

Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation: The Role of Simeon Yerevantsi's *Girk' or koč'i partavčar* in the 18th Century National Revival

The eighteenth century was a period when Armenian elites and activists first became preeminently concerned with the decline and cultural fragmentation plaguing their nation, a process that, in so far as it was real, had begun as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹ It was also a period when a the cultural revival movement was launched in the diaspora and the homeland, independently and in near-simultaneity. This movement was spearheaded by three different sets of elites: the representatives of the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, in the homeland; the erudite monks belonging to the Catholic Armenian order known as the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice; and, also in the diaspora, the merchant-activists of India with their base in Madras. These elites had disparate and conflicting agendas, but they shared one underlying commonality: they traced the malaise of the nation to the dispersedon state of their people. Etchmiadzin attempted to combat this malaise by rallying the nation around its "divine authority" as spiritual shepherd to an exiled and powerless flock. In the process, it created a national discourse centered on the Church that, more or less, accepted dispersion as a hallmark of the nation, but tried to harness its polycentric tendencies.

¹ I would like to thank Khachig Tölölyan and Razmik Panossian for their meticulous readings of and discerning commentaries on earlier drafts of this essay, and Father Vahan Ohanian for helping clarify some of the more recondite vocabulary in *grabar*. I am also grateful to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice and Vienna for placing their rich collection of books at my disposal. Particular acknowledgment is due to Father Vahan Hovagimian of Vienna, and Alfred Hemmat Siraky in Venice, for obliging me with many library requests. Lastly, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Hayr Hovsep for making my visits to San Lazzaro most hospitable and intellectually productive.

The Mekhitarists attempted to leave aside the question of institutional authority and instead rallied to collect the dispersed fragments of the nation's culture. Most importantly, they launched a movement to cleanse and "purify" the language by compiling dictionaries and grammars. In addition, they crowned their cultural labors by publishing the first modern account of the nation's history (Mikayel Chamchian's *History of the Armenians*, 1784-1786² that sought to recover in history what the nation had lost politically and geographically; it attempted this recovery by fashioning a narrative of national continuity whose goal was to provide wholeness and integrity in the realm of culture. The Madras community, on the other hand, sought to displace and replace the traditional Armenian (self) image as a geographically fragmented and dispersed ethno-religious community by a new Enlightenment conception of the nation as a political community grounded in its native territory and represented and led by its elected sovereign authorities.

This essay discusses the first of these triadic responses, and indirectly addresses the other two. It focuses on the work of Simeon Yerevantsi (d. 1780), arguably the most gifted and effective Catholics of the eighteenth century. Though ignored in the current scholarship on the eighteenth century Armenian revival, Yerevantsi is a crucial figure for understanding the crisis of his times. In fact, his book *Girk' or koč'i partavčar* (A Book Called Fulfillment of a Pledge) is in part a meditation on this crisis and an implicit response to, and rejection of, the prognoses advanced by the Mekhitarists, on the one hand, and the Madras activists, on the other.

In what follows, I will provide a textual analysis of *Partavčar* as a discourse on the crisis of the nation conceptualized as *a crisis of dispersion*. I will argue that Yerevantsi's text deserves a close reading for at least three reasons, the last of which has broader theoretical implications. First, it is central to our understanding of diaspora and dispersion and the valence and implications the latter terms had for the Armenian elites of the time. Second, it helps to illuminate current discussions on the formation of Armenian nationalist

² Mikayel Chamchian, *Patmow'iwn Hayoc' i skzbanž ašxarhi minčew cam Teatn* 1784 (The History of the Armenians from the Beginning of the World Until the Year of Our Lord 1784), 3 volumes, (Venice, 1784-1786).

thought in the nineteenth century since, as I will demonstrate, Yerevantsi's work provided an exemplary discourse on the nation and is equipped with foundational myths that were subsequently reassessed and transformed by the nationalist elite. In other words, many of the symbolic elements of nineteenth century nationalist thought (the notion of being a "chosen people" and the significance of the "motherland" for instance) are present in Yerevantsi's work, albeit in their pre-secularized forms. Third, it enables us to see more clearly the central role of the eighteenth century Enlightenment on shifting the "semantic terrain" under both nation and dispersion, and as such promises to reformulate some of our conventional theories concerning the nature of (and nexus between) nationalism and diaspora. By this, I am referring to how eighteenth century notions of nations as territorially grounded communities with secular (and sovereign) representative authorities came to insert themselves into conceptualizations of "dispersion" or "diaspora" (including and especially in the Armenian case) as not just a trait of geographically scattered communities, or as Biblical punishment for a "chosen people," but as a sign of a national malaise or illness that could be cured by a return to the native homeland. Yerevantsi helps us identify this shift in an oblique or rather oppositional manner; he does this not because he accepts this new formulation, but precisely because in consciously rejecting it, he explicitly formulates the concept.

Before I turn to Yerevantsi's work, it is important first to provide a historical discussion on the Armenian dispersions and clarify some of the key features of the eighteenth century crisis as its contemporaries perceived it. The latter will help us to embed and situate the different revivalist responses of the Armenian elite and, in particular, will shed contextual light on the significance and import of Yerevantsi's reformist agenda.

Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation

The collapse of the Bagratuni kingdom in the eleventh century precipitated the first major wave of Armenian dispersions from the homeland. Large numbers of Armenians (including the landowning nobility, the top echelons of the Church and their client populations) fled south, where they established small principalities in

the Levant and gradually consolidated power in what began as the diaspora state of Cilicia and became a kingdom that endured until the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Others nobles moved with their courts, clergy and some peasants and dependents west to Byzantine controlled territory such as Sebastopolis/Sepastia (present day Sivas) and then north to populate mostly urban centers such as Kaffa and Tana along the southern rim of the Crimean peninsula. These communities later acted as "way-stations" for more Armenians arriving from the homeland in the first half of the thirteenth after the Mongols had overrun their lands. Some of the new migrants remained in the Crimea, while others fanned out further northwest to Polish-controlled Galicia and Transylvania, where they founded colonies in Gamenits and most notably in Lvov.³

By the sixteenth century two empires, Ottoman and Safavid Persian, had come to dominate and divide the Armenian Plateau, with the lion's share falling on the Ottoman side of the frontier. After a century of predatory Safavid-Ottoman campaigns over the geopolitical frontier territory had concluded in 1639, many Armenians found themselves in what Tölölyan refers to as "intra-state diasporas," that is, in communities outside the ancestral lands but within the jurisdictional boundaries of the state that controlled and administered them.⁴ A significant portion of these communities gradually coalesced around key imperial administrative centers, most notably in Constantinople. The invitation and settlement of prominent Armenian families and religious leaders in the new Ottoman capital paved way for the establishment of the Armenian

³ See Arshag Alboyadjian, *Patmow'iwn Hay gaitakanow'lean* (History of Armenian Emigrations) vol. 2, (Cairo, 1955) and A. Abrahamian, *Hamarōt owrowagic hay gait'avayerow patmow'lean* (A Concise Outline of the History of Armenian Expatriate Communities) vol. 1 (Yerevan, 1964). For an excellent historical overview with extensive bibliographic references, see Edmund Schütz, "An Armeno-Kipchak document of 1640 from Lvov and its background in Armenia and in the Diaspora," *Between the Danube and the Caucasus*, (ed.) Gy. Kara (Budapest, 1987), and Eleonora Nadel-Golobic, "Armenians and Jews in Medieval Lvov: Their Role in Oriental Trade, 1400-1600," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XX (3-4), 1979.

⁴ Khachig Tölölyan, "Exile Government in the Armenian Polity," *Governments-in-Exile in Contemporary World Politics*, Yossi Shain (ed.) (New York, 1991), p. 170.

Patriarchate in 1461. This in turn laid the basis for the *millet* system that, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had become a unique institutional framework of "indirect rule," whereby the Ottoman sultan ruled his Armenian (and other non-Muslim) subjects through the intermediation of the merchant elite who were allied with and eventually controlled the clergy and the Patriarchate with its institutions.⁵ A similar situation prevailed on the Safavid side of the frontier, albeit with a much more violent etiology. The intra-state diaspora there owes its origins to the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1604-1605, when Shah 'Abbas I uprooted up to three hundred thousand Armenians from their lands and deported them to Persia in a conscious policy of economic and urban renewal.⁶ Some of these deportees, particularly those from the trading town of Julfa on the Arax, were given privileged treatment and resettled on the outskirts of

⁵ The traditional date, ascribed by Mikayel Chamchian, for the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople is 1461, when a certain Hovagim, Bishop of Bursa, is said to have moved to the Ottoman capital along with six prominent Armenian families, thereby taking charge of the Armenian *millet*. Though this account was accepted as the conventional wisdom throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, it has recently come under scrutiny by several scholars who consider it as a kind of "invented tradition." Bardakjian and Braude, for instance, have argued that the Patriarchate assumed its full functions of leading the *millet* only after the expansion of the Ottoman state's "infrastructural power," to use Michael Mann's term, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the *millet* "system" as we know it came to be institutionalized. This contention seems to be borne out by Yerevantsi's account (see below). For the "revisionist" view on the Patriarchate and the institution of the *millet*, see Kevork B. Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople," and Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (ed.) (New York, 1982). For Chamchian's account, see his *History*, vol. 3, p. 500.

