

## STUDIES IN THE ARMENIAN MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND CULTURE BY FRÉDÉRIC MACLER

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Frédéric Macler is one of the prominent, honored and admired names of French Armenology (1869-1938). He has left an enormous Armenological heritage. He was one of the Armenophil movement's leaders in France. To obtain Armenological materials and facts he made research trips to Holland, Spain, Italy, Austria, Poland, Denmark, Romania, Bulgaria, Syria, Constantinople, Tiflis and Ejmiatsin. Macler compiled catalogs of manuscripts of the libraries he had visited, including the Armenian manuscripts, preserved at the National Library of Paris. Macler made also copies of Armenian manuscripts in various libraries of the world, attached to them literary monuments and indicated his Armenofied family name as the manuscript receiver: **“Fredericus Macleryants Rabuni, recipient”**.

According to F. Macler's great disciple and follower, Frédéric Fady, the Armenologist has left unprinted a large amount of scientific materials, which he hadn't managed to publish. It is known that he was a devoted defender of the Armenian Cause.

The Armenology owes to Macler the French translation of the History by Sebeos, which the Armenologist entitled: “Histoire d'Héraclius par l'évêque Sebéos”<sup>1</sup>. Macler dedicated his translation to the memory of the famous French Armenologist Auguste Carrier. In the introduction, attached to the translation, Macler notified that Carrier was dreaming to translate the work of Sebeos into French, beginning with the translation of the History's first parts, but death prevented him from carrying out his plan. Antoine Meillet advised Macler to complete Carrier's initiative to translate the work of Sebeos and enrich it with annotations. Inspired by Meillet's instruction and professional advice, Macler carried out this translation, expressing his deep gratitude to the latter and also to Arshak Chopanyan, an outstanding Armenian poet, publicist in France, on whose scientific preparedness he had relied on numerous times.

Macler put a brief hint about the History by Sebeos in the introduction of the translation. Armenian bishop Sebeos was the first Armenian historian, who wrote about the Arabs' invasions into Armenia. He was the contemporary of the Sassanid dynasty's downfall and accurately described historical events of his time as an eyewitness.

According to Macler, his goal was to translate the work of Sebeos into French, attach to it historical and philological annotations and give necessary explanations, concerning them. The book is entitled “Histoire d'Héraclius” (“History of Heraclius”), but Sebeos tells also about other historical events in a very detailed manner:

the wars between the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and the Persian King Khosrov,

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<sup>1</sup> Histoire d'Héraclius par l'évêque Sebéos, traduit de l'arménien et annotée par Frédéric Macler, Paris, 1904.

the contemporaries and the successors of those two sovereigns,  
the first Arab invasions into Persia, Armenia and the Byzantine Empire.

The history includes the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and goes on until Caliph Muawiyah's enthronement (661 AD).

Sebeos is a bishop and, perhaps, the church historian is more apparent in this work than the political historian. The period when Sebeos lived and died is the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which was mostly investigated from the religious outlook. Being Christians, the Armenians didn't want to have any connections with Zoroastrianism, which as a religious ideology of Persia had often persecuted them. The relations with the Byzantine Empire were not friendly, too. After the Church Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) the issue of monophysitism divided the eastern Christians into two parts. The Armenians' independent religious and political aspirations of that period forced to face their adversaries, and Hayk's descendants had to oppose the Byzantine and Sassanid empires until the Arab conquests. Sebeos tells about those battles, struggles and endless wars in a very detailed manner. The historian's characteristic features were carefully analyzed and raised by Heinrich Hubschmann.

In 1930, the work of F. Macler, "Armenia and Crimea" (*"Arménie et Crimée, Note d'histoire, notice de manuscrits"*), with the materials of historical and manuscript annotations was published in Paris. As in all his Armenological studies, here also F. Macler showed a scholar's conscientiousness and, at the same time, impartiality in evaluating the role of Armenian people. "Armenia and Crimea" consists of three subsections: 1) what was the Armenians' role in the Crimea? 2) a historical overlook, 3) a study of manuscripts.

At the beginning of his work, F. Macler warned to show a cautious approach to the reports of travelers and researchers, because some of them expressed prejudiced opinion and, sometimes, they judged very subjectively. In this respect, the Armenologist presented the evaluation, given to the Crimean Armenians in the travelogue of German traveler N. Kleemann<sup>2</sup>.

