are barely average but definitely not academic. He used idioms and vernacular forms with no scruples. His knowledge of Arabic too is problematic. The titles of the *sūrahs* appear in poorly transliterated forms, and in general, the transliterations are not from Arabic but Turkish, such as "*fatihet*" (*fātiḥah*), "*surē*" (*sūrah*).

This translation, however, must have been popular, for it was followed by a second edition within a year. Recently I noticed that this particular *Ghuran* of Amirkhanyants' in libraries is considered the "only" Armenian translation. I have also but occasionally seen the translation of Lewon Larents' (1911), and rarely that of Kurbēt'ian (1912).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹² *Ibid.*, 95.

¹³ *Ibid.* 112.

*What is the Ghuran, Do You Know? [Ghuraně Inch' ē Gites?]*¹⁴

This polemical treatise is written more systematically. It has a great number of citations and references from specific *sūrahs* and verses. Amirkhanyants' addresses his compatriots the Armenians, who at the time lived under threat and aggression. "O my beloved Armenians, I beg you ...", is an opening and closing sentence for this text. He refers to the Muslim Turks, the Kurds, and the Persians, but never to the Arabs. In general, the Arabs are almost absent in the literature of these times. On few occasions, Amirkhanyants' observed that since the majority of the Armenians lived among Muslims — some happily approving their ways, especially in the greater urban centers such as Istanbul — they should be instructed about the true nature of Islam, its Prophet and their *Ghuran*. "O Armenians, I beg you", he wrote, "please understand what a weak and untrue book the *Ghuran* is." It is nothing but a collection of contradictory and confused verses. It was for this reason that the Muslims were reluctant to translate and show it to others, he explained.¹⁵ It was Caliph Uthmān, according to him, who gave the text some structure and form, but still, even the Muslims themselves do not understand the *Ghuran*, he explained.

After some points about the life of the Prophet, in the remaining two thirds of the book Amirkhanyants' discussed what he called the "contradictions" in the Qur'ān. He quoted specific verses and compared them to others that cancelled them, in his view. He concluded the book as he started, "O beloved Armenians" you must love and help each other." Being involved in philanthropic and rescue work of migrants and refugees from the Turkish side, he was probably campaigning for aid and assistance. The Armenians in the east were overwhelmed by the arrivals, some on the mainland in 1915, even wanted to drive the refugees from Van back as "Turkish Armenians."

Paradoxically, but as a "true" Christian, at the end Amirkhanyants' urged his audience to love and help their Muslim neighbors to understand the Bible and recognize their errors. He concluded, "Let the all-powerful God bless and assist us in these noble objectives, by the Holy Spirit and by the love of Jesus Christ, Amen."¹⁶

¹⁴ Amirkhanyants', *What is the Ghuran?*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

B. *K'URAN* — TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH, AND BIOGRAPHY BY
LEWON LARENTS' (ISTANBUL, 1911)

Less than two years after the publication of the second edition of the *Ghuran* of Amirkhaneants' at Varna, a translation from a French version by Lewon Larents' (K'irishchian, 1875-1915), entitled *K'uran*, was published at Istanbul in the West, in modern Western Armenian.¹⁷

Unlike Amirkhanyants', Larents', a Hnch'ak intellectual, journalist and translator, made no comment on the truth of the holy book of the Muslims, nor expressed any opinion about the Prophet. He maintained a neutral position and focused on translating the text and briefly presenting the founder of the faith, Muḥammad. Both the translation and the biography suffer of many inaccuracies but are conspicuously positive and reserved. His source for both, mentioned Larents', was M. Savari's (?) translation in French, also Carlyle's (?) and Davenport's (?) English translations. In his foreword to the *K'uran*, he wrote that his aim was to introduce the Armenians to the faith and the culture of the peoples among whom they lived for thirteen centuries. The introduction of the *K'uran* to the Armenian public, he added, would promote "inter-racial solidarity and reconciliation," then added:

The *K'uran*, or by a more common term the *Shēriat*', is the cornerstone of the Ottoman state, upon which the judicial laws are developed. It is also the expression of the daily life of the Muslim peoples, and the inspiration of their norms and attitudes ... It would be very important to spread this translation wherever the Armenian people live in the proximity of Muslims.¹⁸

C. *MUHAMMĒT, GURAN* — TRANSLATION FROM ARABIC, AND BIOGRAPHY,
BY HAGOP KURBĒT'IAN (VARNA, 1912)

Muhammēt, Guran, translated from Arabic by Yakob Kurbēt'ian was published at Varna, in 1912.¹⁹ This translation in modern Western Armenian is mediocre but meticulously literal. Kurbēt'ian does not impress the reader as someone who knows enough Arabic for a venture as ambitious as translating the Qur'ān. Arabic words are transliterated in heavily Turkish

¹⁷ *Kuran with Biography*, trans. Larents'.

¹⁸ Միջ-դեղալիկ Համերաշխութիւն. *Ibid.*, Introduction, d.

¹⁹ *Muhammēt, Guran*, trans. Kurbēt'ian. On the title page, below the title, it is written "Based on the Arabic original, and with reference to the translations of authoritative Arabologists Cazmirski and Amirkhan, and other Arabologists."

forms, thus, *Sūrat al-Tawbah* has become “*Surē T‘evbē*.” Many *sūrahs* have no titles. His Western Armenian is in fact the dialect of Istanbul, and not the literary language.

In his Introduction, he observed that for “300 million followers” the “*Guran*” was the foundation of their faith. It shaped the destiny of many peoples, especially that of the Armenians. Consequently, understanding it was essential. He too identified the Qur’ān with Islamic Law, or the “*Shēraat*” as he put it. Consequently, he said, having the Armenian version was a necessity for most Armenians, who lived under Muslim rule. His translation, he added, was to fill in a gap and respond to a need. In order to facilitate the reading and clarifying vague points, additional information has been added in italic in the notes, as he explained. The biography at the beginning was to introduce the reader to the life and work of “Muhammēt.”²⁰

At the end there is an index of proper names, locations, terms and subjects (pages 641-654), which he borrowed from the translation of Amirkhanyants’. Without this index, he said, “it was impossible to imagine a more tedious (*chapagh*) and untidy (*kharn-khuṛn*) book.”

The biography of the Prophet is on ten pages, taken from more or less classic sources. Kurbēt’ian does not have any references. The following is his narrative briefly: At Medīnah, and after having a good number of followers, Muhammēt became arrogant and aggressive. By promises of pleasures of the Islamic “*jennet*” (Paradise in Turkish pronunciation)²¹ also by threats and violence, he managed to subjugate and convert the people of Mecca. He also succeeded in expanding into the Byzantine and Persian lands and by religious wars, he conquered them. With an indirect reference to an initial arrangement concerning the non-Muslims, in 631, the ninth year of the Hijrah,²² Muhammēt asked ‘Alī, his paternal cousin and son-in-law, to issue a decree (*hrovartak*) to exterminate the pagans and ask the Christians and the Jews to pay taxes in return to their protection by the Islamic authorities. In fear and under compulsion, many heads of tribes and military men submitted and converted.²³ In the tenth year of the Hijrah, he continues, ‘Alī was sent to al-Yemen, where the people were Christians and Jews, and returned with gold and treasures. It was during this year, in 632, that Muhammēt made a last pilgrimage to Mecca

²⁰ *Ibid.*, IV-XIV.

²¹ *Ibid.*, X.

²² *Ibid.*, XI

²³ *Ibid.*, XI.

and “performed all the duties that were previously performed by the pagans.”²⁴ “He only removed the statues of the pagan gods, leaving only the Black Stone, and completed the traditional rites, not to offend the Arabs.”²⁵ At the time in Arabia, there appeared other prophets too, but the caliphs dismissed them all.²⁶ When the Prophet fell ill, disputes broke out over his succession among his close associates and relatives. He died in “the lap of his wife Ayshē” on June 8, 632.²⁷ It was after his death and at the hands of his successors Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and Uthmān, that the Qur’ān took its final form, and all other fragments were destroyed.²⁸

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, XI-XII.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, XII.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, XIV.

CHAPTER III

“IMPLIED ISLAMOLOGY” IN THE 20th CENTURY PHILOLOGY, ARABOLOGY, POLITICS

After World War I, and following massacres and deportations of almost the entire Armenian population of Turkey, an “implied Islamology” developed in the literature. These were philological, historical, or so-called Arab-Armenian, and political studies of the Armenian *Pax Islamica*.

A. PHILOLOGICAL — K'. PATKANYAN AND P. GULĒSĒRIAN

Two major philologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries initiated a small yet absolutely important literature about texts related to Islam. As mentioned, the first was K'erovbē Patkanyan, the publisher of the *History of Mkhit'ar*, the second was Papgēn Gulēsērian.

It was Patkanyan's six appendices and Mkhit'ar's *History*, then his accidental discovery at Istanbul of *Against the Tajiks* of Grigor Tat'ewats'i that motivated Gulēsērian to initiate a broad project. He decided not only to publish *Against the Tajiks* by Grigor Tat'ewats'i separately, but to collect, study and classify and prepare a critical edition of all that was written about Islam and “Islamism” (“*tachkut'iwn*”) before and after Tat'ewats'i. Gulēsērian found an initiative of this nature important because, according to him, Armenians did not have the remotest idea about Islam, under which they lived in the Turkish state and its constitution. He wrote:

I thought that after the Ottoman *Meshruiyat'* (constitutional reform) Turks and Armenians would gather under a free banner, and both needed to understand the other better. According to my humble opinion, my planned study would serve the Armenian population of Turkey. But my plan did not meet with success.¹

The reasons for the interruption were administrative duties, his illness and travel to the US. He returned to Jerusalem in 1922, and after the publication of the first in series on Islam in Armenian literature in 1930, he was summoned to Antelias in 1930 as coadjuter to Catholicos Sahak II

¹ Gulēsērian, *Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature*, 5.

Khabayan (r. 1902-1939), at Antelias in Lebanon. His library and research notes for this project left at Angura, Behesni, were destroyed, together with the entire library of manuscripts of the historic Red Monastery (*Karmirvank'*) there.² The title of the series is *Islam in Armenian Medieval Literature*. The first two volumes, published together, were Grigor's *Against the Tajiks* and *Excerpts from the K'ashun by Mkhit'ar Anets'i*. Even though primarily philological, this series would have been an appropriate beginning for Islamic-Armenian studies.

B. "ARABOLOGY" (*ARABAGITUT' IWN*) — ISLAM IN THE CONTEXT OF ARAB-ARMENIAN HISTORIES — B. KHALAT'YAN (1919), LĒŌ (1930s), Y. NALPANTYAN (1965), A. TĒR GHEWONDYAN (1980s)

Medieval as well as modern Armenian historians have often referred to primary Arab sources on Armenia and Armenians, especially when the latter coincided with or served their own narratives and perspectives. Few historians from the Republic of Armenia specialized in Arab-Armenian histories and Arabic language and literature. These are identified as "Arab-ists" (*arabagēt*) and their discipline as "Arabology" (*arabagitut' iwn*). Even though Islam and Muslims were indirectly referred to, but Islamic studies proper were not part of their training, research and interests. The approach, subject matter and perspectives barely if at all touched Islamic-Armenian interactive history.

1. *Bagrat Khalat'yants'*

The initiator of Arab-Armenian studies was Bagrat Khalat'yants' (1860-1935). He was mainly interested in the information the Arab authors provided on the geography of historic Armenia. In 1919 he published, in his translation, excerpts related to Armenia and Armenians from al-Balādhurī, Ibn Miskaway, al-Ṭabarī, Ya'qūbī, and Ibn al-Athīr in *Medieval Arab Authors on Armenia*.³ In his Introduction Khalat'yants' wrote that the Prophet united the Arabian peninsula and the Arab tribes under a single ideology. He considered the development of Arab historiography, geography, sciences and literature a result of the military conquests and expansion. However, he also added that the Islamic Empire never reached the high levels of intellectual and scientific progress that the Greeks, Romans and Persians did.⁴

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ Khalat'yants', *Medieval Arab Authors*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

2. Lēō (*Arak'el Babakhanyan*)

The first and to date the only historian who dedicated an entire chapter to “Islam” and another on “Islam in Armenia” — at least in his generation and times — was Lēō (1860-1932), a contemporary of Khalat'yants', in his massive *History of the Armenians*.⁵ These chapters in volume III were probably written during the third decade of the century, as part of his lectures at the newly established Yerevan State university.

Lēō considered Islam a “religious system” for the Bedouin peoples. These tribes, he observed, were perpetually involved in blood feuds, laws of vengeance and desert lifestyles. He highly praised the role of Muḥammad in merging the population of the peninsula in a single religio-political unit and giving them a common book of laws, a codex.⁶ Lēō was aware of the translation of the Qur'ān by Amirkhanyants' at Varna in “1908” (instead of 1909).⁷ Following the latter, he too spoke of changes in the personality and teachings of Muḥammad after his rise to fame. He became more violent, and ambitious, he wrote. “As his popularity rose, success spoiled him. He turned war into the cornerstone of his teachings ... holy war became a terrible and destructive principle.”⁸ At his death, said Lēō, Muḥammad had managed to create an entire political organization that united the Arab world and achieved a centuries-old dream. After conquering Byzantine Syria, he turned to Iran and further, and⁹ Islam spread by the sword, he concluded.¹⁰

There is nothing unique or original in the dogmas of Islam, observed Lēō. They are mostly borrowed from existing faiths, they lack imagination and philosophical sophistication.¹¹ Again, following Amirkhanyants', he emphasized the success of Muḥammad in establishing laws in the first place. He was primarily a “lawmaker”, he said, and had his Apostle Paul in Caliph 'Uthmān. This is how Lēō described Islam:

Arab thinking is simple and primitive, the basic principle of *la ilaha illa Allāh* is a simple statement, and this Allāh is a willful, despotic and unpredictable deity.¹² Islam is fatalistic, legalistic and requires the primacy of obedience.

⁵ Lēō, *Collected Works*, vol. II.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 277-278.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 279-280.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹² *Ibid.*

In all cases, Muḥammad knew how to kindle faith in the minds of the common people.¹³

Following the authors of the late 19th century, T'op'ch'yan and Atrpet in particular, Lēō in turn believed that Islam created a dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims, the believers and the blasphemers¹⁴ between *Dār al-Salam* and *Dār al-Ḥarb*.¹⁵ He gave credit to Caliph 'Umar, who on behalf of the Prophet, put the basic principles of the relations between the Caliphate and its non-Muslim subjects, the *dhimmīs*.¹⁶ In this context, Lēō explained the meaning of *jihād*, as he saw it.¹⁷ In his reference to the fall of Jerusalem to 'Umar, Lēō expressed relief for the deliverance of the Armenians from Byzantine harassment.¹⁸ He discussed at some length the case of succession, talked about 'Alī, the latter's connections to Iranian royalty, exploitation of the conflict by the Persians, the rise of Shī'ism as a radically Persian nationalist initiative to create a "Persian Islam" as distinct from and against "Arab Islam" and the consequences of this development.¹⁹ He wrote:

The Persians nationalized Islamic doctrines [*vardapetut'iwn*]. They maintained Zoroastrian elements, Hellenistic-Neo-Platonic, even oriental elements in Shī'ī Islam. Sufism is an aspect of it. Shī'ism is simply the left wing of Islam, a heresy of sorts.²⁰

Lēō then explained the role of the Imām in the hierarchical system of Shī'ism.²¹ In Chapter II, "Islam in Armenia",²² he gave basic information. He had a very intriguing comment about the condition of the Armenians in the regional conflict between the Arabs and the Byzantines. The Armenians, he said, were fighting against the Arabs in two battles: along the Greeks in the Battle of Yarmūk (636), and on the side of the Persians in the Battle of *al-Qādisiyyah* (637).²³ Lēō also referred to the Islamic pacts with importance. The first is a version of Shurūṭ 'Umar, but did not

¹³ *Ibid.* 283.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 284-288.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 289-308.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

²¹ *Ibid.* 307-8.

²² *Ibid.*, 309-343.

²³ *Ibid.*, 313.

elaborate.²⁴ He also mentioned the “Pact of Caliph ‘Uthmān” through Mu‘āwiyah in 653 (must be 652) with T‘ēodoros ʔshtuni (his source is Sebēos).²⁵ He then discussed the pacts by Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah in 651-2 (must be 654) with the people of Dwin, and another with the Georgians (his source is Ghewond).²⁶ There is no mention of the posthumous oath given to catholicoi Sahak III in 703, and the next one to Ōdznets‘i in 719.

3. *Yakob Nalpanyan*

The next author who translated excerpts from Arab histories is Yakob Nalpanyan. *Arab Sources on Armenia and Neighboring Countries* is a collection of excerpts from Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī (1178-1229), Abu’l-Fidā’ (1273-1331) and Ibn Shaddād (1145-1134).²⁷ The translation is barely acceptable, and he does not seem to have gone beyond this first initiative.

4. *Aram Tēr Ghewondyan*

Probably the most dedicated author to Arab-Armenian history was Aram Tēr Ghewondyan (originally from Egypt, 1928-1988, migrated to Armenia). Almost single-handedly and for the first time, he not only made significant material from Arab histories available in Armenian, but first-hand information on the Arab Period in Armenia. He was indeed a trailblazer in Arab-Armenian history. He translated with elaborate introductions and notes, excerpts from Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kamil fī’l-Ta’rīkh* (1981) in *Arab Sources 9th-10th centuries* (2005). He also translated into modern Eastern Armenian Ghewond’s *History*, with introduction and notes (1982). His *Collected Articles* (2003) were published by his son and “continuator” of Arab-Armenian studies, Vahan Tēr Ghewondyan.²⁸

Tēr Ghewondyan has several important articles indirectly related to Islamic-Armenian studies.²⁹ His article titled “The Christian Arabs and the Armenians in the Middle Ages” is basic research necessary for any study,³⁰

²⁴ *Ibid.* 288-289.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 322-323.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 320-321.

²⁷ Nalpanyan, *Arab sources on Armenia*.

²⁸ Tēr Ghewondyan, *Arab Sources II*; Ghewond, *History*, trans. Tēr Ghewondyan; *Arab sources III*; Tēr Ghewondyan, *Collected Articles*.

²⁹ Tēr Ghewondyan, *Collected Articles* (Yereva, 2003).

³⁰ Tēr Ghewondyan, “*K’ristoneay Arabnerē ew Hayerē Mijndarum*” [The Christian Arabs and Armenians in the Middle Ages], in *Ibid.*, 85-89.

and an important study of Arab and Armenian authors.³¹ In an article on “The Revolt of 703”, he has a brief section on the episode of Catholicos Sahak III. According to him, the latter was back in Armenia (from Damascus), when he was delegated by the *nakharars* to meet Muḥammad Ibn Marwān at Ḥarrān. Following a revolt by pro-Byzantine aristocracy in 702/3, and retaliatory measures and persecutions, the Umayyads decided to dissolve these houses in order to eliminate their Byzantine alliances and establish total sovereignty.³² Sahak’s plea was posthumously successful, says Tēr Ghewondyan. “A written oath was granted by the hand of Muḥammad” in 703 (repeating Draskhanakertts’i).³³ This renewed oath was primarily a promise to stop the bloodshed, allow freedom of worship, restore privileges of the church, rather than a political one, as was the case of the 652 and 654 treaties. Even though perceived and organized in a primarily nationalist framework, the work of Aram Tēr Ghewondyan is a major contribution to Arab-Armenian history.

C. *PAX ISLAMICA* REVISITED — MAHMET AS OATH-GIVER AND
GUARANTOR — LEON ARPEE (1946), L. MINASSYANTS’ (1972),
Y. ANASSYAN (1980)

The revival of interest in the Armenian *Pax Islamica* and the related texts in the 20th century was an intriguing phenomenon in the literature and part of political studies. The traditional subject of the “Edict of Mahmet”, also the decrees of ‘Umar I, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī were revisited. From 1899 to 1981, five historians took up the subject of the alleged Islamic pacts to Armenians, in different perspectives and with no trace of polemical intent. This is an aspect that must be emphasized. These authors are: E. T’op’chyan (in 1899), Lēō (in 1920s), L. Arpee (in 1940s), L. Minassyan’s (in 1970s), and Y. Anassyan (in 1980s). Their accounts have been discussed in Chapter Three on *Pax Islamica*.

None of these authors was under any threat of censorship or ban in their locations. Arpee, Minassyan’s and Anassyan in particular attached great political significance to the texts, considering them authentic documents.

³¹ Tēr Ghewondyan, “*Hay ew K’ristoneay Arabakan Matenagrakan Arēnch’ut’iwnneri Patmut’iwnits’*” [“From the History of Relations Between Armenian and Arab Christian Literature”], in *Ibid.*, 57-63.

³² Tēr Ghewondyan, “703 *T’wakani Yeghap’okhut’iwnē*” [“The Revolt of 703”], in *Ibid.*, 33-45, 41.

³³ Բան իրարման ի ձեռն գրոյ, as in Draskhanakertts’i, *History*, 39.

Thus, at the end of the 20th century, Muḥammad re-emerged in Armenian literature not as a “false prophet” or “aggressor”, but as a trusted “oath-giver”, a maker of a divine covenant, a guarantor, and a supreme reference for the regulation of relations between Christians/Armenians and the Muslims. I find the focus on this particular subject in recent times interesting, and subject relevant to and part of Islamic-Armenian interactive history.

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRD PHASE OF TRANSLATIONS

1991-2014 — CONTEMPORARY THEMES AND CONCERNS

In outlook, scope, and methods, contemporary Armenian historiography — both in the Republic and elsewhere — is not radically different from that of the past decades, even centuries. The degree of nationalism and methodology are factors of differentiation between individual scholars and/or Armenian studies centers everywhere. In view of this condition of Armenian studies, Islamic-Armenian interactive history has no great chance to generate a discipline or at least a novel literary phenomenon.

Contemporary concerns and themes after 1990, can be traced in about two dozen studies of different size, level and significance. They can be classified under translations, religious-missionary concerns (such as Christian preaching among Muslims), biblical persons in the Qur'ān, and general-informative works (such as modern Islam, Islam and Christianity, Shī'ism). Finally, there is what I call the “alternative” position and scholarship, which is holistic, critical and interdisciplinary. This has been the orientation of my research.

It is hard to trace identifiable trends related to Islamic-Armenian studies during the past three decades, but the appearance of a third group of Qur'ān translations is an exceptional development. Between 1991 and 2014, five translations were made, two partial and three full. None can be considered scholarly neither in style nor in intent. Obviously, no effort was ever made by any institution of higher education or research to prepare a scholarly translation of the Qur'ān. Had there been any interest in Islamic-Armenian interactive scholarship, the need for a serious translation would have been felt. The following are these translations very briefly:

A. PARTIAL TRANSLATION (FROM RUSSIAN), G. GUYUMCHYAN (MOSCOW, 1991)

The first partial translation of only *sūrah* 2, *al-Baqarah* into modern Eastern Armenian was made in 1991 from Russian, by Grigor Guyumchyan, a relatively little-known author. It is based on the translation of

I. Kratchkovsky and existing Armenian translations, according to the author.¹ I have not been able to see this translation.

B. PARTIAL TRANSLATION (FROM RUSSIAN),
V. DAWT'YAN (YEREVAN, 1995)

The next partial translation was made in 1995, into modern Eastern Armenian of only hundred and twenty verses from *al-Fātiḥah* and *al-Baqarah*. It is again from the Russian translation of I. Kratchkovsky as well as existing translations, by Vahagn Dawt'yan (1922-1996). This translation was part of his project to introduce Armenians to the spiritual culture of other peoples, as he planned.² This is a poetic exercise having nothing to do with Islamic-Armenian studies.

C. FULL TRANSLATION (FROM ARABIC),
N. K'ILISLIAN (TORONTO, 2003)

The sixth full translation (after Lehats'i's) into modern Western Armenian from Arabic was in 2003 by Noubar K'ilislian, again for no academic or scholarly concerns, but obviously to legitimize his conversion, of sorts. The title is *The Kuran Explained in Armenian* [*Kuranē Hayerēn Bats'atrwats*].³ Otherwise, his Armenian is vernacular in very poor grammar, vocabulary and spelling. His comprehension of the Classical Arabic is less than acceptable.

D. FULL TRANSLATION (FROM PERSIAN), E. HAKHVERDYAN
(YEREVAN, 2006)

The next and seventh full translation was from Persian, in 2006, titled *Holy Ghuran* [*Surb Ghuran*] by Etwart Hakhverdyan. It was published by the Cultural Center of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁴ The style and language are informal and non-scholarly. It would have been advisable to have an Arab scholar of the Qur'ān as part of the project.

¹ “*al-Baqarah* from the *Qur'an*”, trans. Guyumchyan. This reference is in Kozmoyan, *Ghuran Among Armenians*, 31-32.

² “Kovē” trans. Dawt'yan, 41-60.

³ *Noble Qur'an*, trans. K'ilislian.

⁴ *Holy Ghuran*, trans. Hakhverdyan.