⁶ The numbers of deportees varies from 80,000 to 400,000, depending on whether the figure is attributed to the great deportation of 1604-1605 or to all the deportations during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. Most contemporary accounts put the number at 300,000. According to Edmund Schütz, the more likely estimate is 100,000. Schütz, "An Armeno-Kipchak document of 1640 from Lvov and its background in Armenia and in the Diaspora," pp. 260-261. For the historical context of the deportations, see Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*, (Atlanta, Georgia, 1998); Edmund M Herzig, *The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan: A Study in pre-modern Asian Trade*, Ph.D. dissertation (Oxford University, 1991), Chapter 1; Vazken Ghougassian, *The Rise of the*

Isfahan, where they founded the mercantile colony of New Julfa. What started as a "victim diaspora" soon became one of the most prosperous "trade diasporas"⁷ of the seventeenth century. Employed as a domestic "service gentry"⁸ for the Safavid state, and invested with a privileged status as middlemen traders of the "shah's silk for Europe's silver,"⁹ the New Julfa merchants established small off-shoot trade diasporas across Europe (Venice, Amsterdam, Livorno, Marseille), Russia (Saint Petersburg and Moscow) and in India (mostly clustered in Madras, Surat, Calcutta and Bombay) and further in the East.¹⁰ With the sharp decline of the Iranian economy in the late seventeenth century, many of these merchant families permanently settled in their European and Russian trading outposts in the west and the north and especially in Madras in the east, where they had a symbiotic but increasingly uneasy relationship with the English East India Company.¹¹

Though geographically scattered, these more recent communities of dispersion, along with the earlier ones dating back to the twelfth century, were loosely inter-linked through a network of "portable" institutions and elites. The merchants were one group within this elite. Their rise to prominence as the leading patrons of Armenian society came on the heels of the decline and then exter-

Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia: 1998), chapter 2; Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan 1587-1722," *Iranian Studies*, VII/3-4, 1974; and Rudolph Mathee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver 1600-1730* (Cambridge, 1999), chapter 3. It should be noted that there were Armenian communities in Iran predating the reign of Shah Abbas I, but these were numerically insignificant compared to the intra-state diasporas of the seventeenth century.

⁷ These typologies are elaborated in Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, (London, 2001). For an earlier discussion of "trade diaspora" and its insightful application to the Armenian case, see Philip Curtin's *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge, 1984), especially pp. 179-206.

⁸ Mathee, *op.cit.*, pp. 6 and 84-89.

⁹ See Baghdiantz, *op.cit.*

¹⁰ The subject is scrupulously addressed by Herzig, *The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa*, Isfahan, pp. 132-151, and Baghdiantz, *op.cit.*

¹¹ See R. W. Ferrier, "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century," *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, vol. 26, no. 1, 1973, and Mesrobian Seth, *Armenians in India*, (Calcutta, 1937).

mination of the *naxarar* class of landowning nobility in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹² They periodically stepped in to rescue the Church from onerous debts, paid for the upkeep of monasteries and churches, and commissioned manuscripts. Their patronage and capital shored up a string of printing presses from Amsterdam and Livorno (the hubs of Armenian printing in the second half of the seventeenth century) to Venice and Constantinople (where Armenian publishing had gravitated a century later¹³) as well as Madras and Calcutta (important publishers of secular works¹⁴)—all

¹² Even as the Turco-Mongol invasions of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries dealt a final blow to the *naxarar* class in the homeland, descendants of this class continued to survive until the eighteenth century in their former military/"feudal" capacity in Gharabagh, where they constituted the leading five dynastic families known as the "meliks," and also in parts of Cilicia. Others persisted in a more concealed fashion as hereditary representatives of the Armenian Church, as was the case with the Catholicosate of Gantsasar or Albania, which was a hereditary "fief" of the Hasan Jalalian family. On the nature and elimination of the *naxarar* class in Armenia, see Nikolas Adontz classic work, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, translated with partial revisions, bibliographic note, and appendices by Nina Garsoïan (Louvain, 1970), and Hagop Manandian, *Fēowdalizmā hin Hayastanowm* (Feudalism in Ancient Armenia) (Yerevan, 1934). See also the reformulated account in Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, D.C., 1963). On the rise of the merchant class, see Hay Zolovrdi *Patmowt'iwn* (History of the Armenian People), vol. 4, (Yerevan, 1972); Dickran Kouymjian, "From Disintegration to Reintegration: Armenians at the Start of the Modern Era, XVIth–XVIIth Centuries," *Revue du Monde Armenien* I (1994); and Jirayr Libaridian, *The Ideology of Armenian Liberation: The Development of Armenian Political Thought Before the Revolutionary Movement* (1639–1885), Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1987, chapter 1 and especially chapter 2.

¹³ Raymond Kevorkian, "Livre imprimé et culture écrite dans l'Arménie des XXI et XVII siècles," *Révue des Études Arméniennes* (hereafter cited as *REArm*), XVI, 1982; Kevorkian, "L'imprimerie Surb Ejmiacin et Surb Sargis Zoravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1696–1748)," *REArm*, n.s., vol. XV. For historical background, among other works, see Rafayel Ishkhanian, *ԾՊՒՐԿԻ թատմովիւն*, (History of the Armenian Book), volume 1, (Yerevan, 1977); Leo, *Haykakan tpa-growt'iwn* (Armenian Printing), (Tiflis, 1902). For a comprehensive catalogue of printed books, see Ninel Vosganian et al., *Hay girkā. 1512–1800 towakannerin*, (The Armenian Book: From 1512 to 1800), (Yerevan, 1988).

¹⁴ On the publishing history of the Armenians in India, see Hagob Irazeg, *Patmowt'iwn hndkahay tpa-growt'ean* (History of Armenian Printing in India), Vazgen Ghougassian (ed.), (Antelias, 1986), and Haig Khachadrian, "Madrasī tpa-gratan patmowt'iwnic" (Concerning the History of the Printing House of Madras), *Lraber hasarakakan gitowt'iwnneri*, 3, 1984.

bases predominantly settled by New Julfa merchants.¹⁵ The merchants were also responsible for creating an incipient “diasporic public sphere”¹⁶ of readers and consumers of books. Though few merchants were cultural producers or authors in their own right, many were direct commissioners. Moreover, by the late eighteenth century they had begun financing schools and setting up cultural societies, particularly in the Ottoman capital and in the mercantile communities of India.¹⁷

But the most dominant elites were the representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The leaders of this institution had become the *de facto* representatives of the “nation” after the collapse of the last Armenian states and the disappearance of the *naxarar* class.¹⁸ They spoke for the nation whether in the role of intermediaries with their imperial rulers (as in the Patriarchate in Constantinople, or in the case of Etchmiadzin to its local rulers and the Persian Shah), or as supplicants to Western Christendom on the several occasions when Armenians made disconcerted efforts to liberate their homeland from Muslim rule.¹⁹ The Church also had ad-

¹⁵ On the role of the merchant class in financing printing houses in the diaspora, see Baghdiantz, “Merchant Capital and Knowledge: The Financing of Early Printing Presses by the Eurasian Silk Trade of New Julfa,” *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art, Religion, and Society*, Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (eds.) (New York), 1998.

¹⁶ The term is Khachig Tölölyan’s, who adopts Jürgen Habermas’ popular formulation from his 1962 landmark study (*The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*) to explore the Armenian diaspora in the *modern* context. See his “Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Spring 2000. A theoretical inquiry on the role of early modern diasporic public spheres in shoring up Armenian (or for that matter any other diasporic) identity remains to be done.

¹⁷ For a documentary and episodic history of Armenian cultural societies from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, see P.E. Poghosian, “*Patmow’iwn Hay mšakow’tayin ankerow’iwnnerow*” (History of Armenian Cultural Associations), published serially in *Handes Amsorya* (Vienna, November/December 1951–October/December 1967). For the development of cultural societies in early nineteenth century India, see Mesrovp Seth, *The Armenians in India*.