Macler refuted completely the facts reported by Kleemann about the Crimean Armenians. From his viewpoint, Kleemann's judgments lose their influence when reading the French traveler J. Ryoil's reports about the Crimean Armenians. According to the latter, the Armenians had a very big role in the development of Crimea. In the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Crimea had more than five hundred thousand inhabitants. Knowing the Armenians' creative capacity, a mass of the Armenian population was removed to the steppes behind the Sea of Azov by the order of Catherine II in 1778. According to Macler, just thanks to the Armenians Crimea got enriched and they, together with the Genoese and Crimean Tatars, gave a remarkably superb ascent to the East trade. The traveler Ryoili was convinced that the Armenians contributed reasonably to the development of the Crimean trade, linking skillfully the East with Europe. The Crimean Armenians gave strong support to the Genoese in their marine

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<sup>2</sup> Macler F., *Arménie et Crimée*, Paris, 1930, pp. 347-349.

and overland trade. When the Genoese directed their caravans to Flanders, Nuremberg and Amsterdam, those caravans were guided by the Armenians; and for that reason the Genoese highlighted the Armenians' settlement in Crimea<sup>3</sup>.

F. Macler described the Armenian manuscripts in chronological order and thanks to his work it can be seen how great was the influence of Armenian art in Crimea, the Armenians had created real monuments of calligraphy and miniature painting there. Macler recalled the efforts undertaken by Abba Sevin to enrich the Royal Library of Paris with additional manuscripts brought from the Armenian community of Crimea<sup>4</sup>.

Macler published very interesting illustrations, margin ornaments and excellent pages from the manuscripts of apostles Paul and Peter's papers. In the pictures of some illuminated manuscripts one can see very clearly the Armenian medieval music *khaz* notes.

The research of F. Macler, "Armenia and Crimea" was a valuable contribution in thankful endeavor of writing the history of the rich and populous Armenian colony in Crimea and it certainly has not only Armenian historical-cultural, but wider value.

One of the items of Macler's Armenological heritage is "Against Tachiks" by Grigor Tatevatsi, the fourteenth-century chronicler, theologian, philosopher and educator<sup>5</sup>.

Armenian apologetic literature besides theological, had also political and patriotic significance. In that respect, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century the strict criticism is remarkable in the works of Eznik Koghbatsi, Movses Khorenatsi and Yeghishe against the Zoroastrian religion. After the emergence of Islam and the conquest of Armenia by the Arabs, a new direction started in the Armenian historiography, an apologetic struggle against Islam.

As the Muslim countries waged invasive wars in Armenia for a long time, the phenomenon of opposition against Islam was lasting in the Armenian historiography<sup>6</sup>.

The Armenian historian of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Ghevond, whose work describes the period of Arab invasions and conquest of Armenia, presents the inhuman nature of Islam when considering the issue of the adherents of other faiths<sup>7</sup>. In the "Quran" Muhammad calls the Islam believers for the sacred war in his name and religion several times.

Grigor Tatevatsi was familiar with the Armenian apologetic literature and he added his theological work to the existing rich tradition, which attracted F. Macler's attention.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>5</sup> The French Armenologist translated Grigor Tatevatsi's work "Against the Tajiks", using mostly the published work of B. Kyuleseryan, "Against the Tajiks" («Ընդդէմ տաճկաց». տե՛ս Բ. Կիլեսերեան, Իսլամը հայ մատենագրութեան մէջ, Վիեննա, 1930, էջ 50-186).

<sup>6</sup> Chalabian A., Armenia after the Coming of Islam, Southfield, Michigan, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ղևոնդ, Պատմություն, թարգմ., ներածութ. և ծանոթագր.՝ Ա.Ն. Տեր-Ղևոնդյան, Երևան, 1982, էջ 84:

<sup>8</sup> Macler F., L'Islam dans la littérature arménienne, d'après Gr. Tathévatsi, Paris, 1933, pp. 493-522. In addition, F. Macler cites the response of the Byzantine emperor Levon III to the Arab caliph Omar II, which was fully about the religious issues, defending Christianity as a religion of humanity.

Macler noted that in the Middle Ages the work "Against the Tajiks" had a nation-preserving and practical significance.

All the famous European libraries were open before F. Macler, where he looked for the Armenian materials with great enthusiasm. He devoted an article "Armenia and Iceland"<sup>9</sup> to three Armenian bishops who in the 11<sup>th</sup> century went to the distant Iceland as Christian missionaries.

Macler cites several documents, which prove that in the 11-12<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantines and Armenians came to the northern countries of Europe. He notes that after coming to the Norwegian throne Harald III the Severe continued the alliance with the Byzantine Empire. Moreover, Harald gave an order to anoint his bishops not in the church of Bremen, subjected to Rome; instead, he sent them to be anointed in England and France. And when he was reminded of the responsibilities of obeying the Church of Rome, by the example of Byzantine emperor, he answered: "I do not know any other archbishop in Norway except me - Harald". And that is why Pope Alexander II (1062) reproached Harald III - the king of Norway, who, at his disposal, besides the bishops anointed in England and France, had also foreign bishops, who hadn't been anointed yet. Macler confirms with this fact the Armenian clergy's departure and preaching in Iceland.

According to the Armenologist, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Scandinavian peoples had just adopted Christianity. In Norway Christianity was finally established in 1033 and Iceland adopted Christianity from Norway and Denmark, the church of which was subjected to Rome.