E. FULL TRANSLATION (FROM TURKISH), Y. AYDIN (ANKARA, 2014)

The eighth full translation was from Turkish into modern Western Armenian and modern Eastern Armenian, by Yavuz Aydin, a convert to Islam, or simply a Muslim Armenian, in 2014. *Guran-ě Kerim* is initiated and supported by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs. It is part of a project to translate the Qur'ān into several languages, Armenian happened to be one, and “coincided” with the Centenary of the Genocide in 1915.⁵ This is a less than mediocre work. The least of its faults is the completely unacceptable and sometimes incomprehensible language, both Eastern and Western Armenian dialects. In his “Instead of Foreword”, Yavuz Aydin explained that at present no Qur'ān translation in Armenian is available, betraying serious lack of information about Armenian literature. He concluded this introduction in barely comprehensible Armenian as follows:

The central objective of our work is to transmit in the native language to all the Armenians of the world the morality, the tolerance, the beauty and the universal message found in the source of Islam, the *Guran-ě Kerim*, in particular to those Armenians who have accepted Islam by their own free will. These Muslims, who have wanted to learn religious precepts in their own language, have long suffered the absence of an available source. This is an academic work that will take care of their cultural development. As a last word, let us say that Allah spoke the most correct word ...

F. FIRST STUDIES ON QUR'ĀN TRANSLATIONS,
A. KOZMOYAN (YEREVAN, 2003, 2006)

Concerning the subject of Qur'ān translations, to my knowledge, Armanush Kozmoyan is the only author who has few studies in that subject. *The Ghuran among Armenians (Ghuraně Hayots' Mēj)*⁶ published in 2003 is a small book, composed around Vahagn Dawt'yan's partial translation of 120 verses. She has another article on some medieval translations of the Qur'ān at the Matenadaran (2006).⁷ However, as a first yet untidy and quite inaccurate study, it is an important step toward the theme of translations.

⁵ *Guran-ě Kerim*, trans. Aydin from Turkish (Ankara: B.M-Ar, 2014), in Eastern and Western Armenian dialects.

⁶ Kozmoyan, *Ghuran among Armenians*.

⁷ Kozmoyan, “Medieval Translations of the *Ghuran*”.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS AND MISSIONARY THEMES AND CONCERNS

A. CHRISTIAN PREACHING AMONG MUSLIMS

This is indeed the most unexpected category, as far as Islamic-Armenian studies are concerned. I will mention three books with explicitly missionary concerns.

In 1992, Vahan Yakobyan translated and published *Christian Preaching among Muslims — Manual of Modern Islam* [*K'ristoneakan K'aroz Musulamneri mēj — Ardi Islami Teghekagirk'*]. Translated soon after the independence of Armenia in 1991, this booklet is a manual published by a missionary organization called *Gt'ut'iwn* (Mercy). In the introduction we read: “This book is written to assist our Christian brothers, who have decided to preach the Bible to our Muslim friends and neighbors, but who do not have a sufficient idea about their faith and how to address them.”

This manual focuses only on essential and necessary information about Islam, that otherwise the Christian preacher will have to find by long research and reading in order to work among Muslims. The publishers, who present themselves as “we”, hope that the difficulties of the task described in the book, will not intimidate the preachers. They must continue with patience and persistence to show the Muslims the path to Christ. The Manual also teaches specific phrases in Arabic to explain Christian dogma, such as the “Holy Bible”, “blood of Christ”, “Reincarnation”, “being filled with the Spirit.” Strangely, the transliterated Arabic terms are inaccurate both in meaning and form. At the end of the book, it is mentioned that the quotations from the Qur'ān are taken from a Russian translation of the Qur'ān, with some help from the *Ghuran* of Amirkhanyants' (published over 80 years earlier).¹ The book is divided into three parts, “the questions of Muslims”, “the answers of the Christians”, and “how to go about the task” of preaching among Muslims. Some of the main themes are: Islamic theology, the differences between Islam and Christianity, some

¹ Yakobyan (trans.), *Christian Preaching Among the Muslims*, 5.

issues raised by Muslims, the corruption of the Bible, the Trinity, Christ's divinity, death and Crucifixion, the experiences and difficulties of Christian preachers in Muslim countries and societies, samples of difficult terms in Islam and their meanings.

The next book in this category was published in 2006, by A.R. Gayayan, *Islam and the Gospel — A Reformist Perspective* [*Islamě ew Awetaraně — Barekargich' Hayets'akēt*].² This is a very large book (of almost 700 pages) about Islam, its various trends, conflicts with the Christian world, the Qur'ān, its theology, rites, feasts, social theory, relations to Christianity, points of divergence with Christian dogma, the missionary church and preaching among Muslims. Gayayan dedicated the book to "the memory of the Genocide of one and a half million Armenians, who were the victims of Muslim Turks and Western hypocrisy."

There is another manual written three years later for Christian preachers by Martin Goldsmith and translated by H. Zak'aryan, *Islam and the Christian Witness* [*Islamě ew K'ristonēakan V kayut'iwně*].³ Again, the book is a manual for missionaries among Muslim communities and countries. It is more pragmatic and practical than Gayayan's. It even has a brief glossary of Arabic terms. Obviously, the intended missionary work was for Arab speaking peoples and locations.

B. BIBLICAL PERSONS IN THE QUR'ĀN — CHRIST AND MARIAM

In recent years Biblical persons, and in particular Christ and the Holy Virgin, have been popular themes. Three less than scholarly studies come under this category. T'amar Dasnabedian's *Mariam in the Qur'ān and Islam* [*Mariam K'uranin ew Islamin mēj*] is an essay of few type-written pages.⁴ Ashkhēn Makaryan's translation of *Christ in the Ghuran* in Persian, was published in 2003;⁵ I have not been able to see Anna R. Yakob's translation of *Christianity and Jesus from the Perspective of Islam* [*K'ristonēut'iwně ew Yisusē Islami Tesankiwnits'*], in 2014.⁶

² Gayayan, *Islam and the Gospels*.

³ Goldsmith, *Islam and the Christian Witness*.

⁴ Dasnabedian, *Mariam in the Qur'ān and Islam*.

⁵ *Christ in the Ghuran*, trans. by A. Makaryan.

⁶ *Christianity and Jesus*, trans. by A. Yakob.

C. GENERAL, INFORMATIVE, COMPARATIVE STUDIES — ISLAM-CHRISTIANITY,
ISLAM AT PRESENT, SHĪ'ISM, COMMUNITIES

This is the most popular category and houses many general themes related to Islam. The following are some titles. Ōnik P'ahlewanyan, *The Nature of Shī'ism in the Islamic System* [*Shiizmi Ēut'iwne Mahmetakanut'ean Hamakargum*] in 2001;⁷ Zakir Nayik and Hmayak Nalpantyan, *Islam in Questions and Answers* [*Islamē Harts'erum ew Pataskhannerum*], 2009.⁸ *Islam in Azerbaijan Its past and Present* [*Islamn Aderbeyjanum Ants'ealn ew Nerkan*] by Arax P'ashayan was published in 2014.⁹ The most interesting section of the book is the discussion of the role of Islam in the Karabagh-Azerbaijan conflict. Vahan Bayburt'yan's *Islam*, in 2016¹⁰ is a syllabus of readings on Islam for college students. It starts at the Arabian Peninsula, the population, economy, the early phases in the life of Muḥammad, the advent of Islam, the Qur'ān, the Medīnan period, the Rāshidūn caliphs, the *Sharī'ah* religious law, the position of women, divisions and new trends, Sufism, the lunar calendar, the feasts and customs. Books by Persian scholars in translation are also published at Yerevan by the initiative of the Cultural Center at the Iranian Embassy. Allāmah Ṭabaṭabā'ī's *The Qur'ān in Islam*, or *Ghuranē Islamum* in 2016, had six editions. Recently I saw a book in Turkish about the *Alevi*s by Alber Ch'aghlayyan (Istanbul, 2017).

⁷ P'ahlewanyan, *The Nature of Shī'ism*.

⁸ Nayik and Nalpantyan, *Islam in Questions and Answers*.

⁹ P'ashayan, *Islam in Azerbaijan*.

¹⁰ Bayburt'yan, *Islam*.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

A CRITICAL, HOLISTIC, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT FOR
ISLAMIC-ARMENIAN STUDIES

This study was a major phase, rather, a crowning of sorts of an existentially challenging and an intellectually complicated process. It started three decades ago as a lone journey into the twilight zone and uncharted territory of “things Islamic-Armenian.” With no road map, I nevertheless moved by a firm intuition about the dimensions of the terrain to be explored and the Copernican revolution it could make in the way things Armenian as well Near Eastern were seen and explained traditionally.

The obvious hypothesis, which was also my foundational proposition from the beginning, was that there are things in Armenian and Near Eastern intellectual and social cultures that must be specifically categorized and studied as primarily “things Islamic-Armenian.” Furthermore, taken as distinct themes, they generated their own peripheries for a novel discipline, which was essentially interdisciplinary, holistic, and critical. In many respects this discipline, that I sought to initiate, was an alternative path that would break the impasse created by mainstream and often nationalist narratives of things Armenian. It would also reveal the methodological and philosophical insufficiencies of the micro-Armenological and some verbose studies that have been at large recently.

As mentioned in the Introduction, my initiative was triggered by my discovery that an obscure medieval text entitled *Views Gathered from the Writings of Tajik Philosophers* by Yovhannēs Erznkats’i (written around 1260), was simply a beginner’s summary of the 10th century Islamic esoteric compendium of sciences, the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* or *Rasā’il Ikhwān al Ṣafā’*. This was a unique paradigm of interaction that clearly defied the images of so-called Arab-Armenian relations in Armenian historiography. In addition to the historical novelty of the theme, the case of the *Views-Rasā’il*, and the subsequent ones which I excavated, suggested a world of things Islamic Armenian with its own perspectives and tools.

As “facts of Islamic-Armenian” interactive history, they also required novel vantage points and methodology. The latter meant starting from the research, identification and analysis of paradigm cases within their historical contexts, and then deriving their significance and implications in Armenian and Near Eastern studies in general. As I proceeded, the paradigm cases generated an entirely different Armenian landscape in the Near Eastern contexts of which things Armenian were always integral parts. Each case pointed to others and eventually a geoglyphic panorama, that

was essentially a discipline of Islamic-Armenian studies, became perceivable. This study is a journey into this panorama of things Islamic-Armenian.

In order to make a statement about what I call the “alternative” approach to things Islamic-Armenian, and in lieu of a conclusion, I will make very sketchy overviews of some major and intriguing cases in my research, that are also relevant as appendices of sorts to this study. The bibliographic data are in the Bibliography.

As mentioned, the bridge between the *Rasā'il*, a massive and controversial Neoplatonic-Islamic compendium of sciences in 'Abbāsīd Basra, and 13th century cosmopolitan Erzinjān was a totally unnoticed yet major paradigm case of things Islamic-Armenian. Erznkats'i wrote the *Rasā'il* as a curious novice, but the encounter had a deep and powerful impact on his intellectual formation. In addition to the *Views*, he also wrote two cosmological treatises, based almost completely on the cosmology of the Brethren. He was a prolific writer and many of his treatises, even homilies reflected the influence of the Brethren's eclectic system. Through his works, new and advanced ideas were assimilated in late medieval Armenian intellectual culture. The more interesting bridge he threw into Islamic urban culture work was the *Constitution* he wrote for the reform and regulation of the urban coalitions, or the Brotherhoods of the *manuks* (synonym of *fatā*) of his city. Even though these urban coalitions existed in all the cities of the region from the 10th century, perhaps earlier as well, the Brotherhoods of the *manuks* had no constitution, The Constitution had no precedent in the literature. Erznkats'i simply borrowed and Christianized 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir's reform decree and *futuwwa* literature of the early 13th century. I discussed the *manuk-futuwwa* case in several studies and books. The most significant aspect of this paradigm is that the Constitution was applied in the other cities of the Eastern Asia Minor, and later on in the Armenian communities of the East European cities to the 19th century. I argued that only similarity of circumstances may explain this development, hence the significance of being based on texts and drawing their paradigmatic aspects.

Looking at the *Views-Rasā'il* and the *manuk-futuwwa* cases from the perspective of Islamic studies, both texts were their earliest so far known translations into another language, and adopted by a Christian people. This was not exactly a common phenomenon.

Both cases pointed to another unstudied area at least in Armenian studies. This was the urban channel and the environment that made interactions possible, hence the significance of the paradigm of Medieval Near

Eastern cosmopolitanism, the title of the third volume of my trilogy *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World* (2011, 2012, 2013).

The distinguishing traits of the urban youth coalitions of all religious and ethnic backgrounds, were not their ethnicity, religion and location, also not the “purity” or the “impurity” of their morals and conduct. The most significant and peculiar, yet least noticed aspect was their social-cultural role, which again the *futuwwa-manuks* brought out. Studies of *futuwwa*, youth coalitions often end up being studies of artisanal coalitions that appeared after the development of larger cities in the 13th century and later. The urban youth coalitions appeared prior to the 10th century, and were involved in the matters of their urban environments. Similarity of terms and norms may prove to be misleading, especially when the research falls short of perceiving the Islamic and larger Near Eastern realities.

I argue that often described as hedonistic and chaotic young men of cities — which in fact they were — both by medieval Armenian and Islamic authors, the folklore of these youth lay the grounds for the secular and post-medieval culture of the urban lower and middle classes in the entire Near East. Furthermore, because of their popular and grass-root nature and broad popular base, youth coalitions created a new literary and artistic artworld, fresh tastes and naturally large audiences. I could only reach these aspects through the *Views-Rasā'il*, then the *futuwwa-manuk* cases. Obviously, as the literature of Erznkats'i and his junior compatriot Costandin Erznkats'i showed, the Armenians in urban centers were part of the larger urban developments and actors in the processes. Similar circumstances in the medieval cities, mostly under Muslim rule, were proper environments for forceful social-cultural evolutions, which marginalized religious and ethnic dichotomies. Caught between the hardships of unstable resources and an uncertain future under despotic and arbitrary rules, including Armenian, the need for entertainment and self-expression as a class marked the lifestyle of the urban youth of all backgrounds. Song, poetry, dance, drinking, love of women/men and feasting constituted their folklore. It metamorphosed into a new artworld and eventually dominated the scene. Among other aspects of culture and arts, popular poetry and song in the entire Near East has its roots in these developments, hence the relevance of my emphasis on the distinct nature of things Islamic-Armenian. I argue that late medieval urban cultures were simultaneously spiritual, secular and extra-ethnic. They generated their own aesthetics and morality which developed and overtook the conservative cultures of both the secular and the religious institutions.

As mentioned, each case in Islamic-Armenian interactions, pointed to the next. In addition to the paradigm of medieval cosmopolitanism, the *Views-Rasa'il* case revealed the Ismā'īlī link at Erznijān. Being a cosmopolitan city on the borderlands and rather too far north, the city had become a haven for heterodox factions, including Armenian sects and sub-Shī'ī Ismā'īlī missionaries or *dā'īs*. Many of the latter were disguised, as it was customary, as merchants and *khojas*. The *Ismā'īlī* connection in the case of the *Views-Rasa'il* led to extensive research into the phenomenon of heresies and sects in the entire region. From interdisciplinary and holistic vantage points, the so-called sects were in fact dissident trends that in addition to their particular beliefs, had their own political agendas and cultures. It soon became clear to me that heterodoxy-dissidence was one of the paradigms to explain the great variety of political episodes, dynamic change, interaction and continuity.

As I followed the path of the dissident trends, commonalities and alliances defied the criteria of mainstream historiography. When sectarian-related events during the first half of the 11th century in Vaspurakan drove out the so-called T'ondrakians and Sun Worshipers (*Arewordik'*), large heterodox and militant groups of Armenians appeared in al-Shām. They allied with the local factions of several ethnic-religious backgrounds and evolved through the Modern Period. Based on a great number of episodes recorded in medieval Arab histories, I could reconstruct what I called the Armenian Intermezzo in Bilād al-Shām during the 10th-12th centuries.

I argue that the two centuries from 970s to the end of the 12th century constituted a distinct phase both in Armenian and Islamic history. It must therefore be studied as part of regional history, and in particular as a long and a unique phase in Islamic-Armenian history. Armenian military-political activity, by the orthodox and extra-establishment and heterodox factions took intriguing patterns and reached unprecedented levels in the Islamic world. If approached as a chaotic accumulation of events, as has been the case so far, a most interesting segment of Near Eastern history and surely Armenian history will be lost for scholarship, and in fact almost was.

Looking at the Intermezzo from these vantage points, I could discern hitherto unnoticed developments both in Armenian and regional histories. As mentioned previously, during the two decades between 1060 and 1080, and almost simultaneously, there appeared at least five Muslim-Armenian powers, who were the allies of the local Muslims. They were the Dānishmandids in Cappadocia, the Bēnē Boghusaks in Sewawerak/Severek (just northeast of Samosata on the Euphrates), the "federal state"

of Philaretus from Mar'ash to Antioch, the Nāwīqīs/Awāqīs in al-Shām and Palestine, and the Fāṭimid Armenians in Egypt. In addition, there were Armenian mercenaries in small enclaves, and in fortresses over a dozen locations. The appearance of the Rubenids in Cilicia was simply part of this phase, and not an isolated and “purely” Armenian episode, as depicted.

It was the Armenian Intermezzo that led me to Fāṭimid Egypt. What is known as the “Armenian Period” in the last century of the Caliphate in Egypt (1074-1163) was not merely a transitory and isolated episode. This century was probably the longest and most unique episode of Islamic-Armenian coexistence and in general Christian-Muslim relations. It started at the end of 1073, when Caliph al-Mustanshir b' Illāh (r. 1036-1094), almost at the end of his reign and probably life, urgently summoned the Armenian Badr al-Jamālī, then the governor of al-Shām, to his rescue. The latter arrived in Alexandria at the head of some five to seven thousand mostly Armenian heterodox troops and sympathizers of Muslims. In a very short time, and by the brutality and efficiency of his style, Badr brought not only peace and prosperity into the country, but also a great number of Armenians into the administration and the army. The Fāṭimid Caliphate was rescued. To the year 1163, in the course of almost a century, seven Armenian viziers, all except one, Muslims, ruled for a combined total of 60 years: the Shī'ī Badr al-Jamālī (r. 1074-1094) was vizier of al-Mustanshir; his son, the Sunnī sympathizer al-Afḍal Shāhanshāh (r. 1094-1121), was vizier successively of al-Mustanshir (very briefly), and al-Musta'li (r. 1094-1101) who was his nephew (his sister's daughter, grandson of Badr), and al-Āmir (r. 1101-30) who was his great nephew; Abū 'Alī Aḥmad Kutayfāt (r. 1131), a Twelver Shī'ī, was vizier of al-Āmir; and Yānis (r. 1132), *mamlūk* of al-Afḍal, was vizier of al-Ḥāfiẓ (r. 1130-49). Armenian involvement in Fatimid Egypt developed along an “orthodox” path as well. In 1074/5 the visit of Catholicos Grigor II Martyrophil Pahlawuni (r. 1065-1105) provided a means of introducing the pro-Byzantine church and nobility in Egypt. Bahrām or Vahram from the Pahlawuni clan, came from Manbij, in the north al-Shām with a personal army of 20,000 men and a mission to “conquer” the Muslims of Egypt. His blatantly anti-Muslim measures and their bloody aftermath provoked the first and only anti-Armenian spasm in Fāṭimid Egypt. But the lingering reputation left by his predecessors was not dimmed by his excesses, because after less than two decades another Armenian, the Alawī-Nuṣayrī Ṭalā'i' Ibn Ruzzīk, from a clan in northwestern Iran, was appointed to bring order after the assassination of the Caliph al-Zāfir (r. 1149-54). He was vizier from 1154 to 1161 and was briefly

succeeded by his son Ruzzīk (r. 1161-1162). If everything had gone according to plan, the son of his daughter, who was married to the last Fatimid Caliph al-ʿĀḍid, would have attained the Caliphate.

After the rise of Badr al-Jamālī, the Armenian community in Egypt, most of whom were Christians, flourished, and their number reached a hundred thousand, according to Arab histories, while this entire episode is non-existent in Armenian histories. Previously the Coptic community was subject to harassment, but the atmosphere improved to the end of Fāṭimid rule. It is generally accepted that the Armenian involvement in government prolonged the Caliphate for a century, restored some of its past glory and prosperity, and kept the Seljuks and Crusaders out of Egypt. In consequence of these achievements Christians in Egypt enjoyed freedom of faith, and Muslim Armenians had no difficulty in assimilating both cultural and political Islam. Viziers al-Afḍal and Ṭalāʾiʿ wrote poetry in Arabic. With the exception of minor incidents, and also occasional criticisms about the Armenian-Christian origins of the ruling Armenian clans and individuals, no incidents were recorded. Strangely, they were always identified as *armanī*, even though there is no indication that they preserved their language, faith or folklore.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Armenian period in Egypt is the manner in which the Jamālīs, the Ruzzīks, their respective descendants and associates manipulated Islam to achieve absolute power for themselves. But this went without challenge, because as long as the state apparatus ran smoothly and the people and country were secure and prosperous, the primarily Muslim Sunni and Coptic population had no complaints. The true nature of the faith of these Armenians is a matter of debate. They seem to have reconciled their ethnic background with a spirituality that was zeal beyond dogma and a ruthless yet fair sense of justice. In addition to their religious tolerance this spirituality granted them legitimacy and popularity in Muslim society.

The Armenian Period in Fāṭimid Egypt pointed to the necessity of rethinking the Armenian historical experience in the Medieval Islamic world. This was a task which led to my trilogy, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World. Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries* (2011, 2012, 2013). The purpose of this very extensive study in three volumes was to place and define the experiences and roles of the Armenians in the medieval Worlds of Islam, where they were integral and active elements. My initial argument was: If historical Armenia, as well as the modern Republic were always between central Asia Minor and the southern

Caucasus, and if until few decades ago, the entire region, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, the Caspian, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, was the *oikoumenē* or habitat of most of the Armenians, their history too was naturally part of these locations and peoples. Therefore, all narratives and studies must reflect the totality of the Armenian experience in all its interactive aspects in, and as part of the different Worlds of Islam.

The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World — Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries started at my existing research and developed its own comprehensive context. The idea of organizing the study in three volumes was Dr. I.L. Horowitz's (the founder of Transaction Publishers, to whom I am deeply grateful). The Trilogy was a first statement of my philosophy of history, my perspectives on things Armenian and my methodology. Some "strictly", and narrowly I might add, historians may have found my style too heavily loaded with philosophical arguments. Indeed, my "transfer" to historical writing was precisely a response to already obsolete, intellectually anemic and existentially inert ongoing trends in this discipline. At this point, I must mention, without comment, that long before the publication of the Trilogy, and while I was working on large volumes of notes, and as in introduction to it, in 2006 I wrote "A Phenomenology of Armenian Studies: The Discipline and the 'National' Meta-Polis". Predictably, the manuscript failed to find a positive response from the editor of *Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies*. The article was published in *Le Muséon* in 2008.

In addition to the novel material, its structure and sources, the trilogy stands primarily as an argument for a specific philosophy of Armenian history. Volume I naturally started at the *Arab Period in Armīnyah during the Seventh to Eleventh centuries*. Volume II is both the center and the core of the Trilogy, as the title explains: *Armenian Realpolitik in the Islamic World and Diverging Paradigms — The Case of Cilicia — Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries*. In turn, the title of Volume III, *Medieval Cosmopolitanism and Images of Islam — Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries*, summarized critical and holistic vantage points on these themes. Chronologically arranged the paradigm cases in the three volumes, are supposed to reflect intriguing processes and factors, and expand the peripheries of Armenian historical thinking into newer possibilities. These paradigms are also counter-cases to the circulating narratives and as such, they are arguments against them. The Trilogy was a definition of the historicity of the paradigm cases in Islamic-Armenian interactive history in their proper contexts.

In all studies, Arab sources are absolute necessities. Often, Islamic-Armenian histories can only be found in these sources. The research for the “Armenian Intermezzo”, also the “*Fāṭimid Armenians*”, for instance, and others, was almost exclusively based on Arab histories. In general, Arab sources are much more expansive, inclusive and contextual, because the medieval *Armīnyah* in these texts was much larger than any version of the Armenian “homeland.” Furthermore, the term *armanī* (Armenian) was used both for the ethnic Armenians and the inhabitants of that region, also to all Armenians irrespective of their faith. More importantly, *Armīnyah* and *al-arman* were referred to as indigenous elements of the Near East. The narratives did not single them out from the regional texture. Here lay the relevance of these sources and the legitimacy of my suggestion to re-evaluate narratives in the light of Arab sources.