¹⁸ My formulation here draws from two essays by Tölölyan, “The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Diaspora,” *Armenian Review*, Spring 1988, and “Exile Government in the Armenian Polity,” as well as Libaridian, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁹ On the Church’s “clerical diplomacy,” see Libaridian, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–29, and Tölölyan, “The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Diaspora,” p. 56.

ministrative and juridical power over its flock: it owned and managed properties, collected taxes, and was "empowered to judge a range of cases."²⁰ Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, it acted as a patrolling agent for Armenian identity. It did this through a complex and multi-tiered system of Episcopal dioceses that, in the absence of a state, provided a loose and portable infrastructure for the communities in dispersion and functioned as a "boundary maintenance mechanism."²¹ Nearly all the communities in the diaspora (both intra- and inter-state ones) had at least one church, a parish school and a circuit of circulating priests, nuncios/legates and mobile scribes. Some like New Julfa, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Lvov, had their own diocese, equipped with monastic centers of learning, scriptoria or printing presses and reigning local archbishops. In all this, the Church, with its spiritual center in Etchmiadzin, helped shape Armenian identity. It embodied the diasporic "*mythomoteur*" or founding myth and acted as both compass and anchor for Armenians, "rooting" the fragments in dispersion to a spiritual reference point (Etchmiadzin) in the homeland.²²

While these boundary maintenance mechanisms enabled the Armenians to survive as a distinct ethno-religious community over long spans of time and despite the absence of state institutions of their own, they were also precarious and porous. Indeed, by the eighteenth century they were unable to prevent a full-blown crisis from emerging. The Armenian elites and activists of the period were cognizant of this crisis and identified three of its primary symptoms; interestingly, they diagnosed all three symptoms as origi-

²⁰ Tölölyan, "Exile Government," p. 129.

²¹ The term partially derives from the work of the anthropologist Frederik Barth and was elaborated and applied to the "archetypal diasporas" of Jews and Armenians by John A. Armstrong. See his "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, June 1976.

²² The concept of *mythomoteur* is elaborated by Armstrong in his *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982) and especially by Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford, 1986). A *mythomoteur* is a collection of "myth-symbol complexes," or a founding political myth, that links a group's identity in relation to a specific territory. For diasporic peoples such as the Jews and the Armenians, the notion of sacral center plays a crucial role in defining their *mythomoteurs*. See also Armstrong, "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas."

nating from one common source: diasporic existence and dispersion. The first symptom consisted of what we may broadly call the "crisis of language or education"; its principal characteristics were low levels of literacy and the growing rift between the "clerisy" with its literary language known as *grabar* (which itself was "corrupted" or "distorted" under the gradual influence of Latin²³, on the one hand, and the bulk of the population with its proliferating, fragmented and dispersed local vernaculars, on the other.²⁴ What is more, the elite were conscious of the fact that many Armenians in the dispersion did not even have their dialects to rely on. Those in the Crimea and Poland, for instance, spoke and wrote a hybrid language known as Armeno-Kipchak, an amalgam of the Turkic dialect of the Crimean Tatars (who dominated the region) spliced with Armenian words and written in the Armenian script.²⁵ Similarly, many in the Ottoman intra-state diasporas (especially those in and around Constantinople) spoke Armeno-Turkish, again consisting of vernacular Turkish, with religious vocabulary in Armenian, written in the Armenian script.²⁶ From the perspective of the elite (whether in Mad-

²³ Ajarian, *Hayoc' lezowi patmow'iwn* (The History of the Armenian Language) vol. 2, (Yerevan, 1945), pp. 296-323.

²⁴ *Grapar* had ceased to be a spoken language at the latest by the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was subsequently used solely as the language of the clerical literati until its rapid decline in the second half of the nineteenth century. See the classic work of Hrachia Ajarian, *op.cit.*, and Marc Nichanian, *Âges et Usages de la Langue Arménienne* (Paris, 1989).

²⁵ See Ajarian, *op.cit.*, pp. 255-295, and especially Schütz, "An Armeno-Kipchak Document."

²⁶ See Ajarian, *op.cit.*, and Hasmik Stepanian, *Hayatai' t'owrker'ēn grakanow'iwnā (Atbiw-ragitakan hetazōlow'iwn)* (Armeno-Turkish Literature [A Source-study Investigation]) (Yerevan, 2001). Interestingly, Ajarian points out that Catholic Armenians provided the most fertile ground for Armeno-Turkish. The printed literature in this language, mostly of a religious nature but also including texts on history—Chamchian's History went through three separate Armeno-Turkish editions (1812, 1852 and 1867)—was promoted primarily by the Mekhitarists, and done so on practical grounds. The Triest branch of the order, founded in 1775, took the lead in this respect. It should be noted that, despite being almost entirely alien languages, Armeno-Kipchak and Armeno-Turkish nonetheless functioned as boundary maintenance mechanisms. In this respect, they played a similar role in the Armenian diaspora as Judeo-Arabic, Ladino and Yiddish did in the Jewish communities of dispersion. In both cases, while an alien language was adopted for general communication

ras, Constantinople, Venice or Etchmiadzin), this linguistic rift between the clergy and its flock and the fragmentary state of whatever was left of the Armenian language was seen as undermining the social cohesion of the nation, both within and across the diaspora and the homeland. The one group within the constellation of Armenian elites that did most to counteract this crisis was the Catholic Armenian order in Venice known as the Mekhitarist Congregation. Led by their founder Mekhitar of Sepastia, the Mekhitarists defined their identity in what can be called dualistic terms: on the one hand, they were Catholics by confession and hence owed their loyalty to the Church of Rome, while, on the other, they were Armenians by "nationality" and were thus committed to the welfare of their nation.²⁷ To be sure, this distinction between religion and nation was not always easy to negotiate, especially since its significance was lost on other Armenian Catholics and members of the Apostolic Church.

as well as for literary purposes (the first books printed in the Armenian community of Lvov were in Armeno-Kipchak), two important restrictions were maintained. First, the written word, which in both cases was laden with sacral connotations, remained in the group's original script. Second, vocabulary that was offensive to the group's religious/sacral identity was systematically avoided. See Armstrong, "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas," p. 396, and William Safran, "Comparing Diasporas: A Review Essay," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Winter 1999, p. 278. Unfortunately, neither Armstrong nor (especially) Safran are aware of the existence of Armeno-Kipchak or Armeno-Turkish and consequently regard the Jewish examples as exemplary and singular cases of such boundary maintenance mechanisms.

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Nonetheless, it provided the Mekhitarists with a highly original vantage point for their cultural interventions. It was in this context that the Mekhitarists sought to reform and cleanse the classical language from its "Latinizing" and other foreign influences. Their project was to rescue grabar from the same "catastrophe" that had befallen the vernacular, which, "being disordered [անկանոն] and without a guide, has become divided and multiplied [փեռնեկտեալ եւ քազմացեալ] into as many parts as there are population regions or especially cities or villages."²⁸ One of their first works to address this problem was Abbot Mekhitar's *K'erakanow'tiwn Grabari lezowi* (Grammar of the Grabar Language), published in 1730, and trailing by three years a similar work for the vernacular, *Girk' K'erakanow'tean Aşxarhabar lezowi* (A Book of Grammar for the Vernacular Language). Even more important was their monumental *Ba'girk' Haykazean Lezowi*²⁹ (Dictionary of the Armenian Language), a work that aspired to be (and, until the 1830s, was) a "canon of education" that sought to "guide the multitudes to employ the language in a uniform fashion."³⁰

Concomitantly, and intertwined with the crisis of education,

²⁸ *Ba'girk' Haykazean Lezowi* (Dictionary of the Armenian Language) vol. I (Venice, 1749), p. 6. That Abbot Mkhitar regarded the dispersion of the nation as the source for the crisis of the nation's language and education is evident from his description of the state of the vernacular: "On account of the fact that our nation was driven away to live in numerous foreign lands, it speaks in multiple languages and mixes into the Armenian language uncountable foreign words from each nation in whose lands it happens to reside, as the inhabitants of the East have done with the Indians, the Persians, the Georgians, the Arabs, the Assyrians, the Turks and their likes, and those in the West have done with the Franks, the Hungarians [գնոնաց], the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Tatars [Սկիւքացի or Scythians, i.e., the Crimean Armenians who spoke and wrote in Armeno-Kipchak] and their likes. Because of this, those who live in one region do not understand the language of another region, at least in part." Ibid., p. 6. Given the cacophonous nature of the vernacular(s), Mekhitar naturally chose to concentrate on restoring and standardizing grabar, which he saw as being (ideally) "the only language common to all."

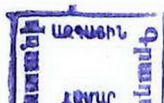
²⁹ Work on this two-volume dictionary had commenced in 1727. The first volume was published in 1749 followed by second one in 1769. See Sahag Djemjemian, *Mxit'ar Abbahōr hratarak'akan arakelow'tiwnā* (The Publishing Mission of Abbot Mekhitar), (Venice, 1980), pp. 221-247, and Marc Nichanian, "Enlightenment and Historical Thought," *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, pp. 117-121.