At that time, there were various religious movements in Europe, one of which was the Albigeois movement, which was spread in Bosnia, Lombardy, south of Gaul. That sectarian movement was closely linked with the Bulgarian Bogomils and Armenian Pavlikians, which later, in the 11-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, grew in Armenia as the Tondrakian movement and was annihilated "by Theodora's fervent rage"<sup>10</sup>.

In F. Macler's Armenological heritage there are mentions of the "The history of Armenia" by the Father of Armenian Historiography, Movses Khorenatsi (the 5<sup>th</sup> c.). He was against the opinions of those researches, who considered Movses Khorenatsi as a falsifier and not the historian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. But as a shrewd Armenologist, he had a critical approach to such incorrect opinions.

The great Russian philologist Dmitri Likhachev noted in his study "Текстология" ("Textology") that the records of the Middle Ages, especially the old ones, had undergone serious changes while copying: some parts were removed and replaced by the new ones, and very few monuments have reached us with the author's original content. During the centuries the works of secular and, particularly, historical content

<sup>9</sup> Macler F., *Arménie et Isirnde*. - *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1923, LXXI.VII, pp. 236-241. The article was translated by the prominent Armenian historian M.Zulalyn and published in "Էջմիածին", 1971, N 6-7, էջ 73-76:

<sup>10</sup> Շառլ Դիլ, Բյուզանդիայի պատմության հիմնախնդիրները, առաջաբան և ծանոթագրություններ՝ Հ. Բարթիկյանի, Երևան, 2005, էջ 31-32:

had undergone the most changes; a circumstance, which didn't largely relate to religious books<sup>11</sup>.

The publication "Extrait de la chronique de Maribas Kaldoyo (Mar Abbas Katina): Essai de critique historico-littéraire") by Macler was published in the magazine "Journal Asiatique" in 1903, the main purpose of which was the translation of Maribas's original into French and rendering it to the researchers of Khorenatsi<sup>12</sup>.

Macler was engaged in the studies of Armenian miniature painting and illustration in 1913 and 1924. Actually, his appropriate studies were published in those years. Especially, the "Armenian secular decorative art" was an interesting and fresh work in the history of decorative art research, having been published in 1924. In the "Introduction" of the work the Armenologist noted that the research of the Armenian medieval decorative art had a serious progress in the last forty years: it had been studied from the spiritual outlook, because the Middle Age, first of all, created an art, native to the Christian religion. F. Macler put an important task before himself, to find out whether the secular decoration art was also created in Armenia, which could compete with the religious one. And here, the answer to this question became his research published in 1924, which identified and evaluated a completely new sphere in the Armenian decorative art - the secular decorative-art.

Macler noted that for achieving the desired result in the preferred sphere it's necessary to have many resources, though there were many difficulties with that issue. The richest collections of Armenian manuscripts have been kept in Yerevan, Ejmiatsin and the Monastery of St. Hakobyants in Jerusalem. Of course, the secular decorative art flourished in medieval Armenia and reached up to the 17th century. But as a result of foreign invasions and destructions many Armenian treasures had been destroyed; still owing to their richness, a part of spiritual treasures preserved, being the evidence of their centuries-old existence.

From the 11-13 centuries the Hellenistic tradition, beside Christianity, was reawakened up in the Byzantine art. According to Macler, the same phenomenon was observed in the Armenian art. As an example he brings two miniature paintings, the first of which shows the king of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia Levon IV issuing a verdict.<sup>13</sup> In another miniature painting a person with secular clothes is depicted. He noticed that the secular miniature paintings depict mostly the doctors and are present in the manuscripts, referring to the medicine. In this context, the Armenologist presented also two miniature paintings (received from the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, thanks to Archbishop Yeghishe Durian) depicting the doctors. Macler informed that the manuscript he was interested in was copied in 1294; the original, of course, had been

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<sup>11</sup> Лихачев Д.С., при участии А.А. Алексеева, А.Г. Боброва, Текстология, На материале русской литературы X-XVII веков, Санкт-Петербург, 2001, стр. 395.

<sup>12</sup> „JournalAsiatique”, 1903, mai-juin, p. 492.

<sup>13</sup> Macler F., Document d'Art Arméniens, L'Enluminure Arménienne profane, Paris, 1924, p. 8.

older. He mentioned also another manuscript, which was copied in the same year and kept in the Mkhitarians' Congregation in Venice.

In the "Introduction" of the research dedicated to the Armenian miniature painting and published in 1913<sup>14</sup>, Macler noted that during many travels and searches, which were done to detect the values of the Armenian people's history and historic literature, he had met numerous types of miniature painting, which captured his attention. According to Macler, the studies of Armenian miniature painting will enable to clarify the interaction of East and West arts.

***Translated from Armenian  
by V.Gharakhanyan***

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<sup>14</sup> Macler F., Miniature Arméniennes, Vies du Christ, Peintures ornementales (X<sup>e</sup>-au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Paris, 1913.