With respect to Arab sources, there is a philosophical complication too: it is the nature of the disposition of the reader, how and why s/he reads the texts. A strictly nationalist outlook may drastically narrow the vantage points and blur the historiographic vision. During the past century, some major sources were available in Armenian translation, and indeed they brought in some “fresh air.” But the traditional narratives, in the style of Modern nationalist historians from Ch’amch’iants’ and Alishan to contemporary ones both in the East and the West, maintain their authority over historical thinking. No counter-histories, so to speak, challenged them, even the facts that questioned them were overlooked. The traditional paradigm of national sovereignty, for instance, may be questioned as the primary locomotive of political history. I argue that it is irrelevant, at least as a tool to understand the totality of the experiences. By mid-11th century, the Armenian dynastic territories or the kingdoms had been annexed to Byzantium. The loss of sovereignty, rather semi-autonomy, did not freeze Armenian military-political activity by both the traditional and extra establishment-heterodox factions. The contrary is true: new contexts and circumstances generated new and intriguing patterns of interaction which inevitably cancelled the paradigm of sovereignty, also traditional criteria of identity and “national ideology.”

In view of the perpetual migrations and evacuations of the Armenians, I argue that the paradigm of “habitat” gains priority over “homeland” as an appropriate tool to detect and understand the patterns of the Armenian experience in the Near East, where their “homeland” is at any rate. In other words, habitat will not rule out but include it. Furthermore, since perpetual displacements and migrations marked the history of the

Armenians, homeland could not be taken as a constant factor. Change of habitat and political and economic circumstances also caused class changes in many locations everywhere. Parallel to the weakening of the church and the traditional nobility, new political classes and their manners of interaction with both the Muslims and the other Christians need to be re-conceptualized, and their historicity re-drawn.

In the 11th century massive political changes in eastern Asia Minor (following Seljuk invasions and Byzantine take-overs and withdrawals) sent most Armenians into the south and west. There came about a medieval Armenian Diaspora and a new condition that evolved and grew as a permanent social-political-cultural condition of the Armenians on the regional and, eventually, the international stages. As of this period and for the past millennium, the majority of the Armenians do not live on the native land. Practically, they are natives/citizens of the locations they live in. The traditional concepts of diaspora and exile must be re-conceptualized.

Based purely on practical considerations of survival and power, another paradigm imposes itself. It is the realpolitik of Armenians of all backgrounds and faiths, such as the Cilicians and the Muslim Armenians. It generated unprecedented models of political culture, vision, flexibility and mechanisms of survival. Armenian-Turkish realpolitik during the Seljuk Period is just one of these cases. The Dānishmandids in Cappadocia (1055-1173) were referred to as “Turks”, even though their Armenian background was common knowledge. The Nāwīkīs, also known as the Awāqīs, of the *Clan of Awag* (elder, also an Armenian male name) were presented as “Ghuzz.” Philaretus the renegade was an ally of the Turks and Kurds in his region.

Despite these clear-cut cases, even some very credible scholars, such as Claude Cahen, find it hard to accept the Armenian background of the Dānishmandids. The problem comes from the application of modern criteria of ethnicity and nationalism to medieval cases. Ethnicity cannot be taken as a paradigm. On the other hand, religion was often a means to power not spirituality. Political Islam superseded and absorbed these criteria. Cahen himself admits his inability to explain the mixed Christian and Muslim representations on Dānishmandid coins. What stronger proof does one need about the “twin-born” nature of these times and societies? Syncretism was indigenous to the region, as discussed in Volume One of the *Trilogy* and my other studies.

The subject of syncretistic religious cultures and ethnic identity in historical contexts is in turn an uncharted area in historiography. Heterodox

Armenians in Muslim environments were no doubt deeply spiritual people who did not seem to have scruples about dogma. This was a major yet misunderstood aspect of Armenian heterodox spirituality. It meant and required a dismissal of all doctrines except the belief in one, all-powerful, and just God. This sounded very Islamic, and they seemed to have no difficulty in finding almost coreligionists in Muslims, not adversaries. The only commandment they accepted was that of love, which they interpreted as both physical and spiritual, but, more importantly, as an equalizing factor. However, irrespective of their declared loyalties to different trends in Islam (Ismāʿīlī, Shīʿī, Sunnī, Imāmī), the Armenian identity of the heterodox and Muslim Armenians was granted, both by themselves and their environment. These perceptions of ethnicity and national identity pose a challenge to the more common concepts of Armenianness based on the classic loyalties of faith, language and homeland as preconditions.

Unavoidably, the perspective on the ongoing Armenian experience in the Worlds of Islam must be holistic, dialectical and non-essentialist. This shift implies and requires a transformation in Armenian historiographic culture. One of the obstacles before this transformation is what may be called a culture of authority among Armenians. For many Armenians, including scholars and academics, security-fixed and authority-approved-legitimized criteria and the corresponding narratives they produce are more “useful” for the survival of the nation than the uncertainties critical approaches may generate.

The Armenian experience in the medieval Near East as well as the modern Middle East was and still is too diverse and complicated. Constructs based on the idea of an ancient, heroic, persistent and struggling people are too narrow. In order to avoid dangerous essentialism, Armenian histories should reflect this condition. There is a politics of Armenian historical writing, and an underlying grid that is often obstructive. Being a scholar at present is more than just a self-identification and self-categorization. It means being part of this politics of truth or a critic of it, being a contributor to the “culture industry” or its adversary and reformer, the latter describes my career. The arguments in my studies reflect this polarity.

As mentioned at several occasions, the ultimate objective of my research of the past three decades, was to initiate the overdue discipline of Islamic-Armenian studies. I set textuality, contextuality and maintaining a critical and interdisciplinary approach as methodological criteria, and an open mind as a pre-condition. Despite the odds, this has been my path in an uncharted territory with “forbidden” areas as well.

Islam in Armenian Literary Culture. Texts, Contexts, Dynamics, was a logical consequence, of sorts, of my entire research and publication so far.

The research, analysis, and the organization of a great volume of novel material and a particularly complicated theme posed four categories of problematics: informative, methodological, analytical and theoretical.

The informative aspect required an initial and a very broad search to locate, identify, and often translate all the relevant passages and/or full texts in the entire literature of the past fourteen centuries. My translations from classical, middle, vernacular, and modern Western and Eastern Armenian dialects, were deliberately literal. This task was in response to the criterion of strict textuality. Hopefully, the outcome would be an input to Near Eastern and Interfaith Studies.

The absolute primacy of the texts also made them the primary matter and the starting points for any analysis. The derivation of the recurring patterns had to be based on and emanate from the texts themselves, and not commentaries or mainstream ideas. This was my solution of the methodological problematic of the subject.

Maintaining the contextuality of the texts meant regularly drawing the historical contexts in their vital and relevant aspects.

The formulation of clear arguments based on the analysis of all the texts was in response to the essentially critical nature of the initiative. This was the analytical task. It meant the formulation and classification of the basic themes as phases of hitherto unexplored undercurrents. It also meant thinking of the theoretical peripheries of a philosophy of Armenian interactive history in the Near East.

The organization of the themes in a solid logical sequence of chapters and sections was another challenge. The sequence of the chapters had to reflect and sustain the consecutive and interrelated arguments. Structured thematically and chronologically, the five parts had to lead the reader on a smooth path. The “Armenian Mahmet”, the “Armenian *Pax Islamica*” and the “Armenian *Ghurans*” were the basic themes that made a conceptual also logical “tripod” to support the great number of textual citations and the arguments they generated.

Introducing the study by a chapter on the medieval “Armenian Mahmet” (Part One and Two) was to present the initial argument, that only remotely related to the Prophet, the cumulative and dynamic figure of the Armenian Mahmet generated by consecutive texts over seven centuries, was granted as a historical account and never questioned. As such, it became

a solid ground, a context and a sufficient source for information on all aspects related to his “laws”, or Islam as well, at least in the literary culture.

By the end of the Middle Ages after the Seljuk, Mongol and Turkmen periods, this composite and rather gross figure of Mahmet also summarized the Armenians’ perceptions and knowledge of Islam as the faith and the instrument of power of their rulers. As simply the “laws” of this Armenian Mahmet, the Qur’ān was greatly marginalized. Islam as an alternative religion and a moral system, became secondary to yet closely tied to the person of its founder.

Another argument emanated from the texts spread over fourteen centuries concerning the manner in which the Armenians perceived their status under Muslim rule. This is what I call the Armenian *Pax Islamica* (Part Three) recorded and deployed in Armenian literature, its historical and literary records. Cited in full in this study, all the alleged covenants, agreements, pacts, compacts and treatises, named differently, acquired a peculiar legitimacy as historical documents, which originated from the Armenian *Pax Islamica*, almost always legislated by the Prophet himself, as assumed. As I show, in all the available texts, and particularly in the few studies made in the 20th century and the next, at present the figure of Mahmet has metamorphosed into a fair oath-giver and guarantor, a “true Prophet”, as Sebēos said fourteen centuries ago. All pacts from the first in 652 to 1811, were considered “re-confirmations” of the initial prophetic covenant, hence their historical, political and moral significance.

I also argued that in the midst of ongoing Islamic-Armenian historic relations and interactions, the significance of the alleged pacts superseded the issue of their authenticity, often raised and discussed by some historians for various reasons. Consequently, all references to texts related to *Pax Islamica* must be studied not as “courtroom exhibits” but as the records of the historical circumstances of the Armenians in the Worlds of Islam. Briefly put, the oaths/pacts reflected the Armenian, not the Islamic condition.

In Part Four, I argued that the primacy of the Armenian Mahmet was a major reason for a delay of a millennium in translating the Qur’ān, for the first time in 1680, but from Latin. While previously the biographies were polemical tools, the Armenian *Ghurans* that were made to the first decades of the 20th century, in turn became occasions/platforms for polemical side-scripts and attached texts.

What I call the Armenian *Ghurans*, the theme of Part Four, in turn reflected dispositions toward “the laws of Mahmet” or Islam. From the

first translation in 1680 (from Latin) to the last in 2014 (from Turkish), eleven full *Ghurans* texts were available, translated from Latin, Arabic, French, Persian and Turkish, four of these were copies. They appeared in three clusters: the first group of five *Ghurans* in the 17th- 18th centuries; the second group of three *Ghurans* in 1910-1912; a group of two partial translations in 1991-1995, and a third group of three *Ghurans* in 2003-2014/5.

This very peculiar sequence through three phases each a century apart, shows that the subject of Armenian *Ghurans* is more complicated than it seems because of its political underpinnings. I argue that the motive in all the translations, with the exception of the last three (two as apologies for conversion and one as cultural propaganda) was never interest in the scriptures (of the Muslims), as one would expect in the case of the Vedas, for instance. The first five Armenian *Ghurans* made in the Safavid World, also the second group of three made in the Ottoman World, were occasions and platforms for side-scripts and attached texts. In intent and form, the side scripts were systematic polemical treatises on the margins of the *Ghurans*, or attached texts. The plan was to offer the *Ghurans* along with a refutation, also an additional text to inform or warn the reader. In all cases, the comments were again based on the person of Mahmet, whose “laws” were summarized in the Qur’an, as the writers considered. I was very fortunate to discover a hitherto unknown extensive Sequel of four major texts about/against Mahmet attached to the first copy of the first translation from Latin by Lehats’i and of equal size. It simply showed that as of the first translation, and within the same year, the polemical strategies were motives in making the “Armenian *Ghurans*” s.

Chronologically, also logically, Part Five “Islam, the Prophet and the Qur’ān in Late Modern and Contemporary Literature”, traces the beginnings and development of what may be described as “Islamology” in Armenian intellectual culture. During the early and hesitant phases in the 19th century, the context and perspectives of studies in things Islamic were still political related particularly to Ottoman policies and practices. There were also unexpected surprises, such as an apology for Islam. The studies that appeared from the late 19th century to the present, are philological, and primarily parts of Arab-Armenian histories. There were over two dozens of studies in random themes, such as preaching Christianity to Muslims, the figure of Christ or the Holy Virgin in the Qur’an, Shī’ism. The third phase of “Armenian *Ghurans*” s, three translations from Arabic, Turkish and Persian, was also part of this phase, but none of the initiatives was academically motivated.

A truly contemporary and critical discipline of Islamic-Armenian studies is yet to break its way through the pillars of mainstream Armenian studies, into the open ocean of Near Eastern and interfaith studies. The subject of Islam in Armenian literary culture is hopefully a beginning. It is a statement by the force of the material it makes available and the theses it expounds.

APPENDIX

AL-SHĀFI'Ī'S VERSION OF *SHURŪṬ* 'UMAR

[This document is based on Bernard Lewis's translation of al-Shāfi'ī's version of the pact to be accorded to the Christians by the *Imām*, in *Kitāb al-Umm*, in Lewis, *Islam*, 219-223].

If the *Imām* wishes to write a document for the poll-tax (*jizya*) of non-Muslims, he should write: In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate. This is a document written by the servant of God so-and-so, Commander of the Faithful, on the 2nd of the month of Rabi' I, in the year such-and-such, to so-and-so son of so-and-so, the Christian, of the descendants of such-and-such, of the people of the city of so-and-so. I accord to you and to the Christians of the city so-and-so that which is accorded to the *dhimmīs*, in conformity with what you have given to me and the conditions I have laid down concerning what is due to you and to them, and I have agreed to your request and accorded to you and to them, on behalf of myself and of all the Muslims, safe-conduct (*amān*), for as long as you and they maintain all that we have required of you, namely:

- You will be subject to the authority of Islam and to no contrary authority. You will not refuse to carry out any obligation which we think fit to impose upon you by virtue of this authority.
- If any one of you speaks improperly of Muḥammad, may God bless and save him, the Book of God, or of His religion, he forfeits the protection (*dhimmā*) of God, of the Commander of the Faithful, and of all the Muslims; he has contravened the conditions upon which he was given his safe-conduct; his property and his life are at the disposal of the Commander of the Faithful, like the property and lives of the people of the house of war (*dār al-ḥarb*).
- If one of them commits fornication with a Muslim woman or goes through a form of marriage with her or robs a Muslim on the highway or subverts a Muslim from his religion or gives aid to those who made war against the Muslims by fighting with them or by showing them the weak points of the Muslims, or by harboring their spies, he has contravened his pact (*ʿahd*), and his life and his property are at the disposal of the Muslims.

- If he commits some lesser offence against the property or the honor of a Muslim or against an infidel under Muslim protection, with a pact or safe-conduct, he shall be punished.
- We shall supervise all your dealings with Muslims. If there is anything in which you are engaged which is not lawful for a Muslim, we shall reject it and punish you for it. If you sell a Muslim something we hold forbidden, such as wine, pig, blood, or carrion, and the like, we shall annul the sale, confiscate the price if it has been paid, and not return the thing to you if it still exists, but pour it out if it is wine or blood and burn it if it is carrion; if the purchaser has already consumed it, we shall not oblige him to pay for it, but we shall punish you for it.
- You shall not give a Muslim anything to eat or drink which is forbidden, nor marry him in the presence of witnesses chosen from among you, nor by wedding rites we hold to be invalid.
- We shall not supervise transactions between you and your co-religionists or other unbelievers nor inquire into them as long as you are content. If the buyer or the seller among you desires the annulment of a sale and comes to us to ask for this, we shall annul it or uphold it in accordance with the provisions of our law. But if the payment has been made and the purchase consumed, we shall not order restitution, for this would count as a completed sale between polytheists.
- If one of you or any other unbeliever applies to us for judgment, we shall adjudicate according to the law of Islam. But if he does not come to us, we shall not intervene among you.
- If you commit manslaughter against a Muslim or a protected person, whether protected by you or by others, your clan is liable for the blood price as with the Muslims. Your clan consists of your paternal kinsmen. If the offender is one of you who has no kin, he himself is liable for the blood price with his own property. If he kills with intent, he is subject to retaliation unless the heirs are content to receive the blood price, in which case they must get it at once.
- If any of you steals and the victim takes him before a judge, his hand shall be cut off if his crime is punishable by this penalty, and he shall make restitution.
- If anyone commits slander and a legal penalty is due, it shall be inflicted on him; if there is no legal penalty, he shall be punished at discretion so that the laws of Islam may be applied among you in these matters, both specified and unspecified.

- You may not display crosses in Muslim cities, nor proclaim polytheism, nor build churches or meeting-places for your prayers, nor strike clappers, nor proclaim your polytheistic beliefs on the subject of Jesus, son of Maryam, or any other to a Muslim.
- You shall wear the girdle (*zunnār*) over all your garments, your cloaks and the rest, so that the girdles are not hidden.
- You shall differentiate yourselves by your saddles and your mounts, and you shall distinguish your and their headgear (*qalansuwa*) by a mark which you shall place on your headgear. You shall not occupy the middle of the road or the seats in the market, obstructing Muslims.
- Every free adult male of sound mind among you shall have to pay a poll-tax (*jizya*) of one *ḍinār*, in good coin, at the beginning of each year. He shall not be able to leave his city until he pays his poll-tax or appoints someone to pay it on his behalf, with no further liability until the beginning of the year. The poor among you is liable for the poll-tax, which should be paid for him. Poverty does not free you from any obligation, nor does it abrogate your pact ...
- You are subject to no taxes on your money other than the poll-tax as long as you stay in your country or travel around in the lands of the Muslims otherwise than as a merchant.
- You may in no circumstances enter Mecca. If you travel for trade, you shall pay the Muslims a tenth part of all your merchandise. You may go wherever you wish in the lands of the Muslims, except Mecca, and reside wherever you wish in the lands of the Muslims, except the Ḥijāz, where you may only stay for three days in any city, after which you must leave.
- Whoever has hair under his garments, has attained puberty, or has completed his fifteenth year before this, is subject to these conditions if he accepts them. If he does not accept them, he has no covenant. Your children, underage, boys below puberty, persons of unsound mind, and slaves are not liable for the poll-tax. But if the madman recovers his reason, the child attains puberty, or the slave is emancipated and follows your religion, they are all liable for the poll-tax.
- These conditions are binding on you and on those who have accepted them. Those who reject them we cast out.
- We owe you protection for yourselves and for your property which it is lawful for you to hold according to our laws, against anybody, Muslim or other, who seeks to wrong you, as we would protect our own persons

- and property, and we administer justice to you in matters under our own jurisdiction as we would do with our own property.
- But no one among you can ask us to protect any forbidden thing which you own, such as blood, carrion, wine, or pigs, as we would protect lawful property. We shall not prevent you from having them, but we shall not allow you to display them in the cities of the Muslims.
 - If a Muslim or any other buys such merchandise, we shall not compel him to pay the price, because these are forbidden things and therefore have no price which could be legally enforced. But we shall restrain him from troubling you in this, and if he persists, he shall be punished, though not by enforcing payment for what he took from you.
 - You must observe all the conditions which we have imposed.
 - You may not deceive a Muslim nor give aid to their enemies by word or deed.
 - This is the pact and covenant of God, and the greatest obligation to respect this covenant which God has ever imposed on any of His creatures. You have the pact and covenant of God, the protection (*dhimma*) of so-and-so, Commander of the Faithful, and the protection of the Muslims to carry out their obligations toward you.
 - Those of your children who reach the age of puberty are in the same position as you are, in regard to what we have given to you and in the obligation to observe all the conditions which we have laid down for you.
 - If you change or modify anything, then the protection of God, of so-and-so the Commander of the Faithful, and of the Muslims shall be withdrawn from you.
 - If anyone of those to whom we gave this was not present when we wrote it, and hears of it and accepts it, the conditions stated in it are binding on him and on us. If he does not accept it, we cast him out.

Witnesses.

INDEXES*

PERSONAL NAMES

- ‘Abbās I, Safavid Shāh (r. 1588-1629) 9, 91, 226, 227, 234-236, 242, 251
- ‘Abbās II, Safavid Shāh (r. 1642-1666) 251
- ‘Abd al-Malik, Umayyad Caliph (r. 685-705) 8, 20, 24, 31, 32, 36, 37, 48, 52, 152, 158, 159, 165, 185-187
- ‘Abdisho‘ Bar Brikhā of Nisibis (d. 1318) 121
- Abd Rahman*, allegedly the father of Muḥammad (Trans-Arb: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān) 54
- Abdla'y* (Trans-Arb: ‘Abd Allāh) 40, 43, 44, 60, 61, 126
- Abdul-Hamid II, Ottoman Sultan (r. 1876-1909) 229, 230, 298, 289
- Abeghyan, Manuk (1865-1944) 25, 294, 295
- Abgar ‘Alī Akbar Armanī (d. c. 1708) 10, 244-246
- Abisoghom, *tanutēr* of Shiryan (14th century) 203, 206
- Ablsuwar* (Trans-Arb: Abū'l-Aswār Shāwūr), Shaddādīd ruler (d. 1067) 81, 82
- Abraham, Prophet 21, 26, 27, 31, 35, 36, 40-42, 50-56, 64, 65, 83, 94-98, 100-103, 105, 126, 127, 149, 150, 211, 224, 263, 268, 269
- Abraham, Bishop of the Armenians of Jerusalem (12th century) 192, 194
- Abraham Erewants‘i (1680-1740) 11, 281-283
- Abraham II Khoshabets‘i, Catholicos (r. 1729/30-1734) 281
- Abraham III Kretats‘i, Catholicos (r. 1734-1737) 280, 281
- Abraham *K‘ahanay* 179
- Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad Kutayfāt, Fāṭimid Arm. Vizier (r. 1131) 333
- Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Rāshidūn Caliph (r. 632-634) 34, 84, 162
- Abū Naṣr al-Manāzī (11th century) 66
- Abū Yūsuf, Ya‘qūb Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī (d. 798) 161
- Abū'l-Faraj, ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 1043) 121, 155
- Abū'l-Fidā‘ (1273-1331) 317
- Abutalb/Abut‘alb* (Trans-Arb: Abū Ṭālib) 40, 170
- Adam 59, 65, 81, 94, 95, 99, 107, 116, 212, 263
- al-‘Āqid li-Dīn Allāh, Fāṭimid Caliph (r. 1160-1171) 334
- Adonts‘, Nikoghayos (1871-1942) 294, 295
- al-Afḍal Shāhanshāh, Fāṭimid Arm. Vizier (r. 1094-1121) 333
- Agat‘angeghos (5th century) 81
- Aghayan, Ghazaros (1840-1911) 300
- Aharon* (Trans-Arb: Hārūn al-Rashīd) 43

* In the case of non-English terms (proper names and others), the reference, the original language and the meaning are mentioned in parentheses: **Arb** for Arabic; **Arm** for Armenian; **Turk** for Turkish; **Pers** for Persian; **Trans-Arb** for Armenian transliterations of Arabic terms; **Trans-Turk** for Armenian transliterations of Turkish terms; **Trans-Pers** for Armenian transliterations of Persian terms; **Arm-Trans** for Armenian transliterations of terms; **Arm-Version** for other terms; **Latin** and **French** appear too.

Book and text titles do not appear in the Indexes, for their large volume, the Bibliography is deemed sufficient.