³⁰ *Ba'girk' Haykazean Lezowi*, p. 6.

there was a crisis in historical memory. By the eighteenth century, the leading members of the diasporic elite were concerned that most ordinary Armenians (both within and without the diaspora, both laymen and some members of the literate class of clerics) had lost touch with the former history of their people. This was partly the result of the absence of manuscript histories, which were rare and inaccessible to most Armenians, as well as the dramatic decline of educational centers in the homeland on the heels of predatory invasions across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although printed texts of a few classical histories (including Movses Khorenatsi's classic *History*, Agathangelos and others) were available on the market and could partially alleviate this crisis, up until the second half of the eighteenth century they were few and far in between. What is more, as Marc Nichanian has suggested, the rhetorical and allegorical style of their classical narratives could no longer resonate with the increasingly secularized and modern concerns of Armenian readers in such places as Madras and Constantinople.³¹

Here as well, the Mekhitarists were at the forefront. Along with the intellectual-activists of Madras (to whom we shall return later), they were the first to become acutely aware of this crisis and its implications on the nation's identity; hence their "totalizing" project of gathering, assembling and ordering an archive in San Lazzaro that could serve to reconstitute the fragmented and dispersed past, and fashion a historical narrative that was national in form. The fruit of these labors was Mikayel Chamchian's three-volume *History of the Armenians* (1784-1786), which remained the standard national history text for much of the nineteenth century. With this publication, along with their manuals of grammar, their Dictionary, and many other works in the field of geography and European translations—and, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the periodical press—the Mekhitarists played a leading role as diasporic reformers of the nation. They were the leading outlet for Armenian printed books in the eighteenth century, supplying a transnational market of literary consumers stretching from Transylvania, Constantinople and Smyrna in the West, all the way to the towns and provinces in the homeland and to Madras and Calcutta in

31 Nichanian, "Enlightenment and Historical Thought," p. 91.



the East.³² However, the Catholic aspect of their identity, to which we shall return later, made their publication and revival activities suspect to the hierarchy of the Armenian Church.

The third symptom of the crisis, which we shall call the "crisis of the center," was the most corrosive. The latter was connected, on the one hand, to the absence of a clear geographic and political center for Armenian life, and more specifically to the fact that most Armenians were partitioned between rival Ottoman and Persian dominions. Without a fixed center of authority where they could appeal to resolve their problems, Armenians sought assistance from Rome (as was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the several Catholic missions to Europe), and from as far away as the Palatinate of Germany (the case of Israel Ori at the end of the seventeenth century) and London, Moscow and Tiflis (as did Joseph Emin in the following century). The only place in the homeland that could provide them with a semblance of a secular political center was the region of Gharabagh, where the remnants of the Armenian nobility (the Meliks) had survived. It was here that in 1722 a rebellion led by Davit Beg, and sustained by Georgian power from the north, succeeded in establishing a transitory period of independence. But this region itself was geographically peripheral to the lives of most Armenians, and Davit Beg's rebellion was crushed after his death in 1728. Alongside and reflecting this multiplicity and heterogeneity of political and authority centers, there was a deeper crisis of polycentrism affecting the religious identity of the Armenians that in turn was tied to the status of Etchmiadzin as a viable compass and anchor for Armenian memory. Herein the problem of the Church, which up to the eighteenth century translated into a problem for the nation. To understand its broad implications, we must briefly compare and contrast the Armenian predicament in the diaspora with that of the Jewish dispersions.

By the fifth century CE if not earlier, the overwhelming majority of Jews were living in the diaspora.³³ The resulting tenuous demographic link with the homeland, which in effect was a symbo-

³² Djemjemian, *The Publishing Mission of Abbot Mkhitar*, pp. 260-318.

³³ In this and the following paragraph, I have thought through and elaborated some of Ben-

lic rather than demographic homeland, was compensated for with a spiritual bond focusing exclusively on Jerusalem as a kind of pilgrimage shrine, an imaginary icon of identity for all Jews in the dispersion. Jerusalem's centrality in Jewish identity and memory—its role as the hub of the diasporic *mythomoteur* that symbolically linked the margins of the dispersion to the geographic center in the homeland—was never seriously challenged during the long centuries of exile. Even as old centers of learning became residual and new ones emerged, they never displaced the aura of the Holy City. On the contrary, their symbolic location in Jewish memory was always qualified by reference to the originary site of loyalty. Hence "the Jerusalem of such and such..." In other words, they were derivative or secondary *lieux de mémoire*, to borrow Pierre Nora's felicitous term;³⁴ their symbolic capital was contingent on their subordinate position to Jerusalem.

The reverse situation held for the Armenians. What makes the Armenian case unique, as Braude has pointed out, is its singular degree of polycentricity.³⁵ Unlike the Jewish case, Armenian ties with the homeland were demographically strong, but the territorial or spiritual focus of their "myth-symbol complexes" was tenuous. To be sure, like the Jews, the Armenians also defined their identity along confessional lines; they too had their own version of being the "Chosen People," a claim they bolstered with Armenia's conversion to Christianity by Gregory the Illuminator in the early years of the fourth century. The "originary" site of this conversion, Etchmiadzin,

jamin Braude's astute speculations on the comparative history of Armenian and Jewish diasporas. See his "The Nexus between Diaspora, Enlightenment and Nation: Thoughts on Comparative History," *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian and David N. Myers, (Atlanta, 1999).

34 *Les lieux de mémoire*, (ed) Pierre Nora, (Paris, 1993), translated into English as *The Realms of Memory*, 3 vols, Lawrence Kritzman (trans.) (New York, 1996). For the significance(s) of the term, see Nora's introductory essay in volume 1.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 16. Braude's use of the term "polycentrism" to characterize the Armenian diaspora and its relationship to its homeland is fascinating and theoretically suggestive. Unfortunately, however, Braude largely concludes his discussion on Armenian polycentrism at the beginning of the fifteenth century, thus stopping short of realizing the full implications of dispersion and polycentrism as catalysts for the Armenian "revival" movement in the eighteenth century.

also had a spiritual significance as the sacral center of the Armenian Church and by extension of the nation. But unlike Jerusalem, Etchmiadzin's grip on Armenian memory and identity was fragile and fissiparous. Under the pressure of weak, geographically shifting, and often disappearing states, Etchmiadzin habitually gave way to alternative, and at times competing, centers of loyalty, as the leaders of the Church were forced to give precedence to the "portability" of the institution of the Catholicosate over its originary site or lieu. Indeed, from the fifth to the tenth centuries, Dvin (485) had come to displace Etchmiadzin as the mother seat of the Catholicosate. Subsequently, the Catholicosate had moved west to the island of Aghtamar (927) in Lake Van, followed by Argina (947), then the Bagratuni capital of Ani (992). After the fall of the Bagratunis, in the middle of the twelfth century it shifted again this time southwest to Hromkla (1149) on the Euphrates and, in the late thirteenth century, to the Cilician capital of Sis (1293). It was only in 1441, when the Catholicosate of Sis made overtures to the Church of Rome, that Etchmiadzin once again reassumed its place as the spiritual center of Armenian life, but not without leaving Sis behind as a regional Catholicosate. Since by then the Armenians were not only a dispersed but also a stateless people (the kingdom of Cilicia having collapsed in the last quarter of the previous century), the weight of representing and centering the "nation" had fallen on the shoulders of the Church. But the Church, despite its relocation to its sacral center, never recovered from the centrifugal forces that had marked its earlier history.³⁶

In fact, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Armenian Church faced one of the most volatile periods in its history, as the earlier tendency of "serial polycentricity" (Etchmiadzin, Dvin, Aghtamar, Argina, Ani, Hromkla, Sis and back to Etchmiadzin) had given way to "simultaneous polycentricity" to use Benjamin Braude's term—a dangerous combination.³⁷ At this time, several alterna-

³⁶ This is only a partial inventory. For other sites, see Babken Guleserian, *Patmowt'iwn Katolikosac' Kilikioy* (History of the Catholicosate of Cilicia) (Beirut, 1939), pp. 5-7. For a concise overview of the movements of the Church and its various centers, see Gabriella Uluhogian, *Un'Antica Mappa dell'Armenia: Monasteri e santuari dal I al XVII secolo*, (Ravenna, 2000), pp. 23-29.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16. To be sure, the tendency towards simultaneous polycentricity also existed before

tive and at times rival claimants to Etchmiadzin's traditional authority as the center for the dispersed nation had proliferated and were operating in the open. Some, like the Patriarchates of Jerusalem (founded by the Fatimids of Egypt in 1311) and Constantinople, had surfaced from within the Church's own back yard. Though both were officially under Etchmiadzin's symbolic authority, under the tutelage of the Ottoman state and the support of the rising Amira class, they had become semi-autonomous institutions with *de facto* and *de jure* powers of their own.³⁸ This was particularly true for the Patriarchate of Constantinople, whose expanding jurisdictional space mirrored the growth of Ottoman power and came at the expense of dispossessing Etchmiadzin of one diocesan see after another in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.³⁹ As for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, it too was in theory under the Holy See's jurisdiction,⁴⁰ but its location within Ottoman territory had similarly contributed to its increasing autonomy. So much was this the case that, sporadically between 1664 and 1680, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem functioned as an independent "Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians" with the former abbot of the Saint James monastery, Eghiazar

1441, as the case of Aghtamar (1113) and several other "anti-Catholicosates" dating back to 590 demonstrates. However, unlike their post-fifteenth century counterparts, these rival centers were the exception rather than the rule. For a listing of the earlier "anti-Catholicosates," see Guleserian, *Patmowt'iwn Kat'ohikosac' Kilikiyoy*, p. 7.