- Ahmat Son of Mahmet* 57
- Akbar the Great, Mughal Emperor (r. 1556-1605) 233, 234
- Akinian, Nersēs, Vardapet (1883-1963) 34, 52, 203, 252, 254
- Alek'sanyan, A. 63
- Ali Armni* (Trans-Arb: 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī), 'Abbāsid general, governor of *Armīnyah* (d. 863) 85
- 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Rāshidūn Caliph (r. 656-661) 53, 156, 172, 178, 193, 209, 240, 304, 311, 318
- 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, fourth and last Rāshidūn Caliph (r. 656-661) 8, 35, 36, 53, 84, 156, 164, 171, 172, 175, 177, 178, 192, 193, 203, 209, 221, 227, 240, 245, 252, 299, 304, 311, 316, 318
- Alishan, Ghewond K'erovbē, Vardapet (1820-1901) 124, 125, 129, 130, 294, 336
- Allāh 44, 149, 150, 152, 156, 209, 315
- Alp Arslān, Seljuk Sultan (r. 1063-1072) 63, 71, 73, 77, 81, 82, 85, 86, 107
- al-Amīn, 'Abbāsid Caliph (r. 809-813) 84, 304
- al-Amīr bi-Aḥkām Allāh, Fāṭimid Caliph (r. 1101-30) 333
- Ambakum (Jehoiakim) 98, 103
- Amirkhanyants', Abraham (1838-1913) 12, 306-311, 315, 323
- Amirmomnik'*, *amiralmomnin* (Trans Arm: Amīr al-Mu'minīn) 34, 35, 62, 83, 131, 166
- Amr/Amr* (Trans-Arb: 'Umar) 28, 34, 42, 43, 57, 59, 60, 84, 131, 166
- Anania I Mokats'i, Catholicos (r. 946-968) 39
- Anania Shirakats'i Vardapet (7th century) 79, 125, 199
- Ananun* Arstruni (continuator of T'ovma Arstruni) 46
- Ananun* Tarōnets'i (a Samuēl continuator) 87
- Anassyan, Yakob A. 13, 175-178, 318
- al-Anawī, Qāḍī Burhān ed-Dīn Abū Naṣr Ibn Maṣṣūr (b. 1128) 6, 106-108
- Andrews, Tara L. 135
- André du Ryer (1580-1660) 248
- Anna Komnene, Byzantine princess (1083-1153) 71
- Antichrist (Arm *Ner*) 41, 51, 71, 72, 100, 103-105, 214, 226
- Apljehr* (allegedly an uncle of Muḥammad) 41
- Apupak'r* (Trans-Arb: Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq) 84
- Aputalp* (Trans-Arb: Abū Ṭālib) 41, 43
- Arabic names on Armenians: *Abas*, *Hasan*, *Apuset'* 46
- Aṛak'el Dawrizhets'i, Vardapet (c.1590-1670) 10, 239, 241, 242, 253, 283
- Ardavazt Surmeyan, Archbishop (r. 1924-1940) 237
- Arewshatyan, Sen (1928-2014) VII, 64, 141
- Aristakēs *Erēts'* (priest) Hamadants'i (18th century) 168, 285
- Aristakēs Lastivertt'si, Vardapet (11th century) 4, 62, 63, 81
- Aristotelian 64, 213, 216
- Arius/Arios, founder of Arianism (256-356) 50, 83, 126, 206, 207, 214, 221
- "Armenian Mahmet" 3-6, 8, 17, 21, 21-23, 47, 71, 77, 123, 151, 165, 205, 288, 339
- Arpee, Leon (1877-1947) 13, 171, 172, 175, 318
- Artsruni/s 4, 23, 36, 47, 49, 53, 54, 74, 132, 191, 203, 204
- Arzoumanian, Zawēn, 25, 33, 34, 111, 128
- Aslanian, Sebouh 235-238
- Ashot-Sahak, Artsruni King (r. 968-997/991) 45
- Ashot I, Bagratuni King (r. 884/5-890) 46
- Ashot II *Erkat'* (Arm: iron), Bagratuni King (r. 914-928) 47
- Astuatsatur *Erēts'* (priest) 93
- Atalis, Patriarch of the Greeks (16th century) 228
- Atom, *Ughghap'ar* (Arm: orthodox) Scholar (14th century) 214
- Atrpet (Sargis Mubahyachian, 1860-1937) 12, 299-301, 316

- Awt'man* (Trans-Arb: 'Uthmān) 84
 Aydin, Yavuz 322
 Azaria I Jughayets'i, Catholicos (r. 1584-1601) 238
- Badr al-Jamālī, Fātimid Arm. Vizier (r. 1074-1094) 333, 334
Badu Ghan (Arm-Trans: Batu Khan, Mongol ruler of the Golden Horde, d. 1255) 129
 Bagarat, Bagratuni Prince (d. c. 860) 45
 Baghwashi-Libaridians of Georgia 86
 Bagratuni/s 4, 23, 25, 32, 45-47, 49, 52, 53, 60, 73, 74, 77, 81, 85, 105, 132, 135, 136, 138, 178, 188, 191, 195
 Bagratunian, Yovakim Grigor 178
 Bahīrā, Sergius (Arm-Trans: Sargis *Bkhira/Bkhiray/Bhira/Bahiray*) 22, 40, 41, 50, 83, 100, 105, 130, 131, 206
 Bahrām/Vahram al-Armanī Pahlawuni, Fātimid Arm. Vizier (r. 1135-1137) 333
 al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā Ibn Jābir (820-892) 185, 314
 Bardakjian, Kevork 240
 Barkhudaryan, Vladimir (1927-2017) 178
 Barsegh Pahlawuni of Ani, Bishop (r. 1081-1105); Catholicos (r. 1105-1113) 9, 72, 191
 Bart'ikyan, Hrach' 72, 135
 Bartholomeo da Bologna, Latin abbot of the Monastery of Maragha (d. c. 1294) 199
 Bastamyants', Vahan, Vardapet 109, 110, 113, 114, 116
 Baybars, Mamlūk Sultan (r. 1260-1277) 134
 Bayburt'yan, Vahan (1933) 325
 Beihammer, Alexander D. 71-73, 191
 Beknazaryants', N.T'., Bishop 176
 Bērbērian, Avedis *Varzhapet* (instructor, 1802-1870) 227, 228, 240, 283, 294
 Bērbērian, Haig 178
 Bogharian, Norayr 254
 Bōghos Vardapet, Patriarchal *vēk'il* (locum tenens) of Jerusalem" (19th century) 227, 228
- Bournoutian, George 242, 274, 281, 282
Bughaa/Bukhay, Ostikan (commissioner) 44, 45
 Burman, Thomas E. 248
- Capasp* (Trans-Pers: ref. to Khosrow ?) 55
 Catherine II the Great, Empress (r. 1762-1796) 273
 Cerinthus/*Kerint'os* gnostic, heresiarch (b. 100) 83, 105, 126, 130, 207, 214, 221
 Ch'aghlayan, Albeṛ 328
 Ch'amch'iants', Mik'ayēl, Vardapet (1738-1823) 11, 33, 227, 239, 283, 284, 294, 336
Ch'ankz Ghan (Arm-Trans: Genghiz/Jenghiz/Jinghis Khan), Mongol Emperor (r. 1206-1227) 88
 Ch'ēlēbi, Ambakum (19th century) 243
 Ch'ēlēbi K'ēōmiwrcian, Eremia (1637-1695) 10, 239, 243, 244
 Christ 43, 51, 56, 62, 65, 66, 81, 86, 87, 89, 92, 95, 97, 98, 100, 102-106, 114, 127, 128, 136, 137, 143, 149, 154, 189, 204, 207-220, 222, 224, 226, 208, 251, 261, 262, 266-270, 277-279, 309, 323, 324, 341
 Constans II, Byzantine Emperor (r. 641-668) 25, 29, 95, 104
 Constantine IX Monomachos, Byzantine Emperor (r. 1042-1055) 63, 66
 Constantine X Doukas, Byzantine Emperor (r. 1059-1067) 136
 Costandin I Bardzrberdts'i, Catholicos (r. 1221-1267) 123
 Costandin III Lusignan, Cilician King (r. 1343-1344) 134
 Cowe, Peter 130, 133, 204, 242, 244,
- Dadoyan, Seta B. 1, 64, 71-74, 76, 78, 85-87, 124, 133, 140-142, 144, 202, 206, 238, 244, 251, 271, 283
 Daniel, Prophet 29, 31, 98, 103, 124
 Darbinyan-Melik'yan, M. 52-54, 242
 Dasnabedian, Tamar 324
 Dawit' *Anhaght'*/Invictus (5th-6th centuries) VII, 198

- David IV, King of Georgia (r. 1089-1125) 77
- Dawit' Alawkay Ordi Gandzakets'i, (c.1070s – 1140) 112, 116
- Dawt'yan, Vahagn (1922-1996) 320, 322
- Dimascus Riman*, Idol (Arm-Trans) 102
- Doghuz/Doquz Khat'un, Christian wife of Mongol Khan Hulagu/Hukaku 124
- Dominicus Germanus of Silesia (d. 1670) 249
- Duri Zadē Abdullah, Sheikhislam Efendi (19th century) 227
- Eghia* (Arm-Trans: Elijah) Prophet 219, 220
- Eghia I Archishets'i, Catholicos (r. 703-717) 52, 187
- Eghishē, Vardapet (5th century) 45, 81
- Ēmin, Mkrtich' (1815-1890) 80
- Enovk'* and *Eghia*, Prophets 219
- Ēōmer* (Trans-Arb: 'Umar) 9, 154, 227-230, 294, 299
- Erekle II, Georgian King of Kakheti (r. 1744-1762) 273
- Eusebius of Caesarea (265-339) 78, 79, 81, 130, 253
- Fakhry, Majid VII
- Fat'ima* (Trans-Arb: Fāṭimah) 54
- Fattāl, Antoine (1918-1987) 38, 153-157, 159, 162
- Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino (1422-1482) 248
- Frederiks, Martha 234, 247
- Freidenreich, David M. 120-123, 150-152, 163, 200, 201
- Friedmann, Yohanan 151
- Gagik I, Artsruni King (r. 925-943) 39, 46, 47
- Gagik II, Bagratuni King (r. 1042-45) 63, 77, 136, 138, 139
- Garegin I Yovsēp'yants', Catholicos (1867-1952) 199, 200, 294
- Gayayan, A.R. 324
- Georg III, King of Georgia (r. 1156-1184) 77
- al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (c.1058-1111) 122
- Ghāzān Khan, Mongol Khan (r. 1295-1304) 89, 134
- Ghazar P'arpets'i, Vardapet (5th-6th century) 81
- Ghewond, Vardapet 4, 13, 23, 31-38, 43, 44, 48, 52-54, 81, 94, 105, 124, 130, 165, 186, 187, 294, 317
- Ghougassian, Vazken 236, 276
- Goldsmith, Martin 324
- Greenwood, Tim 24-26, 33, 34, 37, 39, 45, 46, 49, 52, 53, 59
- Gregory Barhebraeus, Syrian Maphrian (d. 1286) 121, 122
- Gregory of Nyssa, Bishop (d. 378) 124
- Griffith, Sidney H. 19
- Grigor I *Lusaworich'* (Illuminator), First Arm. Catholicos (d. c.331) 57, 60, 63, 89, 91, 112
- Grigor II Pahlawuni *Vkayasēr* (Martyrophil), Catholicos (r. 1066-1105) 71, 72
- Grigor III Pahlawuni, Catholicos (r. 1113-1166) 78, 81, 82, 86, 136
- Grigor IV Tghay, Catholicos (r. 1173-1193) 87
- Grigor VI Apirat, Catholicos (r. 1194-1203) 87
- Grigor Derenik, Artsruni Prince (r. 847-887) 39
- Grigor *Erēts'* (priest, 12th century) 135
- Grigor Kamakhets'i-Daranaghts'i Buk', Vardapet (1576-1643) 178, 239-240, 242
- Grigor Kesarats'i, Patriarch of Istanbul (r. 1601-9; 1611-21; 1623-26, d. 1636) 240
- Grigor Mamikonian, governor of Armenia (660s) 61
- Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros Duke of Vas-purakan (990-1059) 4, 59, 63-67, 72, 81, 140, 199
- Grigor Sanahnets'i, Priest (13th century) 143
- Grigor Tat'ewats'i, Vardapet (d. c. 1409/1411) 9, 84, 122, 166, 176, 196, 200, 202, 205, 200, 213-225, 251, 254, 313

- Grigoryan, G. 199
- Gulēsērian, Papgēn, Catholicos Coadjutor to Sahak II (r. 1930-1936) 13, 93-95, 100, 101, 202, 215, 296, 313
- Guy of Lusignan of Jerusalem, Crusader King (r. 1186-1192) 192
- Guzyan, Yovhan 177
- Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah al-Fihri, Umayyad general (7th century) 8, 184, 185, 317
- Ḥabīb, monk 157
- al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh, Fātimid Caliph (r. 1130-1149) 333
- Hagar, handmaid of Sarah 21, 39, 47, 48, 83, 95, 100, 105, 126, 130, 136, 184
- Hakhverdyan, Etwart 16, 321
- Halfit, Dennis 276-279
- Hamazasp Mamikonian (d. 661) 25, 57, 58
- Hārūn al-Rashīd, ‘Abbāsīd Caliph (r. 786-809) 43, 160, 190
- Hayrapet, Vardapet 79
- Hep’estos* (Arm Trans: Hephæstus/Vulcan, Greek-Roman god) 126
- Heraclius, Byzantine Emperor (r. 610-641) 20, 25, 25-27, 35, 39, 42, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 62, 95, 155
- Het’um I, Cilician King (r. 1226-1269/70) 80, 82, 83, 88, 89, 129, 137, 138
- Het’um II, Cilician King (r. 1289-93, 1294-97, 1299-1307) 89, 134, 138
- Het’um Korikosts‘i *Patmich’* (historian) Hayton (d. early 1310s) 80, 83, 88, 89, 133, 137-138
- Hovannas Khalifeh, Avānūs khalīfa, Vānīs Khalīfa, Khalīfa Āvānūs* (Pers: Yovhannēs Jughayets‘i Mrk‘uz) 276, 277
- Hoyland, Robert G. 26, 37
- Hulaku/Hulagu/Hulawu, Mongol Khan (r. 1256-1265) 124, 130, 133
- Humphrey Prideaux, Bishop of Norwich (1648-1724) 248
- al-Ḥusayn, son of Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib 36, 304
- Ibn ‘Asākir (1106-1176) 162
- Ibn al-Athīr, ‘Izz ed-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī (1160-1233) 314, 317
- Ibn al-Mi‘mār, Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad, scholar of *Futuwwa* (13th century) 143
- Ibn Miskaway, Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ya‘qūb (932-1030) 314
- Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah the Syrian (1292-1350) 163
- Ibn Shaddād, Bahā’ ed-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Rafī‘ (1145-1134) 317
- Ibrahim *Amiray* 64-65
- Imām Rīqā* 245
- ‘Isā Ibn Maryam* (Jesus Son of Mary) 149, 209, 218
- Isahak* (Arm-Trans: Isaac, son of Abraham) 56
- Isaiah, Prophet 43, 97, 102, 127, 277
- Ismā‘il I, Safavid Shāh (r. 1501-1524) 71
- Ismayel/Ismayēl* (Arm-Trans: Ismael/Ishmael) 21, 26-30, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 50, 56, 58, 60, 83, 95, 96, 98, 100, 101, 103, 105, 125, 126, 128, 132, 166, 183, 186-188, 243
- Ivanē Zak‘aryan, Georgian-Armenian general (late 12th early 13th centuries) 77
- ‘Izz ed-Dīn, Amīr of Ostan/Vostan (late 14th century) 204
- Jacob Baradeus, Bishop (500-578) 19
- Jahangir, Mughal Emperor (r. 1605-1627) 233
- Jap’r* (Arm-Trans: used for several caliphs) 43-46, 84, 85
- Jap’r Mot’ok’l* (Trans-Arb: al-Muwakkil) 44
- Javanshir (Juansher, Jivanshir), Prince of Caucasian Albania (r. 637-680) 49
- Jerahian, Lewon 177
- Jesus 65, 67, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 126, 127, 149, 209, 210, 226, 266, 278, 308, 309, 324, 345
- Jirjis al-Jawharī, Coptic figure (d. 1810) 274
- John I Tzimiskes, Byzantine Emperor (Arm: *Yovhannēs Ch’mshkik*, r. 969-976) 136
- K’aghrt’/K’aghart’/K’ēghērt’* (legendary figure) 83, 105, 106, 128

- K'asre* (Arm-Trans: Khosrow, a Persian king?) 55
- K'edar* (Trans-Arb: Khdr) 100
- Kambanyan, Grigor 178
- Karapet I Ewdokats'i, Catholicos (r. 1446-1477) 91
- Karst, Josef 113
- Kat'rchian, Yovsēp' H., Vardapet (1820-1882) 294
- Kaykāwus I, 'Izz ed-Dīn, Seljuk Sultan of Rūm (r. 1211-1220) 6, 107
- Kaykubād I, 'Alā' ed-Dīn, Seljuk Sultan of Rūm (r. 1220-1237) 108
- Kennedy, Hugh 190
- Kech'eghak, Vardapet 90
- Keuch'arov, Manas 287
- Keuch'aryants', Artem 287
- Khach'atryan, A. 198
- Khach'atur Jughayets'i 276, 283
- Khach'atur Kafayets'i, Priest (c.1592-1658/9) 244
- Khach'atur Kesarats'i, Bishop 237
- Khach'eryan, L.G. 64, 199
- Khach'ikyan, Lewon (1918-1982) 79, 142, 196-200, 206
- Khadījah 297, 304
- Khalat'yants', Bagrat (1860-1935) 314, 315
- Khar Banda/Kharbanda/Khūdabanda Muḥammad, Mongol Khan (r. 1304-1316) 89, 160
- Khrlobyan, Geworg (1927-2010) VII
- Khurasan/Khorasan 56, 82, 84, 86, 88
- Khut'lushah (secular name of Grigor Tat'ewats'i) 213
- Khwāja Pīrī of Isfahan 245
- Kilislian, Noubar 13, 321
- Kirakos Gandzakets'i, Vardapet (d. c. 1271) 6, 33, 38, 49, 59, 77, 84, 109, 123, 128-131, 165, 166, 189, 205, 221, 295
- Kiwrtyan, Y. 113
- Kostandin IV Lambronats'i, Catholicos (r. 1322-1326) 90
- Kostanyants', Karapet, Vardapet (1853-1920) 64
- Kostendin* (Arm-Trans: Constantine) 56
- Kozmoyan, Armanush 321, 322
- Kurbēt'ian, Yakob 12, 308, 310, 311
- K'urt' (12th century Georgian figure) 110
- La Porta, Sergio 213, 214
- Larents', Lewon (K'irishchian, 1875-1915) 12, 308, 310
- Lēō (Aṛak'el Babakhayan, 1860-1932) 13, 184, 295, 314-316, 318
- Leo III, Byzantine Emperor (r. 717-741) 34, 37, 44
- Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1658-1705) 273
- Levy-Rubin, Milka 158, 160, 161, 163, 181, 182
- Lewon I the Magnificent, Cilician Great Prince (r. 1187-1198), first King (r. 1199-1219) 133
- Lewon III, Cilician King (r. 1269-1289) 7, 111, 113, 131, 138
- Lewon IV, Cilician King (r. 1320-1342) 90
- Lewon V, last Cilician King (r. 1374-1375) 134
- Libarid/Libaridyan (Georgian-Armenian figure) 85, 86
- Lot (65)
- Ludovico Marracci (1612-1700) 248, 249
- Machumet* (Latin-Trans: Muḥammad) 247, 254
- Mahé, Jean Pierre 37, 189
- Mahmet* 3, 6, 7, 12, 21-43, 47-64, 77, 83-85, 93-106, 117-139, 151-156, 164-169, 170, 171, 175-179, 184, 186, 188, 205, 206, 210, 212, 220, 226, 228, 240, 242, 252, 256, 259, 262-271, 285, 286, 289, 295-301, 306, 318, 339-341
- Mahmēt* 4, 21, 34, 35, 83, 84, 89, 164, 166, 169, 175, 257, 258, 261, 284, 286
- Mahmat, Mahomat, Mehemēt, Mahamat, Mohammed* 4, 21, 54, 168, 268, 269, 349
- Mahmud II, Ottoman Sultan (r. 1808-1839) 8, 158, 164, 182, 227, 228, 294
- Makirdij (Arm: *Mkrtich'*) al-Kassīh al-Armanī of Aleppo (18th century) 279, 280
- Malik Shāh I, Seljuk Sultan (r. 1072-1092) 9, 71, 72, 86, 182, 191

- Malkhasyants', Step'an (1857-1947) 25
 Manandyan, Yakob (1873-1952) 294, 295
Manko (Arm-Trans: Möngke, Mongol Khan, r. 1251-1259) 88
Manuch'ē (11th century figure) 63, 66
 Margaryan, H.G. 93, 94, 104, 105
Mart'in Lut'er (Arm-Trans: Martin Luther, 1483-1546) 91
 Martiros Ghrimets'i (d. 1683) 244
 Mary, the Holy Virgin 98, 103, 149, 263, 270
 Maryam/Mariam, the Holy Virgin 13, 149, 258, 260, 261, 275, 324
al-Masīh 'Īsā Ibn Maryam Rasūl Allāh 149
 Matar, Nabil 247
 Mat'ewosyan, A.S. 78-80, 82, 86, 125, 160, 165
 Matt'ēos Jughayets'i, Vardapet (1350-1421) 9, 196-212, 217, 218, 220, 224, 265, 282
 Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i/Matthew of Edessa/Uṙha/Urfa, Vardapet (d. c.1140-1144) 6, 71, 72, 133-137, 191
 Matthee, Rudolph 275
 Maurice, Byzantine Emperor (r. 582-602) 53, 54
 Malik Ashraf, Mamlūk general (1290s) 89
 Mesrop Mashtots', Vardapet (362-440) 112
 Mihrdatiants', T'ad'ēos 30
 Minassyants', L.G. 13, 171, 172, 178, 180, 254, 318
 Mirzoyan, Hrach'ik (1940-2019) 276, 277
 Mkhit'ar Anets'i, Vardapet (12th century) 6, 12, 33, 77, 84, 93-106, 125, 130, 295
 Mkhit'ar Gösh, Vardapet (d. 1213) 6, 49, 77, 79, 108-123, 195
 Mkhit'aryan, S. 63
 Mkrian, Y. Kahanay 113
 Mleh, Cilician Great Prince (r. 1170-1175) 86, 87
Mlek'shah (Trans-Arb: Malik Shāh) 86
Mokt'dir, Mokt'dik' (Trans-Arb: al-Muqtadir, r. 908-932) 45, 46
 Moses 27, 56, 65, 83, 116, 130, 149, 206, 209, 210, 214, 217-221, 223, 224, 260, 263, 264
 Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i-Movsēs Daskhuranats'i (10th century), 4, 49, 81, 130, 296
 Movsēs Khorenats'i, Vardapet (5th or 8th century) 81
 Movsēs III Tat'ewats'i, Catholicos (r. 1629-1632) 239
 Mu'āwiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān, first Umayyad Caliph (r. 661-680) 8, 24, 30, 31, 36, 49, 53, 61, 62, 105, 125, 156-158, 170, 175, 176, 182, 183, 184, 185, 227, 286, 288, 317; *Mawia/Mawiyah/Mawias/Maviyah/Mawi* (Arb-Trans: Mu'āwiyah) 11, 35, 43, 83, 105, 106, 156, 170, 183, 185
 Muḥammad, the Prophet 3, 4, 12, 21, 26, 39, 40, 65, 83, 100, 116, 149, 156, 157, 161, 171, 174, 175, 193, 195, 202, 225, 229, 240, 247, 248, 255, 263, 270, 295, 296, 303-309, 315-319, 325, 343
 Muḥammad Afshīn Ibn Abī al-Sāj, *ostikan* of Azerbayjan (r. 890-901) 46
 Muḥammad 'Alī Bāshā of Egypt (r. 1805-1848) 274
 Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥazīn Lāhījī (1692-1766) 276
 Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Tūṣī (d. 1066/67) 201
 Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, Umayyad general (7th-8th centuries) 8, 36, 49, 57, 61, 84, 85, 165, 167, 182, 185-188, 262, 271
 Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Mufīd (d. 1022/1032) 200, 202
 Mulla Qāḍī Dānishmand 'Alī 203, 204
 al-Muqtadir, 'Abbāsīd Caliph (r. 908-932) 39, 45, 46, 163, 191
 Murad IV, Ottoman Sultan (r. 1612-1640) 240
 al-Musta'li b'illāh, Fāṭimid Caliph (r. 1094-1101) 333
 al-Mustanṣir b'illāh, Fāṭimid Caliph (r. 1036-1094) 333
 Mutafian, Claude 133

- al-Mutawakkil, 'Abbasid Caliph (r. 847-861) 8, 9, 24, 44, 45, 56, 85, 90, 157, 158, 160-162, 190, 19, 201
Mystery Writer 288, 289
- Nādir, Afshār Shāh (r. 1736-1747) 236, 273, 274, 281, 282
Nalpanyan, Hmayak 325
Nalpanyan, Mik'ayēl (1829-1866) 294
Nalpanyan, Yakob 314, 317
Napoléon Bonaparte, Emperor (r. 1804-1814, 1815) 274
al-Nāšir li-Dīn Allāh, 'Abbāsīd Caliph (r. 1180-1225) 7, 140, 141-143, 330
Nasr, Sult'an (Trans-Arb: Mamlūk Sultan Nāšir ed-Dīn Muḥammad, third reign, 1310-1341) 90, 160
Nazaryants', Step'anos (1812-1879) 294
Neṛ (Arm: Antichrist) see Antichrist
Nersēs I the Great, Catholicos (r. 353-373) 112
Nersēs Lambronats'i, Cilician Bishop (1153-1198) 110, 111
Nersēs Mshets'i, Vardapet (d. 1284) 213
Nersēs IV *Shnorhali* (Graceful), Catholicos (r. 1166-1173) 67, 87, 111
Nersēs III Tayets'i-*Shinogh* ("builder" of the cathedral of Zwart'nots' in 643-652) Catholicos (r. 641-661) 11, 25, 48, 62, 184, 185
Nestor Sargis (for Sergius Baḥrā) 55
Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople (386-451) 19, 54, 57
Nikol, Bishop of Lvov (17th century) 253
Noah 49, 55, 149
Norton, Claire 234, 236
Nūr ed-Dīn *Amiray* Zankī, Oghuz Turkish ruler of Syria (r. 1146-1174) 82, 87
- Okbay* (Arm for: Muḥammad Ibn Marwān) 61
Ōrmanian, Maghakia, Patriarch of Istanbul (r. 1896-1908) 25, 72, 199, 294
Ōshin, Cilician Lord of Korikos (d. 1265) 138
Oskan Erewants'i (1614-1674) 241
Oskian, Hamazasp 206, 254
Ot'man (Trans-Arb: 'Uthmān) 60, 131, 221
- Paghtasaryan, Edward 142-144
P'ahlewanyan, Ōnik 325
Papayan, L. 199
P'ashayan, Arax 325
Patkanyan, K'erovbē (1883-1889) 12, 13, 33, 38, 93, 295, 296, 313
Paul, Apostle 51, 65, 219, 260, 304, 315
P'awstos Buzand, Vardapet (5th century) 81
Peacock, A.C.S. 106-108
Peter, Apostle 219
Peter the Great, Tsar (r. 1682-1725) 273
Petros I *Getadardz*, Catholicos (r. 1019-1058) 77
Petrus of Aragonia (13th century) 199
Philaretus/P'ilardos/Philaretos/Filārdus Varajnuni/Brakhamios, Byz. general/ruler of Germanica (r. 1071-1087) 71, 72, 75, 76, 86, 333, 337
Photius/Photios I, Patriarch (r. 858-867, 877-886) 37
P'ilibbos I Aghbakets'i, Catholicos (r. 1633/4-1655) 241, 253
Pōghos I Ssets'i, Catholicos (r. 1374-1382) 134
Pōghos and Yovsēp', monks of Nor Getik/Goshavank' 110, 114
Porphyry (234-305) 199
Pourjavady, Reza 234, 236
Prophet 1, 2, 4, 11, 13, 18, 21-23, 27, 31, 35, 39, 40, 49, 55, 57, 60, 64, 82-84, 93, 97-99, 105, 114, 130, 139, 149, 154-158, 167, 168, 171-177, 180, 193, 195, 207, 208, 210, 211, 213, 215, 219, 220, 223, 227, 229, 235, 240, 242, 245, 261, 263, 266, 269, 278, 283, 287, 293-297, 301-304, 306-209, 311-314, 340, 341
P'roshyans of Siwnik' 198
Pseudo-Christ 95
Ptolemy, Claudius (c. 100-170) 125
- al-Qā'im, 'Abbāsīd Caliph (r. 1031-1075) 66
Qara/Kara Yūsuf, Qara Qoyunlu/Kara Koyonlu Turkmen ruler (r. 1388-1420) 196

- Raman/Rëmanal/Rïman*, Idol 96, 97, 102, 126
- Robert of Ketton (1110-1160) 11, 247, 248
- Roggema, Barbara 40
- Rostomyants'-Yarut'iwnyan, Dawit' (late 19th century) 12, 302-305
- Ruzzik Ibn Ṭalā'i', Fātimid Vizier (r. 1161-1162) 333-334
- Saghman* (Arb-Trans: Salmān) 42, 43
- Sahak III Dzorap'orets'i, Catholicos (r. 677-703) 8, 36, 48, 52, 57, 61, 105, 165-168, 182, 186-188, 262, 271, 317, 318
- Sahak Seveda, prince of Khach'en 49
- Sahak I Part'ew, Catholicos (r. 386/7-439) 112
- Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn, Ayyūbid Sultan (r. 1174-1193) 9, 80, 86, 87, 134, 182, 192, 193, 229; *Salahatin* (Trans-Arb: Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn) 80, 86; *Salahadin* 137
- Salibi, Kamal (1929-2011) VIII
- Samir Khalil, Father IX
- Samuēl Anets'i *Erēts'* (priest, 12th century) 6, 8, 33, 53, 59, 77-87, 92-94, 106, 123, 130, 138, 160, 164, 165, 167, 205, 295
- Sarah, wife of Abraham 83, 95, 100, 101, 126
- Sargis, Abeghay 93
- Sargis Amir Dpir Znakya, scribe from Isfahan (17th century) 262, 263, 265, 266, 270-272
- Sargis, Archbishop of Erzinjān (13th century) 88, 144
- Sargis, 14th century scribe of Ghewond's history 34
- Sargis I Sewants'i, Catholicos (r. 992-1019) 59
- Sargis Pitsak, Cilician illuminator-painter (active 1319-1358) 113
- Sarkissian, Karekin I/II Catholicos (of Cilicia: r. 1983-1994, of Ējmiatsin: r. 1994-1999) VII
- Sarkissian, Parsegh, Vardapet 294
- Satan 54, 65, 104
- Sawanalyants', T., 172, 192, 195, 240
- al-Sayyid al-Oassanī 155
- Sbath, Paul 280
- Schmidt, Andrea 124
- Scythian 82, 85, 86, 125, 131
- Sebeos (7th century) 4, 20-36, 39-43, 47, 48, 81, 182-185, 317, 340
- al-Shāfi'ī, al-Imām Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs (767-820) 161
- Shāhkhat'unyan, Yovhannēs, Bishop (1799-1849) 24
- Shahnazaryants', Karapet 32, 33, 35, 36
- Shapuh Bagratuni the Anonymous Storyteller (10th-11th centuries) 4, 46, 52-54, 81, 188
- al-Shaykh Ṣafī ed-Din Ardabīlī (r. 1252-1334) 234
- Shirmazanyants', Galust 176, 178
- Shirvanzadē (Alexander Movsisyan, 1858-1935) 300
- Simēon Lehats'i (c.1584-1636/9) 237, 244
- Smbat Sparapet, Constable *Patmich'* (historian, 1208-1276) 6, 82, 109, 111, 113, 133, 137, 138
- Smbat I *Nahatak* (Martyr), Bagratuni King (r. 890-914) 47, 49
- Spuler, Bertold 190, 225
- Srapyan, Armēnuhi 14
- Step'anos III, Catholicos of Aghuank' (r. 1155-1195) 110
- Step'anos Lehats'i, Vardapet (d. 1689) 91, 151, 168, 188, 237, 244, 249-262, 285, 286, 320, 341
- Step'anos Ōrbelyan, Bishop (c.1250-1305) 80, 87, 88, 124, 131, 198
- Step'anos Siwnets'i, Vardapet (13th century) 253
- Step'anos Taronets'i Asoghik, Vardapet (c. 935-1015) 4, 33, 43, 52, 53, 59-62, 81, 185, 188, 189
- Step'anos IV Hromklayets'i, Catholicos (r. 1290-1292/3) 134
- Step'anyan, Gëorg 302
- Stewart, A.D. 134
- Sulaymān I, Safavid Shāh (r. 1666-1694) 245
- Suleyman I the Magnificent, Ottoman Sultan (r. 1520-66) 233

- sultan/s 63, 72, 86, 88-91, 105, 107, 193, 244, 274, 300, 301
- Sultan Beki Orbli/Orbelyan 287
- Sulṭān Husayn, Safavid Shāh (r. 1694-1727) 274-276, 282
- al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr (839-923) 314
- T'ahanay 179
- T'*alb* (Trans-Arb: Ṭālib) 50
- Tamar, Queen of Georgia (r. 1184-1213) 77
- T'eodoros R̥shtuni, Governor of Armenia (7th century) 26, 28-30, 53, 59, 60, 61, 82, 105, 125, 128, 182, 184, 188, 203, 262, 317
- T'*eotos* (Arm version: T'eodoros R̥shtuni) 183
- T'*eoydas* (Arm version: Theodosius) 56
- T'*ok'l* (Trans-Arb: al-Mutawakkil) 44
- T'ovma Artsruni, Vardapet (9th-10th centuries) 4, 23, 33, 37-46, 49, 54, 93, 187, 225, 226, 294
- T'ovma Metsop'ets'i, Vardapet (1378-1446) 225, 226
- Tahmasb, Safavid Shāh (r. 1524-1576) 233
- Tahmasb II, "*Shah T'ahmaz Khan*", Safavid Shāh (r. 1729-1732) 282
- Ṭāḷā'i' Ibn Ruzzīk, Fāṭimid Vizier (r. 1154-1161) 333
- Tamerlane, Timur i-Lang/Leng/Timur Lang, Mongol Emperor (r. 1370-1405) 90, 196, 212, 225, 294
- Tēr Ghewondyan, Aram (1928-1988) 13, 24, 33, 34, 36, 38, 186, 314, 317, 318
- Tēr Ghewondyan, Vahan 317
- Tēr Mkrtch'yan, Karapet, Vardapet (1866-1915) 52, 294
- Tēr Yovnanyants', Yarut'iwn 171, 172, 227
- Teule, Herman G.B. 134
- Terian, Abraham 63
- Theodor Biliander (1509-1564) 247, 254
- Thomas, David VIII, 1
- Thomson, Robert W. (1934-2018) 17, 18, 26-31, 38-43, 52-54, 100-118, 123, 124, 188
- Tolan, John 1
- T'oros I, Cilician Great Prince (r. 1100-1129) 136
- Tiburcio, Alberto 245
- Tilu-Daylu Libarid Dānishmand, Georgian-Armenian figure in Seljuk circles (mid-11th century) 86
- Tiridates III, Arsacid King (r. 287-330) 59
- Tiyatus* (Arb version: Apostle Taddeus) 107
- T'op'chyan, Erwand (19th-20th century) 12, 229, 297, 299, 304, 316
- T'ovmasyan, N.R. 196
- T'orosyan, Khosrov A. 109, 117
- Tritton, Arthur Stanley 24, 158
- Turiyanos/Trayanos* (Arm version: Trajan, Roman Emperor, r. 98-117) 101
- Ṭurṭūshī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (1059-1126) 162
- 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Rāshidūn Caliph (r. 634-644) 9, 20, 60, 150, 154, 157-159, 161, 162, 190-193, 227, 228, 294, 304, 312, 318
- 'Umar II, Umayyad Caliph (r. 717-720) 8, 24, 34, 36-38, 44, 48, 125, 159, 160, 182, 188-190
- 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, Rāshidūn Caliph (r. 644-656) 30, 158, 182, 315
- Vahan Mamikonian, *Sparapet* (commander, 5th century) 57
- Vahē Oshagan (1922-2000) VII
- Vahram Rabuni (13th century) 7, 137-139, 213
- Valkenberg, Pim 149
- van Lint, Tho Maarten 63, 65, 67
- Vanakan, Vardapet (b. 1180) 93, 109, 128, 130
- Varaqa Ibn Naufal* (Arm-Trans: Waraqa) 297
- Vard, Prince, son of T'eodoros R̥shtuni (7th century) 53, 125, 271
- Vardan Aygekts'i, Vardapet 110
- Vardan Bardzrberdts'i, Vardapet (13th century figure) 128
- Vardan *Mets* (great) Arewelts'i, Vardapet (13th century) 6, 33, 59, 60, 77, 89, 123-129, 191, 295

- Vardanyan, P'ilibbos (19th century) 12, 296, 297
- Vasak, Artsruni Prince (convert?) 45
- Vasak, Pahlawuni *Sparapet* (commander, d. 1021) 63-65
- Vasil (Basil) the scribe of Het'um Patmich' (13th-14th century) 80
- Walbiner, Carsten 279, 280
- Wood, Philip 19, 23, 32, 152, 155, 159
- Yakob Garnets'i Vardapet (1618-1673) 244
- Yakob *Manktag*, heresiarch (13th century) 143
- Yakob IV Jughayets'i, Catholicos (r. 1655-1680) 11, 241, 251, 252
- Yakobyan, Vahan 323
- Yakovb Seyid Ardashukh 179
- Yānis al-Armanī, Fāṭimid Vizier (r. 1132) 333
- Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī (1178-1229) 317
- Yazdegerd II, Sasanian Emperor (r. 438-457) 289
- Yazīd II, Umayyad Caliph (r. 720-724) 44
- Yazkert Shāhriarian* (Arm version: Yazdegerd III), Sasanian Emperor (r. 632-651) 105
- Yesayi, Bishop 179
- Yesayi Nch'ets'i, Vardapet (c. 1260/65-c. 1338) 198, 213
- Yisē* ('Īsā, Jesus) 209, 218, 219
- Yisus Ordi*, Jesus the Son 67, 324
- Yonuz 92
- Yovhan V Draskhanakertts'i, Catholicos (r. 898-929) 4, 47, 48, 81, 94, 184, 187-190, 318
- Yovhan I Mandakuni, Catholicos (478-490) 112
- Yovhan II Ōdznets'i, Catholicos (r. 717-728) 8, 34, 36, 37, 48, 85, 109, 112, 116, 125, 188-190, 317
- Yovhan Orotnets'i, Vardapet (1315-1386) 213
- Yovhannēs Erznkats'i, Vardapet (d. 1293) VII, VIII, 7, 134, 140-144, 199, 329-331
- Yovhannēs Jughayets'i Mrk'uz, Vardapet (1643-1715 or 1726) 276-279
- Yovhannēs Kozerṇ, Vardapet (early 11th century) 136
- Yovhannēs Sarkawag Imastasēr (d. 1129) 79, 81, 213
- Yovsēp' I Hoghitsmets'i, Catholicos (r. 440-452) 112
- Yovsēp', Vardapet 114
- Yusup'*, *Ostikan* of *Armīnyah* (commissioner, Trans-Arb: Yūsuf, 10th century) 47, 49, 62, 161
- al-Zāfir li-Amr Allāh, Fāṭimid Caliph (r. 1149-1154) 333
- Zak'arē Zakaryan, Georgian-Armenian general *amirbasalar* (late 12th early 13th centuries) 88
- Zak'aria Agulets'i (c. 1630-1691) 244
- Zak'aria K'anakeṛts'i, Sarkawag (1627-1699) 226, 242, 252
- Zak'aria II *Nahatak* (Martyr), Catholicos (r. 1369-1393) 90, 203-204, 207
- Zak'aryan, H. 324
- Zohrapyan, Movsēs 302

INDEX OF LOCATIONS AND PLACES

- Adana 56
- Adrianopolis 12, 80, 293
- Aghiovit 83
- Aght'amar 38, 46, 48, 49, 90, 200, 203-207
- Aghuank'* (Caucasian Albania) 29, 49, 50, 52, 60, 76, 109, 110, 114, 188, 198
- Ak'k'ay* (Trans-Arb: 'Akkā) 87
- Alamut (Arab: *Qal'atal-Mawt*) Fortress, Iran 89
- Aleppo (Arb: Ḥalab, Ancient Beria) 11, 71, 90, 91, 235-241, 279, 280
- Alexandria 19, 55, 56, 96, 102, 274, 333
- al-Jazīrah 74
- al-Shām (Greater Syria) VIII, 17, 20, 30, 64, 73-75, 154, 158, 304, 332, 333
- al-Yemen 155, 311
- Amanus Mountains 133
- Amasya 233, 241

- Amida, Amit, *Tigranakert* 83, 242
 Amsterdam 241
Andiawk' (Arm-Trans: Antioch) 56
 Angura 314
 Ani 6, 9, 17, 59, 63, 71-73, 77-82, 85, 86, 88, 94, 1-6-109, 191, 195, 199
 Ankara 13, 322
Ant'ak' (Arm-Trans: Antioch) 114
 Antelias 296, 313
 Antioch 19, 56, 74, 75, 86, 109-111, 113, 237, 233
 Arabia 26, 39, 40, 47, 126, 139, 155, 172, 296, 297, 304, 312, 314, 325
 Aragatsotn 129
 Arapkir 238
 Araxes/Arax/Araz/Aras River 76, 105, 206, 235
 Archēsh 206, 225
Armīnyah 8, 17, 24, 32, 34, 38, 165, 185, 186, 335, 336
 Artaz 105
 Ashtarak 34
 Asia 133
 Asia Minor 11, 20, 24, 27, 34, 73, 74, 76, 77, 85, 86, 107, 130, 133, 196, 233, 234, 237, 293, 330, 334, 337
Asorestan (Arm: Ancient Mesopotamia) 304
Asorik' (Arm-Trans: Assyria) 64, 105
 Atrpatakan 196
 Ayntāb 82, 135
 Ayrarat 124, 236
 Azerbaijan 33, 46, 196, 325
 Azhdarkhan 178
- Babylon/Babylonian 55, 56, 98, 103, 140
 Baghdad 19, 44, 46, 53-59, 85, 88, 133, 136, 157, 161, 172, 188, 240
 Bahrain 154
 Balkans 244
Baltat (Arm: Baghdad) 56
 Basel 247, 252, 254
 Basra 330
 Behesni 314
 Birmantha 157
 Black Mountain (Arm: *Seaw Ler*) 109
- Black Sea 10, 73, 233, 235
 Boşra 297
 Byzantium/Byzantion 25, 29, 32, 48, 73, 74, 77, 85, 125, 128, 135, 183, 184, 187, 189, 336
 Bznuni 83, 131, 166
 Bzommar 254
- Caesarea 72, 78, 79, 92, 130, 140, 253
 Cappadocia 5, 63, 73, 75, 86, 135, 140, 332, 337
 Caspian Sea 10, 11, 73, 196, 233, 235, 293, 335
 Caucasus 11, 76, 233, 281, 282, 335
Chenk' (Arm-Trans: China) 57
 "Christ's Prison", Jerusalem 193
 Church known after the Olive Garden 193
 Church of All Savior New Julfa (Arm: *Amenap'rkich'*) 176, 178, 235, 236, 276
 Church of Forty Martyrs Aleppo (*K'arasan Manuk*) 91
 Church of Holy Ascension of Jerusalem 194, 195
 Church of Mār Ya'qūb 193
 Church of St. James (*Surb Yakob*) at Sis 92
 Church of St. John at Damascus 190
 Church of St. Karapet of Mush (Arm: *Mshoy Surb Karapet*) 87
 Church of St. Nikoghayos 240
 Church of St. Thomas at Damascus 190
 Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar (Arm: *Surb Khach'*) 203
 Churches of Bethlehem and Nāblus 193
 Cilicia VII, 5-7, 10, 56, 72-82, 86-90, 108-114, 123, 124, 129, 131, 133-135, 137-139, 141, 196-199, 213, 235, 237, 239, 240, 249, 273, 293, 294, 296, 308, 333, 336
 City of 1001 Churches Ani 77
 Constantinople 19, 56, 76, 90, 241, 244, 273, 274
 Crimea 10, 235
 Cyprus 83, 134, 240
- Damascus 8, 19, 32, 37, 48, 49, 61, 83, 85, 89, 96, 106, 125, 126, 134, 183, 187, 189, 190, 192, 222, 225, 297, 318
 Daranaghi 239, 243

- Dawrizh* see Tabriz
 Dewrigue 240
 Dlūk 81
 Dome of the Rock 20, 159
 Duin (*Dābil*) 17, 25, 26, 33, 52, 60, 62, 73, 81, 88, 112, 128, 133, 184, 185, 317
 Eastern or Persian Armenia 10, 178, 235
 Eastern Europe 9, 233
 Edessa/Uṛḥa/Urfa 17, 19, 27, 39, 60, 67, 87, 135, 136, 240, 241
Eğin/Akn 238
 Egypt VIII, 5, 17, 26, 28, 39, 40, 41, 42, 55-57, 60, 72-75, 83, 85, 88-90, 96, 97, 102, 106, 126, 128, 130, 133, 192, 240, 274, 317, 333-335
 Ējmiatsin 24, 48, 76, 80, 90, 91, 109, 113, 135, 168, 172, 178, 202, 213, 236, 239, 240, 241, 242, 249, 252, 253, 273, 280, 281
Ekegheats', province of Erzuka/Erzinjān 144
Ep'itsrep' (Trans-Arb: Yathrib) 100
 Ernjak 206
 Erzuka (Trans-Arb: Erzinjān) 7, 76, 88, 134, 140-145, 243
 Erzurum/Karin 31, 56, 62, 76, 110, 206
 Euphrates 5, 19, 55, 74-76, 78, 82, 140, 332
 Evilay 60
 Falashan 236
 Far East 10, 129, 133, 234
Fṛankstan (Arm: Land of Franks) 90
 Gandzak (Arm-Trans: Ganja) in Karabagh 6, 77, 108, 109, 110, 112, 123, 128
 Georgia 60, 75, 77, 86, 185, 273
 Germanica 75
 Ghoght'n (in Nakhijewan) 33
 Gnunik' 242
 "Grave of Christ", Jerusalem 136, 228
 Gund 56
 Haibar 154
 al-Ḥijāz 345
Hṛomkla (Arm-Trans: Qal'at al-Rūm, Turk: Rumkalē) Catholicosai Fortress 78, 88, 89, 131, 134, 192
 Hungary 244
 India 9, 26, 28, 48, 157, 172, 178, 233, 237
 Iran 8, 11, 13, 76, 88, 105, 196, 233, 238, 241, 244, 245, 252, 273, 275, 277, 282, 293, 315, 321, 333, 335
 Iraq 17, 32, 44, 53, 159, 188, 335
 Isfahan 9, 10, 54, 91, 172, 176, 226, 234-236, 239, 245, 254, 261, 262, 265
 Israel 27, 39, 60, 98, 103, 260
 Istanbul 9, 10, 12, 80, 113, 144, 158, 202, 228, 233, 235, 238, 240, 243-245, 274, 282-284, 294, 306, 309-311, 313
 Izmir/Smyrna 10, 238
 Jerusalem 8, 9, 19, 20, 32, 56, 80, 87, 93, 98, 99, 103, 137, 154, 158, 159, 192, 195, 227, 228, 240, 253, 294, 313, 316
 K'anak'er 242
 K'esun/K'esum/Keisun 135
 Kamakh/Kemakh 239
 Karabagh 6, 77, 108, 123, 306, 325
 Karin see Erzurum
 Kars 300
 Kayseri, see Caesarea 108
 Khach'en 49, 110, 130, 206
Kharan (Trans-Arb: Ḥarrān) 36, 48, 61, 186, 188
 Khorasan/Khurasan 56, 82, 85, 86, 88
Khuzhastan 28
 Kilis 279
 Konya 77, 108
 Lebanon 238, 296, 335
 Lesser, Little Armenia (Cilicia) 133
 Lvov/Ilova, Poland 78, 252
Madena (Trans-Arb: Medīnah) 257
Madiam (Trans-Arb: Medīnah) 39, 41, 43, 97, 131
Madinay (Trans-Arb: Medīnah) 97, 100
Mak'a/y (Trans-Arb: Mecca) 40, 101
Mak'a al-Has, Mak'alhasay (locations in around Mak'a/Mecca?) 96, 101
 Manbij 36, 333
 Manzikert/Manazkert 4, 73, 74
 Mar'ash 72, 237, 333
 Marastan 105

- Mardin 155
 Marmara Sea 93, 239
 Marnanan 235, 236
 Medīnah 7, 35, 36, 95, 131, 150, 154, 166, 263, 286, 307, 308, 311
 Mediterranean Sea VIII, 109, 133, 233, 335
 Melitene (Trans-Arm: *Melitinē*) 56, 72, 80, 92, 155
 Mesopotamia (Arm: *Mijagetk'*) 63, 74, 83, 133, 140
 Metsop' 225
 Middle East VII, 1, 152, 338
 Mokk' 206
 Moscow 12, 13, 47, 80, 128, 293
 Mount Sinai 39, 95, 156
Msis (Trans-Arm: Mašīšā) 56
Msr (Trans-Arb: Maṣr, Egypt) 56, 88-90

 Najrān 154-156, 171
 Nakhijewan 33, 105, 242
 Near East/ern VIII, IX, 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 17, 19, 20, 22, 75, 88, 133, 145, 151, 159, 192, 233, 238, 239, 249, 329, 331, 332, 336, 338, 339, 342
 Near/Middle East VII, 1
 New Julfa-Isfahan 9, 10, 91, 171, 172, 176, 180, 187, 226, 235-239, 244, 245, 252, 254, 261, 275-277
 New York VIII
 North Africa 74, 233

 Orontes River 74
 Orotn 198
Ort'agiwgh, Istanbul 228
 Ostan of Rhtunik' 90, 203, 204, 242

P'aran/Mak'a (Trans-Arb: Mecca) 40-42
 Padua 248
 Palestine 17, 40, 41, 53, 74, 75, 86, 105, 106, 128, 136, 154, 158, 192, 333, 335

 Ramlay 56
Rey (Trans-Pers: Rayy) 54
 Rodosto/Tekirdagh 10, 93, 235, 239, 240, 280
 Rostov 300
 Rueran 54

Samara (Trans-Arb: *Samarrā'*) 54, 55
 Samosata 75, 332
Sap'ay and *Emra'n* (Trans-Arb: Şafā and Marwah) 96, 101
 Saudi Arabia 155
 Seert/Siirt 155-157
 Seleucia/Ctesiphon 19
 Sewan, Lake 78, 85, 110, 129, 221
Sewawerak (Trans-Turk: Severeke) 75, 332
 Shirak 73, 77, 191
 Shosh-Isfahan 235, 262, 265
Sin/Sinai 28, 40, 65, 83, 95, 100, 130, 156, 206, 221
 Sivās 206, 241
 Siwnik' 49, 78, 80, 87, 124, 125, 131, 166, 196, 198, 200, 213
 Sodom 65
 St. Lazar, Venice 113, 130, 282
St'ampōl (Arm-Trans: Istanbul) 244
 Suleymanieh 168
 Sur 60
Surb Yakop (St. James) Monastery at Jerusalem 92, 158, 159, 227, 228
 Syria 5, 20, 24, 30, 36, 53-55, 76, 81, 86, 105, 128, 133, 135, 136, 138, 183, 184, 237, 271, 280, 304, 315, 335