- 38 On the Amira class, see Hagop Barsoumian, "The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850)," *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, (New York, 1982) (eds) Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis.
- 39 According to Hagop Siruni, the number of Sees under the Patriarchate's authority had dramatically risen to seven by end of the sixteenth century, with three additional Sees coming into its fold by the end of the next century. Siruni, *Polis ew ir dera* (Constantinople and its Role), vol. 1 (Beirut, 1965), pp. 452-453. This expansion enabled the Armenian Patriarchate to become the official regulating institution for the Armenian millet, whose empire-wide network was only consolidated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System" and Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate."
- 40 After it had broken away from Sis in 1311—largely in opposition to the Holy See of Cilicia's overtures to the Church of Rome—the Patriarchate had returned to its former subordinate position as a diocesan see of Sis and had remained so until sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century, at which point it had become a satellite see of Etchmiadzin. See Guleserian, *Patmowt'iwn Kat'ohikosac' Kilikiyoy*, pp. 1263-1264.

Aintabtsi, presiding as the Catholicos.⁴¹

Etchmiadzin also faced rivalry from the Catholicosates in Aghtamar, Sis and Gantsasar (located in Gharabagh and also known as the Catholicosate of Albania until its dissolution in 1828). The first two had survived the fall of Cilician Armenia and were now operating independently of the Holy See's jurisdictional authority; they were, at times, regarded as "anti-Catholicosates" not only on account of their effrontery towards Etchmiadzin but also because they had periodically listed towards the Church of Rome. The semi-autonomous status of the Catholicosate of Albania, on the other hand, dated back to earlier days but was reinforced in the sixteenth

⁴¹ In his bid to transform the Patriarchate of Jerusalem into a separate and all embracing Catholicosate for the Ottoman Armenians, Eghiazar had succeeded in attaining a *firman* from the Sublime Porte, which supported his plans since it was in its interest to separate its Armenian subjects from the spiritual (and administrative/financial) authority of Persian-controlled Etchmiadzin. Eghiazar had also relied on Catholicos Khachadur Kaghadatsi of Sis, who anointed him as Catholicos in exchange for financial remuneration and an exemption of Sis's diocesan sees from the jurisdiction of Eghiazar's newly emergent Catholicosate. One of Eghiazar's first acts as Catholicos was to proclaim an edict announcing that all diocesan sees within the Empire, excluding those belonging to Sis but including those hitherto within Etchmiadzin's field of jurisdiction, would henceforth come under Jerusalem's supreme authority. Through the intervention of the Porte, Eghiazar also ordered the exile of Etchmiadzin's Persia-based legates from Ottoman territory. He renounced his title as Catholicos of Jerusalem in 1681 (thus reverting Jerusalem back to a Patriarchate), when, following the death of Catholicos Hagop Jughayetsi of Etchmiadzin during the previous year, Etchmiadzin's electoral synod offered him the throne of the Catholicos of All Armenians. According to Hagop Anasian, this offer was made to prevent Eghiazar from switching allegiances to the Church of Rome. Evidently, the anti-Catholicos was en route to Rome, where he was prepared to make a profession of the faith, when a special delegation from Etchmiadzin interceded with the offer. (See Hagop Anasian, *XVII dari azatagrakan šaržowmnern arewmlean Hayastanowm*, [The XVIIth Century Liberation Movements in Western Armenia] [Yerevan, 1961], pp. 262-266). Anasian's overall interpretation of Eghiazar's decision to transform the Patriarchate of Jerusalem into a separate Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians has been called into question, among others, by Ashot Hovanissian (see his review essay in *Patma-banasirakan Handēs*, 3, 1963) and Siruni (*op.cit.*), who provides a commentary on the debate. It is worth noting that before becoming a Catholicos, Eghiazar was the Patriarch of Jerusalem (1649), the Patriarch of Constantinople (1651-1652, when he was forced to resign), and Vice-Patriarch of Jerusalem (1657). For a detailed discussion of the vicissitudes of this period, see Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 2550-2576; Anasian, *op.cit.*, pp. 241-272; and Siruni, *op.cit.*, pp. 522-537 and 541-551.

century due to Etchmiadzin's weak position and was, in all likelihood, further bolstered in the early part of the eighteenth century when Gantsasar benefited from its close ties with the meliks of Gharabagh during their brief period of independence.

In addition to these contenders, the Church faced its most radical challenge from Catholic missionaries. The latter had first appeared during the Cilician period, made inroads into the Armenian homeland proper in the fourteenth century with the founding of the Armenian Catholic community in Nakhichevan known as the *Fratres Unitores*, and had received a fresh impetus after the Vatican centralized missionary activity with the creation of the *Congregazione di Propaganda Fide* (referred to as the *Propaganda Fide*) in 1622. The opening of the *Collegio Urbano* in Rome (1627), where Armenian recruits (known as "Collegians") were later trained and sent to the field, and the establishment there of a press for the printing of liturgical and religious books in Armenian, led to more Catholic gains.⁴² By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Catholic Armenian community in Constantinople alone was reported as numbering some twenty thousand members, a figure that rose by the end of the century.⁴³ In addition, a separate Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia was established in 1742 (based in Bzommar, Lebanon, after 1749) with its own presiding Catholicos,⁴⁴ and the earlier missions in Nakhichevan were redoubled in the seventeenth century.⁴⁵ These factors not only further reinforced the polycentric

⁴² For a general introduction on the *Propaganda Fide*, see Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1923* (London, 1983), especially chapter 6. For its policies toward the Armenians and its role in training Armenian recruits and publishing missionary literature in Armenian, see Sahak Djemjemian's meticulously documented works, *Naxijewani Hayoc' varžaranə ew Hromə* (The Armenian College in Nakhichevan and Rome) (Venice, 2000) and *Hay t'pagrowt'wina ew Hrom (17 dar)* (Armenian Printing and Rome [17th Century]), (Venice, 1989). See also Garabed Amatuni, *Oskan Vardapet Erewanci ew ir žamanaka* (Voskan Vardapet Yerevantsi and his Times), (Venice, 1975).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 182 and 185. To be sure, the Vatican was printing books in Armenian as early as 1584, when *Tomar Grigorean* (The Gregorian Calendar) was published in its Armenian translation.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-189; see also the discussion in Boghos Levon Zekiyian, "Armenians and the Vatican During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Mekhitar and the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate," in *Het Christeljik Ooosten*, (2000).

⁴⁵ See Djemjemian, *Naxijewani Hayoc' varžaranə ew Hromə*. A missionary report to the

tendencies jeopardizing Etchmiadzin's role as the symbolic center of the nation, but also posed the gravest threat to the Armenian Church's integrity. This was because, unlike Etchmiadzin's other rivals within the Church, the Catholic missionaries, led by the Collegians, regarded the Armenian Church as "schismatic" and "heretical" and called for its union and conformity with Rome. The Mekhitarist position, in this respect, was an exception, since they favored an "ecumenical" communion between the two churches without questioning the orthodoxy of Armenian Church and its liturgical-canonic traditions.⁴⁶ This position, however, was not understood in the eighteenth century and was consequently rejected both by Rome and Etchmiadzin.

Finally, in the last quarter of the century the Holy See confronted potential defiance from the secular discourse of Armenian intellectual-activists in Madras. Though not a strong presence initially, and certainly not one that consciously positioned postured itself against the Church, this threat to Etchmiadzin's authority and its position in the constellation of new institutional and discursive formations was to be the most successful over the long term. The Church itself, as we shall see, only resisted the Madras activists briefly during the 1770s, but seems to have collaborated with them subsequently. By the second half of the next century, the secular agenda advanced by the "Madras Group" had triumphed over the Church agenda as a new generation of intellectuals edged out the representatives of the Church in assuming the role of dominant elite

Propaganda Fide in 1601 indicates that the number of Armenian Catholics in the region was close to 19,400. (Ibid., p. 7) It should be noted that Nakhichevan's Armenian Catholic community, like the rest of the Armenians in the area, were dealt a severe blow by the deportations carried out under Shah Abbas I in 1604-1605. Unlike the other Armenians, however, the Catholic Armenians were allowed to return to their homes due to Vatican's intervention with the Safavid court.

⁴⁶ I have relied here on Zekiyan's typology of the various tendencies historically characterizing relations between the Vatican and the Armenian Church, and for the position of the Mekhitarist Congregation within this typology. See Art.Cit., p. 252. For an exceptionally lucid discussion of the Congregation's national orientation and their position on the Armenian Church, see A. Outounjian, "*Polsahay hamaynkneri miow'tean xndirā ew M. ĆamĆean*" (The Question of the Union of Armenian Communities of Constantinople and M. Chamchian) *Banber Erewani hamalsarani* (1978), no. 3.

for the nation. The emergence of this challenge, to which we shall return later, can be traced back to the merchant activists of Madras, who were the first in the dispersion to consciously formulate an Enlightenment notion of nationhood, equipped with its own concept of a secular "center," in which the Church was divested of its supreme authority as shepherd to the nation.