 Tabūk 154
 Tabriz (Arm-Trans: *Dawrizh*, *Dawrezh*) 108, 124, 168, 170, 172, 235, 241, 245
Tachkastan (land/country of the *Tachiks*/Tajiks, Arabs and Muslims) 47, 60
 Tsamndaw 72
 Tarsus, *Darsis* (Arm Trans) 56, 111
 Taron 19, 59, 79, 87, 131, 135, 166
 Taurus 28, 81, 133
 Tavush 79
 Tbilisi Tekirdagh, see Rodosto 9, 10, 12, 25, 141, 178, 227, 229, 239, 281, 293, 296, 299, 302, 304, 306
 Theodosia-Kafa 10, 235
 Thrace 239, 280
 Tomb of the Messiah/Grave of Christ 136, 194, 228
Tsovk' 81
 Turkey 12, 36, 93, 124, 155, 230, 238, 240, 252, 279, 293, 299, 300, 301, 306, 313

- Upper Mesopotamia 133
 Urmia, Lake 38
- Vahka, Fortress 81, 133
 Van 204, 242, 309
 Van, Lake 38, 73, 90, 155, 166, 203, 204, 213, 225, 244
 Vardenis 129
 Varna 12, 306, 310, 315
 Vaspurakan 19, 38, 39, 44, 46, 47, 49, 57, 59, 90, 91, 105, 184, 191, 196, 198, 203
 Vatican 248
 Venice 86, 89, 110, 113, 128-130, 131, 178, 237, 238, 244, 245, 282, 283
Vodn al-Hamam (wādī ? in Arabia) 96, 101
- Western Europe 10, 234
 Western or Turkish Armenia 10, 235, 309
- Yeghvard 281
 Yerevan 13, 25, 33, 34, 62, 77, 78, 94, 109, 110, 124, 125, 135, 185, 239, 242, 245, 281, 282, 283, 315
Yet'ep' (Trans-Arb: Yathrib) 95
- Zayandarud River 235, 236
 Zeit'un 237
 Zion 99, 193
 Zurich 247

GENERAL INDEX

- 'Abbāsīd/s 7-9, 23, 24, 40, 43, 44, 46, 62, 63, 66, 84, 85, 90, 136, 140, 143, 145, 158, 182, 190, 191, 330
 'ahd (Arb: oath, Arm: *ukht*) 143, 154, 161, 170
 'aqd (Arb: covenant) 161, 181
 'ayyārūn (Arb: urban youth social types) 197
 ablution 43, 117, 128, 207, 211, 223, 224
 Abrahamic 64, 83, 150
 abrogation 280
 abuse 112, 156, 174, 197
 accusation/s 9, 18, 65, 200, 202, 204, 205, 207, 209, 210, 211, 299
 accuser/s 200, 215, 225
 adolescent/s 87, 90, 153
 adultery 118, 123, 224, 242
 adversaries 135, 200, 205, 208, 211, 217, 218, 225, 338
 Afshārid Dynasty (1736-1796) 273
 Age of Kingdoms 4, 23, 47
 aggression 153, 309
aghandawor (Arm: sectarian) 105, 118
aghk'ider (for Trans Arb: *laylat al-qadr* — Night of Decree, Destiny) 259
 agreement/s 7, 8, 20, 27, 30, 36, 90, 119, 151, 154, 158, 160, 164, 177, 179, 181-183, 185, 187, 188, 191, 227, 340
- ahl al-dhimma/h* (Arb: protected people) 150, 162, 163, 200
ahl al-kitāb/kitābī/s (Arb: people of the book) 150, 200-202
aḥwāl shakhṣiyyah (Arb: personal matters) 112
al-arman (Arb. the Armenians) 336
Alcoran (Latin Trans: al-Qur'ān) 11, 247, 251-255
 Alevi/s 300, 325
 Alī-Ilāhīs 299
 alternative approach 13
amān (Arb: safety) 150, 181, 343
 ambassador/s 197, 234
ambhovani (Arm: canopy) 220
amīr/s 34, 35, 62-65, 73, 77, 81, 136, 183, 203, 242, 251
amirapet (Trans Arb: head-amīr, ref. to *khalīfah*) 48, 62, 85, 189
amiray (Trans Arb: *amīr*) 63-65, 87, 136, 183
amirmumni/amirmumnik' (Trans-Arb: *amīr al-mu'minīn*, Commander of the Faithful) 83, 85, 131, 166
 Ammonite 42
 Ammonite temple of *Samam* and *K'abar* 40
anawrēn/anōrēn (Arm: lawless, faithless) 88

- andz ew dēm* (Arm: individual person) 218
andznishkhan (Arm: autonomous) 216
 angels 55, 65, 106, 173, 209, 214, 215, 217, 218, 222, 259, 260, 264, 265, 270
anglukh azg (Arm: headless nation) 242
ankanon grawnits'n Mahmeti (Arm: irregular religion of Mahmet) 43
anōrinut'iwn/anawrēnut'iwn (Arm: lawlessness, faithlessness) 207
Ansiz Antak'oy (Trans Arm: Assizes of Antioch) 113
Ansiz Hayots' (Trans Arm: Assizes of the Armenians) 113
 anti-Christian 20, 236
 anti-Islamic 248
 anti-Muslim 10, 115, 239, 333
 Antiquity 151
 Apocalyptic 20, 29, 40
 apologetical-polemical 18, 254, 256, 259
 apology 12, 13, 37, 66, 263, 277, 293, 302, 303, 341
 apostasy 45, 118, 123, 186
Ar Manuch'ē Hazartoghean (Arm: To Manuch'ē Thousand-Line Poem) 63
arabagitut'iwn (Arabology) 313, 314
 Arab-Armenian 132, 293, 314, 317, 318, 329, 341
 Arabicization 24, 32, 158, 159, 185
arajnord (Arm: leader) 117
 Aramaic 40, 247
aṛaspel (Arm: legend, fable) 100
aṛaspelabanut'iwn (Arm: fable-making) 264
arewelian vardapetk' (Arm: Eastern Vardapets) 76
Arewardik' (Arm: sun worshippers) 332
 argue 4, 5, 8, 22, 37, 53, 65, 73, 164, 169, 180, 181, 216, 217, 221, 222, 225, 247, 278, 330, 331, 332, 336, 340, 341
 argument/s IX, 3, 5, 10, 11, 45, 115, 116, 205, 210, 214, 217-219, 225, 239, 250, 251, 270, 278, 279, 307, 334, 335, 338-340
 Arian 22, 23, 40, 42, 83, 95, 105, 130, 179
 Arius/Arios 50, 83, 126, 206, 207, 214, 221
 aristocratic houses 5, 18, 25, 38, 47, 74, 159, 204
 Aristotelian 64, 213, 216; Aristotle 199, 217, 253
armanī (Arb: Armenian) 11, 85, 245, 279, 336
 Armenian
 Apostolic faith 5, 19, 66, 136, 196, 214, 276, 279
 Church 6, 64, 66, 87, 109, 111, 129, 170, 192, 208, 227, 237, 240, 244, 289
 Awakening 10, 233, 238, 239, 249, 250, 283, 294, 296
 city 10, 236
 East 9, 23, 71, 76, 171, 200, 239, 293, 295
 Ghurans (Trans-Arb: Qur'ān) 8-10, 12, 164, 233, 247, 249-252, 273, 293, 306, 339-341
 Habitat, *oikumenē* 3, 5, 10, 73, 74, 77, 92, 133, 235, 335-337
 intellectual culture IX, 10, 18, 134, 142, 239, 249, 284, 341
 Intermezzo 5, 6, 71, 73-75, 332, 333, 336
 Mahmet 3-6, 8, 17, 21-23, 40, 47, 71, 77, 94, 109, 123, 130, 151, 165, 205, 288, 339, 340
 National Constitution 294
 national Meta-Polis 335
 Nominalists 213
 Patriarchate of Jerusalem 193
 Pax Islamica 7, 8, 20, 23, 30, 149, 150, 154, 158, 162, 164, 165, 167, 168, 171, 181, 182, 184, 186, 187, 229, 313, 318, 339, 340
 Period in Fāṭimid Egypt 5, 333, 334
 political-cultural energy 75
 press of Baghdad 157
 psyche IX
 Studies 2, 9, 233, 320, 325
 West 72, 76, 135
 World 72, 131, 166, 196, 285
 Worlds 76, 235
 Catholic/s 157
 Armenianness VII, 338

- army/armies 19, 26-28, 30, 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 48, 51, 56-58, 60, 61, 63, 75, 77, 82, 83, 86, 87, 105, 106, 126, 131, 134, 136, 137, 156, 167, 183, 184, 274, 282, 283, 289, 302, 333
 arrowmen 196
 Arshakuni 25
 Artsruni 23, 33, 38-39, 45, 47, 53, 54, 191, 203
ashkharhapatum (Arm: stories/narratives of the world) 59
ashkharhn hayots' (Arm: World of the Armenians, Armenia) 241
ashkharhn ösmantswots' (Arm: World of the Ottomans) 241
ashkharhn parsits'parsits', tunn parsits' (Arm: World of the Persians) 241
Assizes of Antioch (Old French: Compilation of Laws in Crusader Antioch, 13th century) 109, 111, 113
assizes (tribunal, enactment) 113
 Assyrian/s 258
astuatsayin dashnaworut'iwn (Arm: divine harmony) 183
atabek (Turk: governor, also charged with raising crown prince) 77
 Awāqīs/Nāwīqīs 75, 333
awas, awas (Arb: exclamation) 101, 127
awrēnsdīr/örēnsdīr (Arm: lawgiver, legislator) 116
awtar/ōtar (Arm: foreign) 21, 114
aylaser (Arm: of another genus/race) 114
aylazgīl'k' (Arm: of another people/race) 21, 62, 92, 112, 114, 118-121, 123, 132, 137, 144, 145, 197, 203, 207, 240, 242, 284
 Ayyūbid 9, 87, 108, 133, 182, 192
azat/s (Arm: freeman) 74, 81, 166
azg Ismayeli (Arm: people of Ismael, ref. to Arabs) 35
azg k'ristoneits' (Arm: Christian people, Christians) 241
azg Mahmeti (Arm: people of Mahmet, Muslims) 137
Azgayin Sahmanadrut'iwn (Armenian National Constitution) 300
azoara (Trans Latin for *al/as-sūrah*) 168, 254-256
 Bābists (*Bābiyyah* rel. movement in Iran, 19th century) 299
 Babylonians 55, 56
 Baku 12, 302
banawor hotk' (Arm: rational congregation) 89
 Baptism 43, 83, 123, 224, 245
 barley 83, 106, 164, 166, 221
basmla (Arb: short for *Bi'sm Illāh*, In the Name of God) 181
 Battle of Avarayr (451) 289
 Avarayr (451) 289
 'Ayn Jālūt (1260) 134
 Badr (624) 307
 Eghvard (1735) 281
 Ḥattīn (1187) 192
 al-Khandaq (627) 307
 Marj al-Ṣuffār (1303) 134
 al-Qādisiyyah (636) 19, 317
 Uḥūd (624) 307
 Wādī al-Khaznadār (1299) 134
 al-Yarmūk (636) 19, 316
bedelet askariyē (Trans-Turk: alternative tax for military service exemption) 301
 bedouin peoples 315
 Bēnē Boghusak/s 75, 332
besmilla rahman u rahim (Trans-Arb: *B'ism Illāh Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) 225
bezirkan (Turk: merchant) 169
 Bible 37, 63, 65, 66, 100, 116, 149, 196, 210, 219, 220, 221, 248, 253, 260, 278, 309, 323, 324
 biblical 13, 21, 63, 67, 110, 125, 263, 277, 278, 320, 324
bikr (Arb: ref. to the Holy Virgin) 218
 biography of Muḥammad the Prophet 4, 12, 78, 205, 207, 220, 229, 248, 293, 296, 297, 306, 307, 310, 311
 bishopric/s 9, 19, 171, 172, 238
 black patch/insign 89, 90
 blasphemers/s 200, 201, 205, 215, 316
 blasphemy 9, 18, 200, 202, 204, 205, 207, 208, 215, 226, 250
 blind 152, 210, 218
 blood money 118

- blue ensigns (on Christians) 90, 160
bnut'iwn (Arm: nature, essence) 218
 bond and oath 181
Book of Causes or *Liber de Causis* 253
Book of Genesis 95
Book of Judgment see *Datastanagirk'*
Book of a Thousand Questions 247
Book of Questions 93, 168, 202, 214
 borderlands 73, 332
 Byzantine/s 5, 19, 20-26, 28, 30, 31, 34-37, 48, 53, 59, 63-65, 72-75, 81, 82, 105, 116, 125, 126, 131, 133, 136, 182-185, 189, 191, 241, 271, 288, 295, 298, 311, 316, 318, 333, 337
bzhshkapet (Arm: head-physician) 302
- calendar/s 33, 79, 80, 83, 86, 106, 195, 206, 212, 221, 244, 325
 caliph/s 35, 37, 38, 44, 46, 52, 63, 85, 136, 189, 230, 243, 301
 Caliphate 17, 19, 24, 30, 31, 36, 45, 52, 61, 66, 106, 132, 158, 184, 187, 190, 191, 288, 289, 300, 305, 316, 333, 334
 camel 40, 43, 97, 103, 126, 127, 192, 220, 259, 269
 canon laws 6, 120-122, 195
 canonization 7, 8, 150, 154, 157, 158, 161, 162, 190
 canonize/r 9, 20, 159, 160
 captive/s 28, 61, 128, 184, 187, 204
 caravan/s 98, 104, 126, 192, 297, 307
 Carmatian (*Qarāmiṭah*) 142
 Cathedral of Ani 94
 Catholic/Catholicism 18, 120, 157, 199, 234, 236, 237, 238, 252, 253, 273, 274, 276, 279, 280, 288, 294
 Catholicosate 52, 71, 72, 76, 78, 91, 188, 189, 196, 213, 238, 296
 Cavalry 30, 83, 165, 166, 183, 221
 Ch'helsut'un State Museum of Isfahan 172
 Chalcedonian/Chalcedonianism 5, 18-20, 48, 71, 74, 75, 77, 82, 125, 133, 135, 136, 184, 189, 214, 288, 289
 Chaldean 247
 chapel/s 156, 174
- Charter/Treaty/Epistle of Najrān 155, 156, 171
chēhad (Trans-Arb: *jihād*, Holy War) 229, 297, 298
 Christianity 7, 17, 20, 22, 64-66, 83, 87, 95-97, 100, 102, 107, 117, 118, 144, 145, 149, 152, 156, 164, 166, 167, 171, 175, 180, 198, 204, 221, 234, 243, 247, 248, 249, 251, 266, 278-280, 303, 320, 323-325, 341
 Christian-Muslim VIII, 1, 34, 134, 236, 273, 284, 333
 Christology 18, 19, 208
 chronically ill 152
 chronicle/s 4, 6, 8, 18, 52, 72, 78-94, 106, 124, 135-138, 155, 157, 160, 164, 165, 167, 178, 240, 241, 244, 281, 282
Chronicle of Seert/Siirt 155, 157
 church/es 6, 17-19, 25, 38, 42, 46, 48, 49, 52, 57, 74, 77, 81, 83, 84, 87, 91, 99, 106, 108, 110-113, 116, 119, 121-123, 142, 143, 155, 159, 162, 169, 170, 173, 174, 180, 185, 191, 192, 194-198, 213, 221, 230, 234, 235, 237, 238, 240, 243, 249, 253, 279, 388, 289, 318, 324, 333, 337, 345
 church union 82, 129, 199
 Cilician/s 6, 7, 80, 82, 86-88, 90, 108, 113, 124, 128, 129, 134-138, 196, 199, 337
 circumcision 41, 83, 211, 224
 civic laws 110, 112, 121
 clan 27, 35, 37, 80, 94, 95, 126, 176, 238, 333, 334, 344
 Clan of Awag, *Awāqī* 337
 clandestine movements 238
 clergy 17, 18, 32, 36, 38, 46, 48, 72, 76, 81, 83, 84, 111, 122, 123, 131, 156, 159, 165-167, 170, 175, 180, 184, 188, 189, 194, 196-199, 206, 221, 228, 240, 250, 294
 code/s 112-117, 122, 145, 160, 161
 codex 301, 315
 coffin 58, 166, 167
 companions of the Prophet 41, 131, 156, 194

- confess 117
 conquerors 24, 154, 181
 conquest/s 20, 35, 106, 107, 138, 150, 152, 157, 158, 181, 195, 221, 233, 282, 314
 Constitution for the Brotherhood of Erznka 141-144, 294, 300-302, 313, 330
 Constitution of Medīnah 154
 Continuator/s of Samuēl Anets'i 79-81, 88, 91, 92
 Conversion 5, 16, 18, 32, 73, 87, 89, 92, 123, 137, 150, 152, 189, 195-198, 236, 240, 242, 244, 245, 249, 263, 270, 275, 284, 304, 321, 341
 Convert 10, 16, 38, 57, 62, 71, 86-92, 97, 102, 123, 134, 145, 155, 159, 163, 169, 180, 190, 192, 194, 198, 199, 203, 230, 236, 237, 240, 242-245, 248, 250, 252, 253, 259, 264, 273-275, 289, 299, 311, 322
 Copernican Revolution 329
 Copt/s 193, 195
 Coptic 121, 156, 274, 334
 cosmological argument 210
 cosmopolitan/ism 5, 6, 17, 73, 136, 140, 144, 185, 202, 239, 330-332, 335
 Council of Chalcedon (451) 19
 Council of Duin (645) 25
 counseling 164-167
 couriers 197
 court/s 11, 91, 110-112, 114-118, 122, 136, 141, 145, 234, 151, 340
 covenant/s 6, 7, 22, 30, 83, 84, 149, 154, 161, 164, 172, 173, 176, 181, 185, 186, 319, 340, 345, 346
 Cross 26, 42, 46, 51, 56, 123, 127, 128, 162, 163, 194, 203, 215, 219, 222, 296, 345
 Crucifixion 65, 149, 219, 324
 crucify 98, 103
 Crusaders 9, 72, 74, 76, 80, 86, 89, 108, 125, 133, 134, 136, 192, 199, 223, 334
 culture industry 338

dā'ī (Arb: missionary) 142, 332
dahekan (Arm: for Arb *dirham*) 57, 62, 89, 105, 185
dalā'il al-nubuwwa (Arb: proofs of prophethood) 245

dallak (Arb: traditional bath massager) 197
danshmand, *danushman* (Arm-Trans: for *dānishmand*) 126, 136
dānishmand (wise man, tutor) 86
Dānishmandid/s 75, 86, 125, 136, 203, 332, 337
Danishmend Name 71
 Dante's *Purgatory* 217
Dār al-Salām and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (Arb: territory of peace, in reference to Muslim held-places, and territory for war, non-Muslim held places) 229, 299, 316, 343
Datastanagirk' (Book of Judgment) 6, 108-117, 121, 195
 Day of Judgment 219
 debate/s 2, 5, 34, 76, 82, 129, 194, 205, 213, 214, 222, 264, 275-277, 299, 301, 334
 decree/s 7, 9, 45, 61, 89, 142, 143, 149, 155, 156, 158, 166, 171, 172, 175, 177-180, 185, 190, 191, 199, 221, 226-230, 233, 235, 236, 242, 252, 274, 275, 301, 311, 318, 330
 Decree of Yavuz Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) 228
 Deluge 212
 demented 152
Demeshkh (Trans-Arb: *Dimashq*, Damascus) 225
 demon/s 41, 50, 54, 57, 66, 97, 100, 102, 127, 142, 209, 214, 259, 270, 289
 deportation 9, 74, 91, 313
 dervish-type Armenian ascetic sectarians 212
 Deuteronomy 115, 116, 277, 279
dhikr 246
dhimmi/s (Arb: brief for *ahl al-dhimma*, proprotected people) 7, 8, 10, 84, 90, 109, 112, 149-153, 157, 160, 161-164, 171, 184, 190, 191, 200, 233, 249, 300, 316, 343
 dialogue 34, 64, 66, 207, 240, 251, 263, 264
dinār/s (Arb: Arab currency unit) 194
dirham (Arb: Arab currency unit) 36, 83, 89, 105, 106, 131, 155, 156, 160, 164, 166, 173, 174, 221

- Dominican 199
 donkey 43, 97, 102, 126, 127
dram/s (Trans-Arb: *dirham*) 106
 Dutch 238, 248
Dux (duke) 63
 Dyophysite/s 19, 214
dziatoprak (Arm: horse-bag) 131
- Eastern or Persian Armenia/n 34, 38, 128, 151, 168, 265, 272, 283, 288, 296, 302, 303, 306, 308, 320, 322, 339
 Eastern Canon Law 120, 121, 123
 Ecclesiology 214
 Ecumenical 76, 135, 192, 196
 Ecumenical Council of Hromkla (1180) 192
 edict/s 7-9, 24, 44, 45, 84, 90, 106, 130, 149, 151, 154, 156-158, 160-171, 178, 182, 190-192, 201, 205, 233, 285, 287, 318
 Edict of 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil (850) 8, 9, 24, 45, 90, 158, 161, 162, 191
 Edict of Mahmet/the Prophet 8, 9, 84, 106, 130, 154, 156, 166-174, 182, 192, 205, 318; also see The Great Manshur of the Prophet: 166, 167, 175, 176, 221
eghakan (Arm: created) and *anegh* (Arm: uncreated) 218
 elderly 152
 elegy 67
Elements of Theology, Proclus 253
 Emirate of Akhlāt 79
 enclave/s 74, 75, 81, 86, 333
 English 238, 248
Ēōmer's Oath/Decree (Trans-Arb: for 'Umar) 9, 154, 227-230, 294, 299
 epic poem 138, 139
 epistles VIII, 7, 63, 64, 141, 253, 329
 European/s 77, 78, 93, 133, 144, 234, 238, 245, 247, 248, 275, 307, 330
Evangelion 149
 evangelist/s 99, 127
 execution 118
 exegesis 214
 exile 45, 71, 80, 105, 140, 184, 236, 296, 300, 337
 exodus 90, 115, 116, 119, 279
 Eznik's concept of evil 216
- fallacy 205, 214-225
 falsity 100, 225, 257, 270
 falsehood 96, 98, 207, 271, 285
farman (Pers: decree) 235, 236
 fast/ing 117, 207, 212, 215, 224, 225, 284
fatā/fityān (Arb: youth, in singular and plural) 143, 145, 197, 330
al-Fāṭīḥah (Arb: Opening, Foreword, the first *sūrah*/chapter of the Qur'ān) 285, 286, 288, 321
 Fāṭimid/s 72, 229, 304, 333, 334
 Fāṭimid Armenians XIII, 2, 5, 22, 75, 333
fatwā (Arb: legal opinion, ruling) 274
 feudal 111, 192, 198, 213
 financiers 197, 234
 fine/s 38, 118, 119
 First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) 7
 Flavius Mithridates 248
 folklore 17, 76, 144, 145, 198, 234, 295, 331
 food 7, 43, 83, 122, 150, 151, 174, 201, 206, 212, 221, 224, 271, 272
 foreigner 21, 56, 119, 120, 123, 273
 fortress 30, 75, 78, 81, 82, 87, 88, 90, 92, 110, 124, 133, 134, 179, 183, 203, 283, 333
 fourth beast 29, 31
franch (Trans-Arb: *franj*, Franks, Crusaders) 125, 223
 Franciscan/s 199, 249
fṛang (Trans-Arb: *franj*, Franks, Crusaders) 86, 87, 90, 91
 free will 216, 217, 322
 French 12, 80, 109, 113, 137, 138, 238, 248, 250, 274, 303, 306, 310, 341
 funeral 122, 162
al-Furk'an/Furqān (Arb: The Criterion, 25th chapter of the Qur'ān, it refers to the Qur'ān, in this context) 219
futūḥ (Arb: conquests) 20
futuwwa (Arb: abstract noun for youth in the positive sense) 7, 140, 143-145, 330, 331

- gadfly IX
gaghut' (Arm: province) 2
geghjuk ban (Arm: peasant speech) 47
 genuflection 207
 geoglyphs 3
 Georgian/s 6, 77, 78, 81, 82, 85-87, 107, 108, 110, 118, 130, 133, 195, 273, 317
 Georgian-Armenian Zak'aryans (1199/1201-c.1350) 82, 87, 195
 German 113, 229, 248
ghapal (Turk: purchase/rent) 91
ghiyār (Arabic: differentiation, here through attire/clothing) 38, 90, 160, 162, 163, 191, 301
Ghōran (Trans-Arb: Qur'ān) 285-287
 Ghuzz 337
gir khaghaghut'ean 188
glkhawor k'aghak' 77
 Gog and Magog 29
 gold powder 189
 Golden Age (Arm: *Oskedar*) 47, 76
 Gorguian sect 143
 Gospel/s 98, 100, 103, 115, 117, 149, 220, 266, 276, 280, 324
goti (Arm: belt), *zunnār* (Arb: belt) 143
 grave/s 163, 243
 Great Massacre of 1915 12, 293
 Greek Church 19
 Greek Classical 64
 Greek Orthodox 19, 109, 274
 Greek Orthodox See of Seleukeia Pieria 109
gusan (Arm: troubadour) 197
 Habsburg Empire 273
hachriet' (Trans-Arab: *hijrah*, migration, also the year of the Prophet's move to Medinah) 177
al-Ḥadīth (Arb: the record, collection of traditions containing sayings of the Prophet) 4, 17, 22, 32, 112, 280, 304
hagarats'ik' (Arm. Hagarians, in reference to the Muslims) 21, 35, 243
 Hagarians, Hagarenes, 4, 21, 35, 45, 47, 48, 62, 88, 105, 106, 125, 132, 168, 227, 251, 254, 255, 284
Haj/Hajj (Arb: Pilgrimage to Mecca) 224, 241
halal (Trans-Arb: *ḥalāl*, lawful, permissible) 223, 224
hamalsaran (Arm: university) 199
Hambali (Trans-Arb: *Ḥanbalī*, one of the four major traditional Sunnī schools of Islamic jurisprudence) 84
 Hamidian Massacres (1894-1897) 308
 handicap/s 152, 279
Hanifi (Trans-Arb: *Ḥanafī*, one of the four major traditional Sunnī schools of Islamic jurisprudence) 84
ḥanpē (Syriac: gentile) 121, 122
haram (Trans-Arb: *ḥarām*, unlawful, not permissible) 215, 223, 224
harts'um (Arm: question) 205, 207
hashishets'i (Trans-Arb: *Ḥashshāshūn*, Assassins) 88
Hayeli Varuts' (Arm: mirror of ethics) 253
hazir (Trans-Arb: *ḥādir*, present) 169
 Hebrew 56, 155, 247
hēch (Trans-Arb: *Hajj*, pilgrimage) 100
 hedonism 197
 heifer 99, 104, 127
 hell 30, 31, 61, 66, 84, 182-184, 222, 279, 286
 Hellenize/d 63
herdzwatsoghk' (Arm: heretics) 197, 207
 heretic/s 22, 72, 83, 89, 125, 215, 260
 heretical 5, 22, 40, 50, 64, 76, 104, 105, 197
 hermaphrodites 152
 hermit/s 42, 95, 100, 126, 130, 152
het'anos (Arm: heathen, pagan) 63, 130, 214
 heterodox/y VIII, 5, 18, 22, 73-75, 142, 144, 145, 196, 205, 332, 333, 336, 338
 heresy VIII, 22, 23, 40, 55, 75, 91, 206, 221, 316
hichrēt' (Trans-Turk: *Hijrah*) 176
ḥilf (Arb: alliance) 181
 historiography VII, VIII, 3, 22, 123, 238, 239, 273, 276, 283, 314, 320, 329, 332, 337
Hiwsisap'ayl (Arm: periodical, *Northern Star*) 302
 Hnch'ak Liberal Party 299, 300, 310

- holy icons 215, 222
 Holy Spirit 62, 66, 65, 98, 103, 127, 208, 209, 214, 218, 225, 253, 259, 260, 262, 289, 309, 323
 Holy Roman Emperor 273
 Homilies 142, 206, 330
 honey-colored 90, 162, 163
Hoṛom/s (Trans-Arb: *Rūm*) 34, 50, 78, 88, 136, 139, 140, 241
 houses/places of worship 163, 193, 264
hraman (Arm: order) 226, 242
hramanatar (Arm: commander) 40, 42
hrovartak (Arm: decree) 61, 301, 311
Hṛomayets'ik' 105
huchatulay (Trans-Pers: divine word, order) 170
Ḥudūd wa Shar' (Arb: definitions and canons) 142, 143
huk'm (Arb: sentence, order, dictate, rule) 169, 170
huri (Trans-Arb: *ḥūrī*, nymph) 66

I'tirāf Nāma (Pers: Confession Book) 10, 245
 idolater/s 150
 idolatry 29, 54
 Ilkhanid Mongols 128
Imām (Arb: religious leader of rank) 161, 174, 176, 245, 316, 343
Imāmī 200, 338
imastunk' (Arm: sages, wise people, scholars in plural) 144
 impure 43, 201, 223-225
 impurity 9, 18, 200, 201, 202, 204, 207, 211, 331
 Incarnation 65, 149, 214, 215, 218, 313
 infidel/s 42, 116, 161, 174, 192, 203, 206, 207, 211, 215, 266, 344
Injīl (Arb: Bible) 149, 219, 280
 interdisciplinary 2, 3, 13, 320, 329, 332, 338
 interfaith VIII, IX, 1-3, 34, 107, 108, 339
 Iranophile/s 20
ishkhan (Arm: prince, ruler) 35, 36, 85, 183, 216, 263
ishkhanats' ishkhan (Arm: prince of princes) 85

 Islamic World VIII, 5, 18, 63, 73, 74, 80, 274, 284, 303, 331, 334, 335
 Islamic-Armenian VIII, IX, 16, 75, 138, 141, 144, 200, 202, 250, 265, 280, 285, 294, 295, 314, 317, 319, 320, 329, 330, 332, 335, 340, 342
 Islamization 8, 24, 32, 158, 185
 Islamized Armenians 75
 Islamology 12, 13, 293, 295, 313, 341
 Ismā'īlī 72, 140, 141, 142, 144, 304, 332, 338
 Ismā'īlism 142
 Ismaelite/s 4, 21, 22, 26, 29, 31, 35, 39, 41-43, 49, 62, 84, 85, 90, 100, 105, 106, 125, 126, 130, 206, 221, 251, 254, 255
Ismayelats'ik' (Arm: Ismaelites) 21, 35, 243, 284
 Italian 247, 248
 Ittihadists 12
izār (Arb/Pers: large wrap) 162

 Jacobites 19
 Janissaries (Turk: *Yenich'eri*s) 244, 301
jehud (Trans-Arb: *yahūd*, Jews) 223
 Jelālī 10, 234, 240, 243
jennet (Trans-Turk: *jannah*) 311
 Jewish 17, 64, 95, 98-100, 123, 154, 163, 201, 212, 224, 244, 248, 263, 274, 298
 Jews 26, 27, 35, 36, 41, 42, 56, 60, 65, 95, 97, 98, 103, 105, 120-122, 126, 131, 150, 151, 154, 155, 159, 185, 201, 208, 211, 214, 223, 224, 236, 242, 253, 263, 269, 270, 275, 311
jihād (Arb: Holy War) 153, 225, 229, 230, 297-299, 316
jizya (Arb: poll/head tax) 152, 153, 156, 169, 185, 190, 192, 200, 275, 281, 301, 343, 345
 Judaism 20, 64, 100, 263
 Julfan/s 10, 235, 237, 238
junubk' (Arb: *junūb*, south, or lower) 211
jzira (Trans-Arb: *jizya*, poll tax) 169

alk'abay, *alk'aaba* (Trans-Arb: al-Ka'bah) 96, 100

- al-Ka'bah* (Arb: the central structure at the center of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca) 50, 96, 102, 126
- alk'ayuba* (Trans-Arb: al-Ka'bah) 126
- karshuni* 6, 93
- k'ashun* (Trans-Syriac: karshuni/garshuni, Syriac text in Arabic script) 6, 93-95, 99-104, 109, 125, 314
- k'ristonēk', k'ristons* (Arm: Christians in local dialects) 282
- K'uran* (Trans-Arb: Qur'ān) 12, 43, 310, 324
- kāfir* (Arb: blasphemer) 200
- al-Kalām* (Arb: or 'Ilm al-Kalām, study of Islamic doctrine, theology) 17, 32
- kalantar* (Hindi/Nepali: chief, head) 236
- Kanonagirk'* (Arm: Book of Canons) 109, 112, 113, 116
- Kanonakan Ōrēnsdrut'iwn* (Arm: *Pentitential*, or canonical legislation) 116
- Kara Koyunlu/Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep tribes) 196
- karamat* (Trans-Pers: miracle) 220
- karamatkar* (Trans-Pers: miracle-worker) 218
- karch i karchoy* (Arm: briefest of brief) 78, 82
- khalifay* (Trans-Arb: *khalifah*) 88, 106
- khalip'ay* (Trans-Arb: *khalifah*) 136, 63
- khaliphē* (Trans-Arb: *khalifah*) 243
- kharaj* (Arb: *kharāj*, land tax) 89, 106, 169, 226
- Khārījī/s* 299
- kharj* (Trans-Arb: *kharāj*, land tax) 89
- khormal* (Trans-Pers: measuring unit) 131
- Kingdom of Ismayel 29
- Kingdom of Jerusalem 192
- Koraks* (Trans-Arb: Quraysh) 258
- Korēsh* (Trans-Arb: Quraysh) 126
- kufr* (Arb: blasphemy) 200, 205, 210
- Kuran* (Qur'ān) 39, 62, 64, 65, 99, 298, 310, 321
- Kurd/s, Kurdish 6, 18, 21, 74, 77, 81, 82, 87, 107, 129, 168, 169, 170, 171, 192, 204, 234, 309, 337
- Kurēsh* (Trans-Arb: Quraysh) 100
- Latin 6, 11, 18, 75, 81, 82, 91, 108, 110, 121, 128, 133, 134, 138, 155, 181, 192, 196, 199, 205, 244, 247-250, 252-256, 262, 286, 288, 340, 341
- law/s 3, 4, 6-8, 12, 17, 20, 22, 43, 48, 51, 56, 57, 83, 84, 97-122, 125-127, 131, 135, 139, 145, 150-155, 159, 161, 163, 166, 168, 169, 174, 181, 182, 187, 190, 192, 195, 197, 200, 201, 215, 219, 221-225, 240, 242, 243, 247, 251, 254-256, 261, 265, 268-270, 277, 289, 299, 301, 302, 309, 311, 315, 325, 333, 340, 344, 345; Islamic Law/s 116, 121, 122, 151, 219, 311; "Laws of Mahmet" 3, 4, 48, 120; Shī'ī Law 9, 122, 152, 195, 200, 201; Sunnī Law 6, 8, 108, 150, 151, 152, 163, 182, 190, 192, 195, 200, 201
- lawcode 109-115
- lawgiver 4, 21, 35, 45, 83, 116, 131, 166, 206, 221
- lawless 62, 87-89, 131, 137, 226
- lbayk', lbayk'* 96, 101, 127
- legislate 27, 98, 103, 194, 340
- legislation 51, 98, 103, 122
- legislator 26, 45, 57, 58, 59, 116, 166, 167
- Levant 133
- liberation 11, 238, 239, 250, 251, 285, 294
- logical "tripod" 339
- Lord's-chosen 175
- Luys* (*Light*, theological weekly Istanbul) 202
- Madians* (Trans-Arb: Medīnans) 131, 166
- Magians (Zoroastrians) 185
- mahmetakan/k', mahmetakanut'iwn* (Arm: Muhammedism) 21, 240-242, 243, 262, 263, 284, 325
- Malēk'i* (Trans-Arb: Mālīkī, one of the four major traditional Sunnī schools of Islamic jurisprudence) 84
- Mamlūk/s 87-90, 129, 133, 134, 139, 141, 160, 163, 333
- Manichean dualism 216, 217, 288
- manktawag/s* (Arm: head of *manuks*, youth coalition members) 143

- Manshur/s* (Trans-Arb: Decree- *Mets/* Great and *P'ok'r/Litle*) 166, 167, 175, 176, 221
- manuk/s* (Arm: youth, here urban youth coalition member) 143, 144, 145, 197, 330
- mardeghut'iwn Banin* (Arm: Incarnation of the Logos/Word) 217
- marriage 46, 83, 113, 118, 119, 123, 156, 206, 221, 258, 259, 343; intermarriage 5, 73, 144
- martyr/s 45, 47, 62, 203, 289
- martyrdom 34, 130, 137, 203, 204, 242-244, 298, 304
- martyrology 204, 240, 245
- marzan* (Pers: measuring unit) 83, 164, 166, 221
- "marvels" of Western technological inventions 274
- massacres 9, 12, 202, 230, 250, 293, 299, 300, 306, 308, 313
- masunk'* (Arm: relics) 218
- Matenadaran (Arm: ref. to the manuscript Library of Yerevan) 24, 53, 177, 178, 252-254, 287, 322
- meat (butchering and consuming) 119, 122, 151, 152, 202, 216, 223, 225
- Medes and Parthians 29
- Medieval Armenian Diaspora 6, 75
- Medinan 226, 227, 263, 307, 325
- meknut'iwn* (Arm: interpretation) 79, 206
- Melkites 19
- mereb* (Trans-Arb: *mur'ib*, fearsome) 222
- Meshru'iatat'* (Trans-Turk: Constitutional reforms) 313
- Messenger 41, 83, 98, 99, 104, 131, 149, 152, 156, 166, 167, 177, 186, 193-195, 206, 211, 221, 257, 263-265, 267
- metsabanut'iwn* (Arm: boasting) 220
- Miabanut'iwn Eghbarts'* (Arm: Coalition of Brothers) 142
- micro-Armenological 329
- Middle Ages 1, 3, 18, 21, 111, 168, 182, 233, 239, 288, 317, 340
- millets* (Turk: ethnic-religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire) 244, 274, 283
- minority/ies 23, 244
- mintaq* (Arb: Arab military belt) 163
- miracle/s 98, 103, 128, 210, 212, 218-220, 257, 277, 298
- missionary 19, 320, 323, 324
- Mkhit'arist 178, 254, 283, 294
- mniray* (Arb: *manārah*, tower) 99
- Modern Period 3, 9, 10, 11, 18, 21, 94, 233, 238, 239, 283, 293, 332, 336, 341
- Mohamētakanut'iwn* (Arm: Muhammedism, Islam) 303
- molorit'iwn* (Arm: fallacy, going astray) 214
- monastery/ies 54, 55, 64, 71, 78, 106, 110, 124, 156, 174, 180, 181, 191, 197, 203, 281, 297
- Monastery of: *Aght'amar* 203; Akn 125; *Akner* Siwnik' 141, 238; *Amenap'rkich'* (All Savior) of New Julfa 176, 178, 193, 235, 236, 254; Amrdolu 244; *Aprakuni* 206; *Drazark* 124; *Geghard* 199; *Gladzor* 125, 199, 213; *Goshavank'/Nor Getik/Getik* 79, 108-110, 114, 128, 199; *Grna* 199; *Haghartsin* 199; *Haghat* 79, 124, 199; *Harich* 94; *Khor Virap* 124, 125, 199; *Khoranashat* 128, 199; Maragha (d. c. 1294) 199; *Metsop'* 225; *Karmirvank'* (Red Monastery, Behesni) 314; *Öhanavank'* 242; *Sana-hin* 199; *Seaw Ler* (Black Mountain near Antioch) 109; *Sebuh Ler* Erznka 239; St. Catherine Monastery, Mount Sinai 156; St. Lazar, Venice 113; St. Makar, Cyprus 240; St. Minas 140; St. Yakob/James Jerusalem 92, 93, 158, 228, 244, 254; Tandzap'arakh Siwnik' 206; Tat'ew Siwnik' 166, 196, 198-200, 206, 213, 214; Tsortsor 199
- Mongol/s 5, 18, 23, 71, 73, 77, 78, 88-90, 111, 124, 125, 128-130, 133, 134, 137-140, 142, 144, 160, 195, 196, 198, 206, 340
- monk/s 22, 40, 42, 50, 54, 55, 83, 105, 106, 110, 137, 138, 152, 155-157, 173, 180, 194, 258, 276, 297
- monophysite/s 18, 19
- monotheist/s 22, 149, 150, 211, 304
- mortal 104, 215, 222

- mosque/s 19, 20, 92, 159, 163, 173, 192, 240
 moon 98, 104, 128, 209, 211
msray sultan (Arm: sultan of Egypt) 88
mrts'ik' (Trabs-Arb: Egyptians in reference to the Mamlūks) 88
 al-Mu'tazilah 299
 Mughal 9, 139, 233, 234
 Mughal Empire (1526-1858) 233
mukhalafat' (Trans-Arb: *mukhālafāt*, unlawful acts) 169
mulla (Arb: *mawlā*, a Muslim learned in theology) 203
mushrikūn (Arb: polytheists, believers in more than one divinity) 201
musilmans (Trans-Arb: Muslims) 179, 180

nahapet (Arm: ancestor) 35
al-Nahdāh (Arb: Renaissance, Awakening) 279
nakhadrut'iwn (Arm: preface) 114
nakharar/s (Arm: aristocrat, lord) 18, 29, 30, 32, 36, 48, 60, 74, 105, 159, 184-186, 318
nalat (Trans-Arb: *na'lah*, anathema) 222
nāqūs (Arb: bell) 162
 National Constitution (*Azgayin Sahmanadrut'iwn*) 294
 Nāwīqīs/Awāqīs 75, 333
 Near Eastern VIII, 2, 5, 7, 75, 151, 159, 329, 331, 332, 339, 342
 Neoplatonic 141, 316, 330
 Neř, see Antichrist
 Nestorian/s 19, 22, 40, 54, 89, 107, 108, 155, 157, 170, 214, 288, 297
 New Testament 50, 95, 100, 107, 214, 215, 219, 221, 269, 278, 304
 non-Muslim/s 1, 7, 23, 32, 38, 133, 150-154, 157, 159-161, 163, 175, 181, 184, 185, 190, 200-202, 227, 230, 236, 264, 273, 288, 298, 299, 301, 311, 316

 oath/s 7-9, 13, 27, 30, 36, 48, 82-84, 87, 100, 101, 118, 131, 143, 149, 154, 161, 164-170-195, 221, 226-230, 252, 259, 271, 299, 300, 317-319, 340
 Obedience 52, 58, 153, 165, 172, 179, 186, 230, 315

Oghb Edesioy (Arm: Elegy on the Fall of Edessa) 67
 Oghuz 196
Oikumenē 5
 Old and New Laws 22, 83, 215
 Old Testament 22, 65, 83, 116, 130, 208, 215, 223, 277
Oragir (Arm: paper in Istanbul) 113
Oragrut'iwn (Arm: Diary) 243, 244
 oratories 156
ordik' Ismayeli (Arm: sons of Ismael) 21, 35
ōrēnsdir/awrēnsdir (Arm: law-maker, legislator) 22, 35
 orthodox/y 19, 74, 75, 121, 156, 194, 214, 194, 214, 251, 253, 274, 332, 333
Ōsmanis/Ōsmants'ik' (Arm: Ottomans) 88, 90, 91, 241, 282
ostikan (Arm: commissioner) 44, 46, 47, 60, 85, 185-187
 Ottoman/s 8-10, 12, 18m 76, 88, 90, 91, 133, 156, 164, 171, 182, 202, 227, 229-244, 250, 273, 274, 280-283, 293, 294, 296, 299-301, 303, 306, 310, 313, 314, 341
 Ottoman Empire (1453-1922/3) 233

p'akakal (Arm: custodian) 94
p'eghambar (Trans-Turk/Pers: prophet) 168-170, 215, 218, 220, 284
p'rang/s (Trans-Arb: *franĵ*, Franks) 125
 pact/s 7-9, 13, 29-32, 36, 37, 41, 48, 53, 61, 83-85, 90, 149, 154, 156, 158, 161-168, 172-178, 181-192, 233 240, 294, 316-318, 340, 343-346
 "pact with hell" 182-184
 pagan/s paganism 22, 50, 65, 96, 102, 114, 117, 122, 207, 210, 211, 214, 224, 230, 235, 288, 311, 312
 Palm Sunday 163
 Parables 110, 210, 253
 paradigm/s VII, VIII, IX, 3, 10, 22, 46, 92, 203, 245, 284, 329, 330, 332-337
 paradise 66, 83, 99, 104, 106, 117, 206, 219, 221, 222, 260, 261, 268, 286, 298, 311
parsik, pars, parsits' (Arm: Persian/s) 21, 39, 62, 63, 241, 276, 282

- pataskhan* (Arm: answer, resp64, 203, 207, 210, 325)
- patch/es (distinctive of non-Muslims) 89, 90, 162
- patgamawor* (Arm: messenger) 41, 263
- patmaban* (Arm: historian) 47
- patriarch 35, 57-59, 61, 72, 80, 110, 228, 240, 243, 244, 274, 294
- patriarchal locum tenens 227
- patriarchate 19, 37, 157, 193
- Paulicians (*Pawghik'eank'*) 22, 48, 64, 74, 125, 189
- Pax Islamica* 7, 8, 20, 23, 30, 149, 150, 154, 158, 162, 164, 165, 167, 168, 171, 181, 182, 184, 186, 187, 229, 313, 318, 339, 340
- Peace of Amasya (1555) 233
- peasantry 111
- pehesht'/p'ehesht/behesht* (Trans-Pers: paradise) 222
- penitential 113
- People of the Book (Arb: *ahl al-kitāb/kitābī/s*) 150, 200, 202
- People of the House of the Prophet (Arb: *Ahl al-Bayt*) 245
- perception/s 1, 3, 7, 8, 20, 23, 64, 65, 149, 164, 181, 190, 275, 296, 338, 340
- persecution/s 9, 12, 23, 44, 45, 47, 48, 62, 85, 89, 125, 135, 156, 160, 191, 196, 198, 207, 229, 242, 249, 289, 293, 297, 302, 306, 318
- phenomenological 3
- phenomenology of Armenian Studies 335
- philanthropist 302
- philology 13, 293, 313
- philosophical hermeneutics VII, 1, 141
- pig/s 162, 344, 346
- pights* (Arm: profane) 207, 226
- pilgrim, pilgrimage 87, 100, 123, 194, 195, 225, 241, 248, 281, 297, 308, 311
- pillars VIII, 224, 342
- Platonic dialogues 64
- poetry 67, 145, 198, 305, 331, 334
- polemical 6, 9, 11, 12, 18, 23, 40, 65, 66, 107-109, 122, 152, 195, 198-200, 202, 203, 205, 206, 209, 212, 215, 220, 229, 236, 247, 248, 250, 251, 256, 260, 287-289, 293, 306, 309, 318, 340
- polemical-apologetic 18, 32, 149, 199, 213, 215, 251, 254, 256, 259, 261, 265, 266
- poll tax, see *jizya*
- Portuguese 238
- prejudice 248
- principalities 73, 74
- problem of evil 217
- profane 84, 226
- pro-Latin 6, 133, 134
- property tax 152
- prophecy 40, 50, 56
- prophet/s (very frequently mentioned)
- prophethood 50, 202, 207, 210, 220, 258, 303
- protection 7, 12, 86, 150, 152, 156, 161, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179-181, 191, 195, 200, 293, 311, 343-346
- Psalms 124, 253, 277
- purification 43, 117, 215
- qādī* (Arb: judge) 6, 106, 107, 203
- qāfiyah* (Arb: rhyme verse) 66
- qalansuwa* (Arb: conical cap worn by Muslims) 162
- Qarāmiṭah (Carmatians) 299, 304
- quadrivium* 199
- Quizilbāshī 234
- Qur'ān, Qur'ānic (very frequently mentioned)
- rabbit and hare 223
- rāfiq* 72
- Ramaḍān* 224
- rational arguments 205
- Rawḍat al-Ma'ārif* (a paper in Beirut, early 1900s) 157
- realpolitik 75, 335, 337
- rectitude 7, 150
- Reformation 247
- refutation 45, 204, 222, 248, 249, 262, 265, 266, 278, 341
- relevant information VII
- religion 23, 24, 27, 48, 54, 64, 65, 89, 102, 114, 117, 145, 150, 160, 169, 152, 194, 198, 205, 234, 242, 275, 288, 297, 303, 305, 331, 337, 340, 343, 345
- Renaissance 247, 250, 279

- renegade 71, 86, 245, 304, 337
 renewal 8, 9, 43, 61, 164, 167, 189, 190, 271, 294
 reconfirmation 8, 164, 192
 residences 156, 173, 180, 238
 response/s 1, 3, 6, 9, 17, 18, 20, 23, 45, 61, 64, 65, 129, 135, 186, 195, 202-207, 210, 217, 233, 251, 277, 335, 336, 339
 restriction/s 7, 48, 150, 158, 159, 161, 165, 181, 191, 201
 resurrection 106, 117, 118, 214, 215, 221, 222, 267, 278
 retreat/s 109, 156
 revelation 66, 149, 209, 217, 279, 307
 Roman Empire 27
 rope/rope of hair 83, 166
 Rshtuni 203, 271
 Rubenid 5, 72-75, 333
 Rubinian 139
ruhallah (Trans-Pers: Spirit of God) 209
 Russian 11, 12, 13, 34, 53, 109, 128, 178, 229, 248, 273, 281, 287, 293, 297, 302, 306, 308, 320, 321, 323
 Russian Empire 11, 273, 293
 Russian-Persian War (1722-3) 273
 Russian-Turkish War (1878) 12, 293