Simeon Yerevantsi's long intellectual and religious career as the Supreme Catholicos of the Holy See was devoted to combating these polycentric tendencies. Though Yerevantsi was aware of the first two symptoms of the crisis afflicting the nation (i.e., that of language/education and historical memory), he framed his intervention squarely on the crisis of polycentrism as it affected Etchmiadzin, and read the other two crises in light of his response to polycentrism. In the process, he *not only formulated a new doctrine for the Church, but also created a novel discourse of the nation*. This discourse, as we shall see, represented the nation as a religious community dispersed over space and territory but bound together and "imagined" through its supreme sacral marker and center in the homeland: the institution of the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin.

*Yerevantsi and the Politics of "Centering like a Nation-State"*⁴⁷

Not much is known about Simeon Yerevantsi's background.⁴⁸ As his sobriquet implies, he was born in Yerevan, most likely in 1710, and seems to have hailed from a family of with noble line-

47 I thank Tölölyan for suggesting this turn of phrase.

48 The best accounts on Yerevantsi's life and work are found in Maghakia Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3019-3136; Kiut Kahana Aghanians, "Simeon Yerevantsu Gensagrutun'e" ("The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi") in *Diwan Hayoc' patmow'tean* (hereinafter *DHP*), volume 3, (Tiflis, 1894), pp. xxxviii-clxvi; and Leo, *Hayoc' Patmow't'wn* (History of the Armenians) vol. 3, book 2, (Yerevan, 1973), pp. 321-328, 460-464. It should be noted that of the latter, only Leo provides a perceptive, albeit short, discussion of Yerevantsi's *Partavčar*, while Ormanian and Aghanians, in their otherwise expert commentaries on Yerevantsi's work, only mention *Partavčar* in passing. See also the entry under "Simeon Yerevantsi" in Yerevantsi's posthumously published work, *Jampré*, (consult footnote 77 below for full references) where useful biographical information is provided. This segment of the text, however, was almost certainly inserted into *Jampré* after Yerevantsi's death and should not be considered an autobiographical account. For additional biographical and historical back-

ge.⁴⁹ At an early age he was sent to the monastic school in Etchmiadzin. After studying with Catholicos Shamakhetsi, he proved himself a gifted scholar and later joined the school's teaching staff as one of its leading *tbirs* (scribe or scholar). Some of his students went on to distinguish themselves in the service of the Holy See. Their ranks included two future Catholicoi, several archbishops and a number of vardapets.⁵⁰

In the early 1740s, Yerevantsi was dispatched as an assistant legate (*nowirakow'tean ognakan*) to Bayazid (then in Ottoman territory, whereas Etchmiadzin was in Persian territory) where his oratorical skills so impressed Archbishop Harutian Jughayetsi that the latter requested from the then Catholicos Jahgetsi (1737-1751) that the young *tbir* accompany him as an assistant during his legatorial mission to India. Following Jughayetsi's untimely death, the title of legate to India fell to Yerevantsi, who at the time was only a candidate awaiting anointment to the celibate priesthood. Yerevantsi spent three and a half years preaching, raising funds, and extensively tra-

ground, see *Hay žołovrdi patmow'iwn* (History of the Armenian People) vol. 4, (Yerevan, 1972), and the articles in the special issue of *Etchmiadzin*, (Yerevan, 1972), particularly A. Hadidian, "Simeon Yerevantsi, 1710-1780," and Barkev Yepiscopos Kevorkian, "*Simēon Katolikos Erewanc'ow jankera Hayoc' Ekelec'ow miasnow'tean ew Hay žołovrdi azgapahpan-man gorcowm*" (The Efforts of Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi in the Work of the Unity of the Armenian Church and the National Preservation of the Armenian People).

⁴⁹ Aghanians and Ormanian raise doubts about the claim, made not by Yerevantsi but by his contemporaries and others in the nineteenth century, that the Catholicos was related to the Broshian family, whose ancestors were among the leading *naxarar* clans in Siunik in the twelfth century. The two authors note, however, that the question of Yerevantsi's nobility remains a possibility in light of the fact that members of the *naxarar* class often survived under the guise of the clerical elite, and used their real or putative links to the nobility as assets to shore up their authority. For instance, the Hasan Jalalian catholicoi of Gantsasar claimed descent from the nobility of Gharabagh, the Ajapahians of Sis traced themselves to the Rubenid dynasty of Cilicia, and the Catholicoi of Aghtamar were believed, as late as the eighteenth century, to have inherited the political mantle of the Ardruni kings in Vas-purakan. See Libaridian, *op.cit.*, p.21.

⁵⁰ The two Catholicoi were David and Daniel, ruling from 1801 to 1807, and 1807 to 1808, respectively; the most notable archbishop was Hovsep Arghutianz, the prelate of Nor Nakhichevan and later of Saint Petersburg, who was actively involved with the Armenian community of India and played a pivotal role in cementing Russian-Armenian relations in the 1790s. See Aghanians, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," p. lxxvi.

veling throughout the Armenian communities in India, as well as in New Julfa, before returning to the Holy See in 1747. Apparently, he had won quite a following among the Armenian merchants in India, to the point that the latter personally appealed to Catholicos Jahgetsı to reassign their legate back to India after promoting him to the rank of vardapet. The Catholicos bestowed the title upon Yerevantsı, but refused to reappoint him to India when it became clear that the new vardapet had thrown in his lot with the growing opposition to Jahgetsı's Catholicosate.⁵¹ Yerevantsı then took refuge in Constantinople (the Catholicos had issued warrants for his arrest) where his reputation continued to flourish; he taught religion and philosophy at the school originally founded by the renowned Patriarch Hovhannes Kolot and expanded under the Patriarchate of Nalian.⁵² In 1751 he traveled to Jerusalem as part of an official delegation from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, thereafter returning to Etchmiadzin in 1755 to assist with the election to the Catholic seat of his former mentor Shamakhetsı.⁵³ After the death of Catholicos Shamakhetsı in 1763, Yerevantsı, who was then a legate in Constantinople and Smyrna, returned to Etchmiadzin and was shortly afterwards raised to the pontifical throne. His election was not swift, since he was not even one of the candidates when deliberations on choosing the next head of the Church had commenced. Due to the absence of a clear contender, however, the electoral synod finally settled on Yerevantsı. He was then rushed into office without consulting the Armenians in Constantinople, for fear that they might oppose the newcomer.⁵⁴

51 See Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3021-3022 for details on Yerevantsı's position in the factional disputes and hostility towards Jahgetsı's Catholicosate.

52 For Kolot's role as a reformer of Armenian education and his long tenure as Patriarch in Constantinople, see Babken Guleserian, *Kolot Yovhannēs Patriark, Patmagrakan ew banasirakan owsowmnasirowt'iwn* (Patriarch Kolot Hovhannes, A Historiographic and Philological Study), (Vienna, 1904). See also the essays in the special issue of *Bazmavep* (1978) and particularly Sahak Djemjemian's "Nor niwt'er Kostandnowpolsoy erjan-kayışatak Patriark Yovhannēs Koloti masin (kałowac Sowrb Łazari diwanēn)" (New Materials Concerning the Blessed Memory of Patriarch Hovhannes Kolot of Constantinople, [Culled from the Archives of San Lazzaro]), *Bazmavep*, 1978.

53 Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3022-3023.

54 Chamchian, *History of the Armenians*, vol. 3, p. 872; Ormanian, *op.cit.*, p. 3024; Aghaniants, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsı," pp. lxxix-lxxl.

By the time he rose to the Catholic throne, Yerevantsi was already a hardened veteran of diasporan culture and politics; his long, and itinerant years at the service of the Holy See had exposed him to the cultural privations marking Armenian life in the eighteenth century. They had also enabled him to witness the proselytizing work of the Vatican's missionaries in New Julfa and Constantinople⁵⁵ and, at the same time, to observe the immense popularity of Mekhitarist publications in the book markets of Constantinople, Smyrna, Madras and other places where an Armenian reading public existed. Yerevantsi was apprehensive about the revival work of the Mekhitarists on account of their Roman Catholic orientation, but he also admired and wanted to emulate their successful deployment of European print technology and knowledge. It was against this backdrop that he therefore set out to transform Etchmiadzin from a cultural backwater into a new beacon for the revival of Armenian learning. At the hub of his revivalist agenda was the establishment of a printing press in Etchmiadzin. Though the first Armenian book was printed 1512 and printing had become a crucial component in the revival of Armenian letters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before Yerevantsi's time, its centers of operation had always been anchored in the diasporic communities where printing facilities were easy to come by and the merchant elite had a significant presence. To be sure, previous Catholicos had attempted to import print technology to the homeland, but their efforts were fruitless;⁵⁶ the closest Armenian printers reached to Etchmiadzin was Constantinople (1568, 1677-1678 and to 1698 to present)⁵⁷ and New Julfa (1636-1642, 1646-1647 and 1687/8-1693)⁵⁸. Thus, when Yerevantsi installed a press in the compound of the Holy See in 1771, it marked the first time that European "print culture" had taken root in

55 For a critical discussion of Catholic missionary activity in New Julfa, see Vazken Ghougassian, *The Rise of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 105-157; for Constantinople, see Siruni, *op.cit.*, and Frazee, *op.cit.*

56 For historical background, see works cited in footnote 13 above.

57 Ishkhanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 385-386; Vosganian, *op.cit.*; and Kevorkian, "Livres imprimés et culture écrite dans l'Arménie des XXI et XVII siècles," and "L'imprimerie Surl'Ejmiacin et Surl'Ejmiacin et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1696-1748)." The dates for this and the following footnote are for the period preceding the establishment of Yerevantsi's press.

58 Ghougassian, *op.cit.*, pp. 173-177; Ishkhanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 351-379; and Vosganian, *op.cit.*

the homeland.

The idea of founding a press had first occurred to Yerevantsi while serving as a legate in India. It was there that he had befriended a wealthy merchant named Mikayel Khojajanian (also known as Krikor Agha Chekigents) who had predicted that the young legate would one day rise to the position of Catholicos, on which occasion he promised to donate large sums to Etchmiadzin for the purpose of opening a printing press and a school. When this came true, Khojajanian lived up to his pledge and provided the Holy See 18,000⁵⁹ rupees, some of which was used to import a press and create Armenian fonts.⁶⁰ Shortly after establishing the press, Yerevantsi also decided to have a paper mill built in Etchmiadzin in order to surmount the logistical and financial barriers of ordering paper from Europe. This was

⁵⁹ This figure is mentioned in a letter by the Mekhitarist Father Manuel Emirzian, one of two legates sent by Abbot Melkonian to India in 1770 with the purpose of raising funds. Relaying important information to the mother convent in Venice, Father Manuel writes the following about Khojajanian's donation: "During these days, a certain Armenian who lives here gave Etchmiadzin 18,000 rupees, so that in segments of six thousand [rupees], they may hastily construct a belfry, a school and a printing press; and he has compelled them to immediately print books and gather children. Books of history, political governance, and secular learning [սրտաբիմ ուսմանց] and proverbs are very much sought after here..." Letter of Father Manuel in Madras to Abbot Melkonian in Venice, February 6, 1771. An excerpt of this letter, with minor digressions from the original, is reproduced in Sahag Djem-jemian's *Mikayel Čamčean ew ir Hayoc' patmow'iwna* (Mikayel Chamchian and his *History of the Armenians*) (Venice, 1983), p. 18.

⁶⁰ A little more than a year after assuming office in 1763 give year again, Yerevantsi first turned to the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople for assistance in obtaining Armenian types or fonts from local printers in the city and in neighboring Smyrna. He also appealed as far as Amsterdam, where a merchant from New Julfa by the name of Arakel Boghosian had just cast new fonts. But these initial efforts proved to be futile, since in 1766 he had not yet succeeded in acquiring fonts. He then turned for assistance to a certain Sarkis Vardapet, who had created Armenian fonts in Venice and tried to persuade him to either sell or donate his fonts to the Holy See. This does not seem to have worked either, because the following year, Yerevantsi was once again requesting help from a printer named Margos in Smyrna. Unfortunately, due to the dearth of documentary material, the origin of Etchmiadzin's fonts has not been sufficiently elucidated a moot point. There is some evidence, however, that Yerevantsi eventually succeeded in having his own fonts created *in situ* by relying on local knowledge. In this connection, the colophon of *Tōnacoye'* (1774) ascribes the molding of the new fonts to the "clerk Harutiun Etchmiadsnetsi, who is the engraver and carver of all the fonts, engravings, tables [խոսքանց], proportions [կանոնաց] and floral designs, as

accomplished once again through the patronage of Khojajianian who, through a European contact in India,⁶¹ arranged for two French paper-manufacturers to travel to Etchmiadzin to set up a mill and train the local monks. The mill was finally opened in 1776 after considerable delays and difficulties, some of which are recounted in the memoirs compiled by Yerevantsi's scribe.⁶²

well as being the printer of this work." (*Tōnac'oyc'*, Etchmiadzin, 1774, p. 562) The colophon of Yerevantsi's first book, *Girk' alōt'ic' or koč'i zbōsaran hogewor* (A Book of Prayers called a Place of Spiritual Pleasure), published in 1772, also contains similar information. For an insightful discussion of the history of Etchmiadzin's press, see Aghaniants, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. clv-clxvii; Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3099-3100; and Sh. Shahnazarian, "Nor niw'er Hayastani arajin tparani verabereal" (New Materials Concerning the First Printing Press of Armenia), *Patma-banasirakan Handēs*, 1972.

- 61 Yerevantsi's *Yišatakaran* names Khojajianian's European contact as a "Monsieur Alexandre De Lasche [*mowssi Aleksandr Dlaš*] in the city of Pondichery," to whom the Catholicos sent a letter of gratitude "for he was the one who sent me the two French paper-makers, as per the request of Chekigents Krikor Agha." The *Yišatakaran* also recounts that the Catholicos sent the aforementioned "letter and a holy insignia [*zgirn ew zsoyrb nšann*], which he placed in his letter to Krikor Agha, so that he shall have it [i.e., the letter] translated and, along with the holy insignia, deliver it to him [i.e., Monsieur De Lasche]." Aghaniants, *DHP*, vol. 8, pp. 417-418. Interestingly, the Armenian merchant Hovhannes Tovmajian, who traveled to Madras in 1768-1769, met the same "Monsieur De Lasche, a certain French merchant in Madras," in the company of the local Armenian merchants, including Shahamir Shahamirian who was Khojajianian's close friend and collaborator. Tovmajian describes the Frenchman as a merchant working for the French East India Company, headquartered in Pondichery. See his fascinating autobiography, *Vark ew patmowtiwn Tōvmačean Mahtesi Ter Yovhannisi Kostandnowpolec'woy oroy and eresown tērowtiwns šrjeal vačarakanowteamb ew howsk yetoy verstin darj arareal i bnik kalak iwr Kostandnowpolis jērnadri and kahanay ylnatios yepiskoposē eōtanaserord ami hasaki iwroy ew apa ekeal dadarē i vans rabownapeti meci Mxitaray abbay Hōr i Venetik* (The Life and History of Mahdesi Ter Hovhannes Tovmajian of Constantinople who, after wondering through thirty states conducting commerce, once again returns to his native city of Constantinople where he is anointed a celibate priest by Bishop Ignatius at the age of seventy and then comes to repose at the monastery of the great master, Abbot Mkhitar, in Venice), Manuscript no. 1688, library of the Mekhitarist Congregation, Venice, San Lazzaro, pp. 255-257.
- 62 We know that arrangements for procuring "paper specialists" were underway as early as 1772, since Yerevantsi and Khojajianian were by then corresponding with each other concerning the difficulties of acquiring assistance from European manufacturers. According to Aghaniants, Yerevantsi had initially attempted to acquire assistance from New Julfa, Persia, where paper makers were also available, before he was forced to turn to France. See "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. clxiii. Concerning the relationship between the

One of the first publications from Etchmiadzin's press was Yerevantsi's *Tōnac'oyc' or Calendar of Religious Holidays*.⁶³ Published in 1774,⁶⁴ this work reformed the Armenian Church calendar by introducing a standardized system of dates for the celebration of such feasts as Easter or Christmas (as well as the holidays of national saints), in place of the previous calendar, which varied from year to year and region to region. Interestingly, the primary stimulus for this undertaking came from the work of the Mekhitarist monk,

French paper specialists and the monks in Etchmiadzin, including the draconian punishments Yerevantsi threatened to administer to them when they continued to delay their work and then refused to share the secrets of their trade with the monks, see *DHP*, vols. 8, pp. 581-583; Aghanians, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. clxiv-clxv; Ormanian, *op.cit.*, p. 3101; and *Partavčar*, pp. 222-224. See also the brief comments in Sh. Shahnazarian, *Art.Cit.*, p. 282 and *Hay žolovrdi patmowt'wn*, p. 625.

⁶³ *Tōnac'oyc'* was the third book published by Etchmiadzin's press. It was preceded by *Girk' alōt'ic' or koči zbūsaran hogewor* (A Book of Prayers called a Place of Spiritual Pleasure) and *Tataran* (Song-Book), both authored by Yerevantsi and printed in 1772. See Sh. Shahnazarian, *Art.Cit.*, p. 283, and Vosganian, *op.cit.*, pp. 487 and 489.