 Sabellian heretics 215
 sacrifice 127
 saddles 162, 163, 345
 Safavid/s 8-11, 76, 91, 171, 226, 233-236, 238, 239, 241-243, 249, 250, 251, 273-275, 277, 281, 282, 341
 Safavid Empire (1501-1736) 234, 236, 238
 safety 36, 57, 119, 165, 181, 182, 185, 187-189, 195, 239, 252
Sahman ew Kanonk ' (Arm: Definitions and Canons) 142, 143
salam alēk ' (Trans-Arb: *al-salāmu* 'alayk, peace be upon you) 61
al-salāmu 'alaykum *wa-rahmat u'llāh* (Arb: May the peace and mercy of God be upon you) 97
 Samuēl continuators (Arm: *Samuēl sh-runakoghkner*) 79
 Sap'ay and Emran (Şafā and Marwah) 97, 101

 Saracens 35, 83, 120, 138, 252, 254
sarasinōk ' (Arm: Saracens) 35
sarch'uk ' (Trans-Arb: Seljuk) 106
 Sasanian/s 19, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29, 43, 45, 50, 84, 160, 183, 288, 289
 scholastic formulation/s 214
 Scripture/s 22, 27, 43, 64, 90, 95, 100, 108, 131, 143, 196, 209, 210, 215, 248, 250, 261, 266, 267, 341
 Scythians 82, 85, 86, 125, 131
 Seert/Siirt Document 155-157
 Seljuk/s (very frequently mentioned)
 Seljuks of Iconium/Rūm 77, 88, 108,
 Seminary of Ani 79
 Sequel (to M3019, the *Ghuran* of Lehats'i) 11, 188, 239, 251, 252, 261-263, 271, 285, 341
 seven liberal arts 199
 Shaddādids 77, 81, 82S
Shafehi (Trans-Arb: Shāfi'ī, one of the four major traditional Sunnī schools of Islamic jurisprudence) 84
 Shāfi'ī School of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) 161, 162
 Shāh i-Armans 79
 Shamanist 133
sharakan/s (Arm: hymn) 253
Sharī'ah (Arb: Islamic Law) 12, 112, 299, 301, 325
Shēriat ' (Trans-Arb: *Sharī'ah*, Islamic Law) 301, 309
 Shī'ī 8, 9, 18, 53, 122, 141, 152, 164, 195, 200-203, 205, 225, 234, 245, 251, 275-277, 279, 299, 300, 316, 332, 333, 338
 Shī'ī Law 9, 122, 152, 195, 200, 201
 Shī'ism 13, 142, 245, 282, 316, 320, 325, 341
 shirt of coarse goat-hair 189
Shurūt 'Umar (Arb: Conditions of 'Umar) 8, 9, 20, 154, 158, 161, 162, 190, 191, 230, 299, 316, 343
 side-scripts 9, 11, 18, 247, 249, 251, 340, 341
 silk 234, 238
 Silver Age of Armenian culture 76
 Sisakan House 80, 131
şiyām 207, 212

- slave/s 36, 38, 88, 128, 152, 162, 169, 194, 230, 345
 slavery 26, 35
 snakes 96, 97, 100-102, 126, 127, 136
 social order 7, 150
 sodomy 118
 sodomite 258
 sons of Abraham 27, 40-42
 sons of Hagar 39
 sons of Ismayel 21, 26-28, 35, 39, 40, 60, 126, 132
 sons of Israel 28, 60, 98, 103, 264
 sons of Mahmet 136
 southern fire 196
 spices 234, 238
 stipulation/s 7, 9, 90, 117, 150, 153, 158-160, 181, 185, 191, 201, 301
stugagrut' iwn (Arm: factual writing) 86
Šūfi/s 234
 Sufism 316, 325
šulh (Arb: peace accord) 161, 181
 Sultanate of Rūm 77
 sun 42, 55, 179, 208, 209, 211, 216, 218, 264
 sun worship/pers 207, 211, 332
sunnāh (Arb: traditions and practices of the Prophet) 280
 Sunnī 72, 109, 151, 161, 163, 200, 201, 234, 299, 333, 334
sūrah 168, 219, 248, 254, 255, 256, 263, 264, 285, 286, 288, 298, 307-311, 320
Surat' al-Bak'aray (Trans-Arb: *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, Chapter of the Cow) 127
Sūrat al-Baqarah, Āyah 256 (Qur'ānic verse from "The Cow", 256) (Q2:256) 150
Sūrat al-Mā'idah, Āyah 5 (Qur'ānic verse from "The Table/Table-spread/Feast", 5) (Q5:5) 150, 151
Sūrat al-Tawbah, Āyah 29 (Qur'ānic verse from "The Repentance", 29) (Q9:29) 150, 152
surku (Turk: forced evacuation, ref. to events of 1632-1635) 92
 surrender agreements 7, 150, 158, 181
 sword 41, 42, 83, 106, 131, 139, 164-166, 169, 170, 174, 186, 187, 204, 212, 229, 230, 268, 287, 298, 315
 syncretistic 198, 205, 337
 Synodicon of the Syrian Orthodox Church (1204) 121
 Syriac 6, 32, 40, 64, 81, 116, 121, 123, 124, 136, 149, 155, 170, 205, 250
 Syrian/s 18, 19, 49, 54, 55, 65, 110, 121, 124, 133, 136, 155, 159, 163, 170, 193-195, 254, 258
ta'am (Arb: food) 151, 271
t'agawor parsits' (Arm: king of Persians) 63
t'ankangar (Trans-Arb/Pers: *tājir*, merchant) 4, 21, 22
t'abiyat' (Trans-Arb: *ṭabī'ah*, essence, nature, from *ṭabī'ah* in Arabic) 223
tachik (Muslim, transliteration of Tajik) 21, 136
tachkerēn (Arm: Arabic) 95
tachkut' iwn (Arm: abstract noun for 'Islamism') 313
tachkunk' (Arm: plural of Tajik in dialects) 90
taḥrīf (Arb: distortion, alteration) 149
 Tajik/s or Muslims (very frequently mentioned)
tanutēr (Arm: local mayor) 198, 203, 206
Taregirk' (Arm: yearbook, chronicle) 137
t'aseb (Trans-Arb: *ta'aṣṣub, fanaticism*) 222
t'asubut' iwn (Trans-Arb: abstract noun for fanaticism) 225
tat'ars of Khorasan/Khurasan 88
T'awrēt' (Trans-Arb: *Tawrāt*) 208
Tawrāt (Arabic for Torah) 149
 tax/es 7, 9, 30, 32, 36, 38, 45, 48, 58, 59, 62, 72, 83, 84, 105, 118, 128, 131, 152, 153, 155, 159, 165, 166, 169, 173, 174, 181, 183, 185-188, 190, 191, 194, 197, 198, 221, 225, 226, 230, 238, 242, 275, 281, 288, 299, 302, 311, 343, 345
 taxation 7, 20, 32, 62, 134, 150, 151, 152, 189, 249, 284
 tax-collection 23, 57, 62
 taxpayer/s 174, 175, 184, 194
 Ten Commandments 116
 theft 242
 theology 17, 18, 64, 111, 214, 253, 267, 323, 324
 things Islamic-Armenian 329-331

- tiezerakan* (Arm: universal) 49, 59, 124, 128
- tolerant 20, 37, 38, 151, 155, 158, 160, 161, 165, 171, 184, 187, 190, 191, 250, 275, 304
- tolerance 38, 151, 322, 334
- Tomar* (Arm: calendar) 79
- Torah 116, 208, 217, 219
- towel 83, 106, 131, 165, 166, 221
- Treaties: Treaty of *Adrianopolis* (1829) 12, 293; Treaty of Constantinople (1832) 273; Treaty of Georgievsk (1783) 273; Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) 273; Treaty/Charter of Najrān 155; Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) 293; Treaty of Zuhab (1639) 10
- tribe/s 27, 39, 41, 45, 63, 71, 74, 100, 139, 154, 258, 263, 297, 311, 314, 315
- Trinity 65, 117, 209, 215, 216, 225, 267, 277, 289, 324
- trivium* 199
- true story 205, 266, 268
- turban 156, 162
- Turk/s, Turkic, Turkish (very frequently mentioned)
- Turks of Horom 88
- Turkmen/s 9, 11, 18, 23, 73, 91, 138, 195-198, 206, 207, 243, 340
- Twelve Imāms 245
- Tzhvzhik* (play by Atrpet, early 20th century) 300
- ukht* (oath, Ab: ‘*ahd*’) 143, 168, 179, 183
- Ulamā*’ (Arb: scholars of Islam) 275
- Umayyad/s 8, 20, 24, 31, 34-37, 43, 44, 57, 61, 62, 85, 105, 106, 158, 159, 165, 182, 185, 186, 190, 262, 271, 318
- Ummah* (Arb: the whole Muslim community) 7, 155
- Unit’ors, or Pro-Latin Unitarians 196, 199, 276
- uprising/s 32, 61, 159, 186
- urban 5, 10, 17, 20, 73, 140, 141, 143-145, 197, 206, 239, 295, 309, 330, 331
- vardapet/s (Arm: doctor of divinity, very frequently mentioned)
- vasi p’eghabarin* (Trans-Arb/Pers: *waṣiyyah*/will of the prophet) 287
- vasiat* (Trans-Arb: *waṣiyyah*, will) 168-171
- vazir* (Trans-Arb: *wazīr*, minister) 236
- Venetian 238
- ver zbnakans* (Arm: metaphysics) 253
- Views-Rasā’il* 329, 331
- vision/s 24, 40, 55, 97, 102, 127, 209, 245, 250, 262, 264, 265, 307, 336, 337
- Wahhābīs 299
- War/s (very frequently mentioned)
- weapon/s 58, 139, 162, 204, 230, 251, 265
- wine 27, 66, 117, 162, 201, 215, 223, 230, 261, 263, 344
- women 43, 58, 83, 106, 117, 151, 152, 162, 174, 204, 221, 222, 224, 245, 258, 260, 304, 325, 331
- wooden images of devils 163
- World/s of Islam VII, IX, 2, 6, 9, 10, 233, 334, 335, 338
- world-conqueror 4, 21, 22
- worship/ping/per 7, 40, 51, 64, 84, 95-98, 100-103, 126, 127, 163, 165, 169, 173, 181, 185, 187, 189, 190, 192-194, 201, 211, 226, 243, 264, 317
- “written word” 30, 36, 48, 61, 187, 191
- Yaḥyā, ‘Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armanī/Alī Armni 85
- Yaysmawurk*’ (Arm: Menologium, church service-book) 129
- Yemen fabric 156
- Yenich’eri/s* see Janissaries
- Yisē nur i nurdan*’ (Trans-Pers: ‘Jesus is light in light’; Arm: *luy s i lusoy*) 218
- Zabur* of David 219
- zakāt* (Arb: regulated almsgiving in Islam) 225
- zakhiray* (Trans-Arb: *dhakhīrah*, ammunition) 170
- Zankī/s 82, 87
- zōravar* (Arm: army general) 184
- zork*’ (Arm: army/ies) 136
- Zoroastrian/s/ism 17, 20, 157, 185, 190, 201, 224, 234, 175, 288, 289, 317
- zunnār* (Arb: girdle, belt) 143, 162, 345
- zuzel/s* (currency unit) 38, 155, 159

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	VII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	XI
ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS	XIII
Transliteration Tables — Armenian and Arabic	XIII
BIBLIOGRAPHY	XV
I. The “Armenian <i>Ghurans</i> ”	XV
A. “Armenian <i>Ghurans</i> ”: Newly discovered manuscripts of Armenian translations of the Qur’ān — The first group dur- ing the Awakening 17th - 18th centuries	XVI
B. “Armenian <i>Ghurans</i> ”: The second and third groups of translations — 19 th - 21 st centuries (in chronological order)	
II. General Bibliography.	XVI
INTRODUCTION	1

PART ONE

THE MEDIEVAL “ARMENIAN MAHMET” AND HIS “LAWS” (7th TO 11th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT	17
CHAPTER II. THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET” THROUGH PHASES — THE FIRST PHASE IN THE ARAB PERIOD (7 th TO 9 th CENTURIES) MAHMET AS T’ANKANGAR, LAWMAKER, PROPHET, WORLD-CONQUEROR	21
A. Sebēos	24
B. Ghewond	31
C. T’ovma Artsruni	38
CHAPTER III. THE SECOND PHASE IN THE FORMATION OF THE “ARME- NIAN MAHMET” (10 th TO 11 th CENTURIES)	47
A. The historians of the “Age of Kingdoms”	47
1. Yovhan V Draskhanatersts’i	47
2. Movsēs Kaghankatuats’i — Movsēs Daskhurants’i	49

3. Shapuh Bagratuni the Anonymous Storyteller	52
4. Step'anos Taronets'i Asoghik	59
B. The last authors of the Arab Period	62
1. Aristakēs Lastivertts'i	62
2. Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros	63

PART TWO

THE THIRD PHASE AND THE COMPLETION OF THE “ARMENIAN MAHMET” THE SELJUK AND EARLY MONGOL PERIODS (12th TO 13th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I. THE “ARMENIAN INTERMEZZO” AND THE GENERATION OF THE ARMENIAN EAST AND WEST (10 th TO 12 th CENTURIES)	71
---	----

CHAPTER II. THE THIRD PHASE IN THE SELJUK-MONGOL PERIOD IN THE EAST	77
--	----

A. New material for the “Armenian Mahmet” — Samuēl Anets'i and Mkhit'ar Anets'i	77
1. Samuēl Anets'i	78
2. Mkhit'ar Anets'i	93
B. Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Abū Naṣr Ibn Maṣṣūr al-Anawī (<i>Anets'i</i>) a contemporary and adversary — An Anti-Armenian polemics in his <i>Anīs al-Qulūb</i>	106
C. Sunnī Law as motive for Armenian canon law: Book of Judgment (<i>Datastanagirk'</i>) by Mkhit'ar Gōsh	108
D. Mahmet at the end of an era in Armenian historiography — Vardan Arewelts'i, Kirakos Gandzakets'i	123
1. Vardan Mets Arewelts'i	123
2. Kirakos Gandzakets'i	128
3. Step'anos Ōrbelyan	131

CHAPTER III. THE THIRD PHASE IN THE SELJUK-MONGOL PERIOD IN THE WEST AND CILICIA (12 th TO 13 th CENTURIES)	133
--	-----

A. Mahmet “in the wings”: Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, Smbat Sparapet, Het'um Patmich'	133
1. Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i	135

2. Smbat Sparapet Gundstable	137
3. Het'um Patmich' or Hayton of Corycus	137
B. Diverging cases	138
1. Vahram Rabuni: Islam and Mahmet in an epic poem . . .	138
2. Yovhannēs Erznkats'i: "Tajik sages" and 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir's Futuwwa reform literature at Erznka/Erzinjān .	140

PART THREE

THE "ARMENIAN *PAX ISLAMICA*" AS PER
THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY RECORDS OF
ALLEGED EDICTS/COVENANTS/OATHS/DECREES/PACTS
(7th TO 20th CENTURIES)

CHAPTER I. PERCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE STATUS OF THE <i>DHIMMIS</i>	149
A. Christ and Christianity in the Qur'ān	149
B. <i>Dhimmis</i> and the Qur'ānic bases for social order, rectitude, taxation and food (Q2:256; Q5:5; Q9:29)	150
CHAPTER II. THE <i>PAX ISLAMICA</i> AND THE PROCESS OF CANONIZATION (7 th TO 9 th CENTURIES)	154
A. The "Edict of the Prophet"	154
B. Canonization: from 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to al-Mutawakkil .	157
1. Caliph 'Umar I — The symbolic-historical beginnings . .	158
2. Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik — The initiator	158
3. Umayyad Caliph 'Umar II Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz — The first "canonizer"	159
4. Canonization: <i>Shurūt 'Umar</i> in early 9 th century	161
5. The "Edict of al-Mutawakkil" (850)	162
CHAPTER III. THE "ARMENIAN <i>PAX ISLAMICA</i> " — THE LITERARY RECORD	164
A. The formation of the "Armenian Edict of the Mahmet" . . .	164
1. The first reference in the Chronicle of Samuēl Anets'i . .	164
2. A direct citation by Kirakos Gandzakets'i	165
3. Grigor Tat'ewats'i — Completion of the "Edict of Mahmet to the Armenians"	166

B. Other Versions of the “Edict of Mahmet”	168
1. “The <i>vasiat</i> ’ (will) of <i>p’eghambar</i> Mahmat, by the hand of <i>Maviē</i> to the Christians”, M6984.	168
2. “The Decree of the Prophet Mohammad” (626)	171
3. “The Great <i>Manshur</i> — Treaty of Mehemmet written for the Christians by the hand of ‘ <i>Alī</i> ” — 626.	175
C. The alleged “Decree of ‘ <i>Alī</i> ” (660/61)	177

CHAPTER IV. THE “ARMENIAN *PAX ISLAMICA*” — THE HISTORICAL RECORD 181

A. Pacts and relations under Sunnī Law — Eight recorded pacts.	182
1. The Pre-Umayyad Period, during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān.	182
a. The pact between Mu‘āwiyah and T’ēodoros R̄shtuni in 652 during the incumbency of Caliph ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān	182
b. The Pact of Ḥabīb Ibn Maslamah at Duin (654)	184
2. The Umayyads	185
a. A third pact by Caliph Mu‘āwiyah concerning taxes (661).	185
b. The Oath of Muḥammad Ibn Marwān, Ostikan/Commissioner of Armīnyah, to [deceased] Catholicos Sahak III (703).	186
c. The oath of Caliph ‘Umar II to Catholicos Yovhan II Ōdznets’i (719)	188
3. Consolidation of Classical Sunnī Law in the ‘Abbāsīd Period	190
4. Seljuk Sultan Malik Shāh — A pact with Bishop Barsegh of Ani (1090)	191
5. Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn’s Oath to the Christians-Armenians of Jerusalem in 1187 — The seventh pact under Sunnī Law	192
B. Turkmen and Shī’ī times and polemical literature.	195
1. The circumstances	195
2. Shī’ī Law and Armenian Polemical literature	200
C. Polemics in response to accusations of Blasphemy and Impurity	202
1. The martyrdom of Catholicos Zak‘aria II Nahatak (martyr, r. 1369-1393) of Aght‘amar as immediate cause	203
2. Matt‘ēos Jughayets’i and the “seven questions” of the Tajiks	206
3. Against the Tajiks of Grigor Tat‘ewats’i — The “sixteen fallacies”	213

- D. Safavid politics: Prophet's Oath renewed by Shāh 'Abbās I (1605-6) — New Julfa-Isfahan. 226
- E. Ottoman times — Contradictory Perspectives 227
 - 1. Avedis Bērbērian — Sultan Mahmud II (1811) — "Oath of Ēōmer" to Jerusalem Armenians (637) 227
 - 2. E. T'op'chyan — "Oath of Ēōmer" and Ottoman politics 229

PART FOUR

THE "ARMENIAN *GHURANS*" IN THE OTTOMAN AND
SAFAVID WORLDS (17th TO 18th CENTURIES)

- CHAPTER I. THE ARMENIAN AWAKENING IN NEW WORLDS OF ISLAM 233
 - A. The making of new Armenian worlds — New Julfa and Aleppo 235
 - B. The Armenian condition in the 17th century and the historiography 238
 - 1. Grigor Vardapet Kamakhets'i-Daranaghts'i Buk' 239
 - 2. Aṛakel Dawrizhets'i 241
 - 3. Zak'aria Sarkawag K'anakerts'i 242
 - 4. Eremia Ch'ēlēbi K'ēōmiwrchian 243
 - C. "Confession" of a New Julfan convert Abgar 'Alī Akbar Armanī 244
- CHAPTER II. THE "ARMENIAN *GHURANS*" — POLEMICAL SIDE-SCRIPTS AND APPENDICES — CIRCUMSTANCES AND OBJECTIVES . . . 247
 - A. Qur'ān translations in the West 247
 - B. The first Armenian translation of the Qur'ān from Latin by Step'anos Lehats'i in 1680 249
 - C. The first copy of Lehats'i's *Ghurān* — Occasion and platform for a *Sequel* of four texts (M3019, dated 1681) 261
- CHAPTER III THE 18th CENTURY — CIRCUMSTANCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY ARMENIAN *GHURANS* FROM ARABIC AND COPIES 273
 - A. Circumstances in the Safavid and Ottoman worlds 273
 - B. Literature and historiography 276
 - 1. Yovhannēs Jughayets'i Mrk'uz 276
 - 2. An unusual contemporary apologist-polemicist of Mrk'uz in Aleppo — Makirdīj al-Kassīh Ibn 'Abdallāh al-Mukhalla' al-Armanī 279

3. Abraham Kretats'i 280
4. Abraham Erewants'i 281
5. Mik'ayēl Ch'amch'iants' 283
- C. The First Armenian Translation of the Qur'ān from Arabic (lost) in the 18th century — Three copies with the Will/Edict of Mahmet as appendix 285
 1. *Ghōran Mahmetin* — First translation from Arabic “by the hand of” Aristakes Erēts' Hamadants'i, 1706 (M 6984, date 1706) — The “Will of the Prophet” as Appendix 285
 2. *Book called Ghuran (Girk' or Koch'i Ghuran, M8056)* — The first known copy of *Ghōran Mahmetin* from Arabic . 287
 3. *Book Called Ghuran (M2826)* — A second copy of M6094 and a comprehensive polemical side-script. 287

PART FIVE

ISLAM, THE PROPHET AND THE QUR'ĀN IN
LATE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

- CHAPTER I. DAWN OF “ISLAMOLOGICAL” SCHOLARSHIP — PHILOLOGY, BIOGRAPHY, CRITIQUE, POLEMICS AND APOLOGY 293
- A. K'erovbē Patkanyan's publication of six accounts of Mahmet and Islam, as appendices in the *History of Mkhitar Anets'i* (St. Petersburg, 1879) 295
 - B. P'ilibbos Vardanyan — Translation of Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet* (Tbilisi, 1894) 296
 - C. A pioneering study of Islam — Polemics revisited by Erwand (T'op'ch'yan, Tbilisi, 1899) 296
 - D. A critical analysis of the Sharī'ah by Atrpet (Tbilisi?, 1899) . 299
 - E. A genuine apology for and praise of Islam by Dawit' Rostomyants' (Baku? c.1880s) 302
- CHAPTER II. THREE ARMENIAN *GHURANS* AND BIOGRAPHIES OF MAHMET — 1909-1912 306
- A. Abraham Amirkhanyants' and an Islamic “trilogy”: A biography of Muḥammad, the *Ghuran* and a Polemical treatise (Tbilisi, Varna, 1904-1910). 306

- B. *K'URAN* — Translation from French, and biography by Lewon Larents' (Istanbul, 1911) 310
- C. *Muhammēt, Guran* — Translation from Arabic, and biography, by Hagop Kurbēt'ian (Varna, 1912) 310

CHAPTER III. "IMPLIED ISLAMOLGY" IN THE 20th CENTURY PHILOLOGY, ARABOLOGY, POLITICS 313

- A. Philological — K'. Patkanyan and P. Gulēsērian 313
- B. "Arabology" (*arabagitut'iwn*) — Islam in the context of Arab-Armenian histories — B. Khalat'yan (1919), Lēō (1920-1930s), Y. Nalpantyan (1965), A. Tēr Ghewondyan (1980s) 314
 - 1. Bagrat Khalat'yants' 314
 - 2. Lēō (Aṛak'el Babakhanyan) 315
 - 3. Yakob Nalpantyan 317
 - 4. Aram Tēr Ghewondyan 317
- C. *Pax Islamica* revisited — Mahmet as oath-giver and guarantor — Leon Arpee (1946), L. Minassiants' (1972), Y. Anassyan (1980) 318

CHAPTER IV: THE THIRD PHASE OF TRANSLATIONS 1991-2014 — CONTEMPORARY THEMES AND CONCERNS 320

- A. Partial translation (from Russian), G. Guyumchyan (Moscow, 1991). 320
- B. Partial translation (from Russian), V. Dawt'yan (Yerevan, 1995) 321
- C. Full translation (from Arabic), N. K'ilislian (Toronto, 2003) 321
- D. Full translation (from Persian), E. Hakhverdyan (Yerevan, 2006). 321
- E. Full translation (from Turkish), Y. Aydin (Ankara, 2014) 322
- F. First studies on Qur'ān translations, A. Kozmoyan (Yerevan, 2003, 2006). 322

CHAPTER V: RELIGIOUS AND MISSIONARY THEMES AND CONCERNS 323

- A. Christian preaching among Muslims 323
- B. Biblical Persons in the Qur'ān — Christ and Mariam 324
- C. General, informative, comparative studies — Islam-Christianity, Islam at present, Shi'ism, communities 325

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION:
A CRITICAL, HOLISTIC, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY
PROJECT FOR ISLAMIC-ARMENIAN STUDIES

APPENDIX: AL-SHĀFĪ'Ī'S VERSION OF <i>SHURŪṬ</i> 'UMAR	343
INDEXES	347
Personal Names	347
Index of Locations and Places	357
General Index	360
TABLE OF CONTENTS	377