⁶⁴ There is a cryptic reference to the publication of *Tōnac'oyc'* in the archives of the Mekhitarist Congregation in which Mikayel Chamchian, writing to Abbot Melkonian, refers to hearsay in Constantinople concerning the publication of a "*Towmaragirk'*" (or *Calēndar*) by Yerevantsi. The letter is dated July 1, 1770, which suggests that it is either a typographical error or that rumors about *Tōnac'oyc'* were already in circulation at the time. The latter case seems more likely, since Yerevantsi's ambition to restructure the Armenian calendar was no secret to the Armenians in Constantinople. Yerevantsi had himself publicized his plans in a work he published there in 1660 while serving as a legate. In the colophon of this work, entitled *Tarekan ḡrac'oyc'* (Yearly Calendar), he had declared: "We also have at hand a grand Calendar [*mayr Tōnac'oyc'*], created upon the thirty-six letters of our alphabet, individually [...], which we are prepared to print." For reasons that remain unknown, no such work was published until the appearance of Yerevantsi's *Tōnac'oyc'* some fourteen years later. See Vosganian, *Hay girk'a*, pp. 449-450 for the colophon material whence I have drawn my excerpt. According to Vosganian, *Tarekan ḡrac'oyc'* was published anonymously, which is why she does not attribute the work to Yerevantsi or anyone else in her catalogue. However, Ormanian has persuasively demonstrated that the work in question belongs to Yerevantsi's pen, a claim that is bolstered by the fact that Yerevantsi's *Tōnac'oyc'* was also "created upon the thirty-six letters" of the alphabet. The matter cannot be resolved since there are no known surviving copies of *Tarekan ḡrac'oyc'*. See Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3102-3103. For an excerpt of Chamchian's letter, see *Mayr diwan Mxi'tareanc' Venetkoy i Sowrb Lazar* (Grand Archive of the Mekhitarists of Venice at San Lazzaro), 1707-1773, edited by Father Ghevont Dayan, Venice, 1930, p. 347.

Hagopos Chamchian (the brother of the famous historian), who in 1758 had begun to publish, in serial form, his *Ōrac'oyc'*. As he was with other Mekhitarist publications, Yerevantsi was apprehensive about the popularity of this work among the Armenians in Constantinople (including those who belonged to the Apostolic Church). He regarded its steady diffusion of Latin rites and traditions among the Armenians as a source of "corruption" and "distortion" of the nation's spiritual domain. Seizing the moment, he thus re-structured Etchmiadzin's calendar and, in doing so, strove to wrest away from the Mekhitarists (and Catholics in general) the influence they were exerting on the Holy See's flock. Referring to the Mekhitarist publication as a "bearer of poison" (*t'ownaran*) or "poisonous guide" (*t'ownac'oyc'*, a play on words with *Tōnac'oyc'* or Calendar of Holidays) that "should be avoided as one avoids a fundamental heresy," he wrote: "Matters such as this caused us to undertake this work, so that by warning our dear nation and making them aware of the [Mekhitarists's] knavery, deception, and especially the quality of their faith, our nation would become cautious with them."⁶⁵ He then or-

⁶⁵ *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 17. Yerevantsi is scurrilous in his sweeping denunciation of the Mekhitarists and their growing influence. Referring to them as "newfangled Catholics" [*noraboy lo'te-rakank*, a pejorative term he used not for Lutherans or Protestants, whose numbers were negligible at the time, but for Armenian Catholics, including both Jesuits and Mekhitarists], he asks his readers in *Tōnac'oyc'* whether the Mekhitarists were really qualified to invent a "a yearly booklet, which is a plaything for children," based on their haughty assumption that "our nation did not have competent scholars who could set their own church holidays to order." He then characterized them as "foxes [*cakamowtk* or those which burrow under ground, used here figuratively], insignificant entities, and not even worthy of being remembered." Ibid., p. 18. (Interestingly, Yerevantsi does not mention them by their real name, not in *Tōnac'oyc'* and not even in his *yišatakarans*; even Hagopos Chamchian's name is nowhere to be found.) "Should we rely on such people," he then asks, "about whom it is uncertain as to which faith they follow, dubious as to which nation or people they belong to, and unknown as to who or where they are, and to what calling they respond." Ibid., p. 18. One can argue that Yerevantsi's disparaging comments here are addressed not to the Mekhitarists but to those Armenians working directly for the *Propaganda Fide* and its *Collegio Urbano*, also known as "Collegians." However, it is evident from the context that Yerevantsi's broadsides are aimed principally at the Mekhitarists, without, at the same time, excluding the Collegians. The Mekhitarists, in their turn, dismissed Yerevantsi's writings for their "heretical" ideas against the Rome. The short caustic entry under "Simon Yerevantsi" in *Kensagrowt'wn ereweli aranc'* (Biography of Eminent People), by Father *Mat'ēos*

dered his flock, through the powers invested in him as Catholicos, to first "rid that poisonous guide [i.e., Chamchian's *Örac'oyc'*] in its entirety from your midst and to condemn it in full," and second "to acquire this new *Tōnac'oyc'* and henceforth to conduct yourselves in accordance with it."⁶⁶ The cost of ignoring these orders was excommunication.⁶⁷

Yerevantsi's new calendar was not merely an idle exercise in setting alternative dates to the ones proposed by the Mekhitarists; nor was it simply an effort to remove Catholic holidays and their corresponding saints from the religious practices of Armenian Apostolics in Constantinople. It was rather calculated to produce a much more subtle but enduring effect, one that is intimately related to the synergy between temporal and national consciousness. After all, the idea of the calendar, as Benedict Anderson and others have noted, lies at the heart of *imagining* (and hence "inventing") national communities.⁶⁸ Its manipulation is pivotal in shaping national cons-

Malak-T'ēopileanc', (Venice, 1839) volume 2, states the following: "He was the first among Armenian Catholicos who dared, in writing, to arm himself against the Holy Throne of Rome; which no one else among those who succeeded our Saint Gregory the Illuminator to the See [of Etchmiadzin] had done. Although Catholicos Ghazar wrote such heretical things, he wrote them before he became Catholicos. This book of Simeon's, entitled *Partavč'ar*, was filled with so much intolerable nonsense, impudence and ignorance against the Holy Throne of Rome, where he labored to demonstrate that our nation has not altered any of its church doctrines and worship. It did not sell, however. And after writing all this, he himself twisted [*xainakeac'*] the former classification of the holidays of our holy fathers by inventing a new classification according to his fancies and his own system. Consequently, those members of our nation living under Ottoman rule did not accept it at first but only after many years had passed." Ibid., p. 454. It should be noted that the author is mistaken about *Partavč'ar*'s date of publication, which occurred not before but after *Tōnac'oyc'* had already come to light. On Yerevantsi's usage of the term *Lot'erank'*, see Aghanians, *DHP*, vol. 3, p. 827, footnote 10; see also below for a fuller discussion of Yerevantsi's polemic with Catholic Armenians and particularly with the Mekhitarists.

⁶⁶ *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 19.

⁶⁷ "Behold, with our high authority that comes from the God-descended Holy Throne, and from the divinely miraculous right hand of our father Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and with the authority of our Catholicosate, we declare that henceforth those who love, receive, and employ that deceitful booklet shall be excommunicated or anathemized." *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 17.

⁶⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London, 1991). It goes without saying that Anderson's key word

ciousness in at least three related ways. First, the calendar helps to generate uniform rituals and practices on a collective level by plotting these rituals/practices along a standardized temporal framework. This "common temporal order" enables individuals—who otherwise lead anonymous lives separated from each other by space and time—to become aware of themselves as living "parallel" to others and thus identify themselves, through their shared and simultaneous rituals, as members of the same community rooted in time.⁶⁹ Second, the calendar and *calendrical reforms* not only reflect but also *constitute* and promote social difference and segregation.⁷⁰ They are agents simultaneously of temporal segregation and integration, of external differentiation and internal standardization. The Gregorian reforms of the Julian calendar in 1582, for instance, clearly accentuated the Catholic/Protestant divide for more than a century, as did Constantine's calendrical reform of the fourth century CE that temporally severed the celebration of Easter from the Jewish Passover, thereby reinforcing the new "identity through difference" of the Church by setting Christianity apart from Judaism.⁷¹ The third feature of the calendar that makes it particularly suitable to shaping group, and especially national, identity is what I call the notion of "centering"—a key strategy of nation-making and a hallmark of modern nation-states. The calendar acts as a supreme centering device by firmly anchoring collective rituals to a homogenized temporal center (i.e., the new system of dates) *as well as* to the institution that administers and manipulates that center (i.e., the nation-state in most modern cases). That is why nation-making and center-

"imagined" (a household term by now among scholars of nationalism and adjacent fields of inquiry) should not be confused with "imaginary," as in something false or non-existent. For Anderson, the nation is an "imagined community" in the sense that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (6) What is important in this context is the presence of "print-capitalism" or print culture in general, which creates the technical and cultural means through which individuals, who are separated from one another by space, can identify with larger, anonymous publics.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 24-25 and 194.

⁷⁰ See the stimulating discussion in Eviatar Zerubavel's "Easter and Passover: On Calendars and Group Identity," *American Sociological Review*, 1982, vol. 47.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 284.

establishing are often engineered by manipulation of the calendar, as with the new French Calendar after the Revolution of 1789.

Forging national identity through temporal "centering" was also Yerevantsi's strategy. His example illustrates—Anderson's claims notwithstanding—that such strategies of "centering" need not rely on the nation-state and its institutions; they can also be pursued in diasporic settings. Indeed, in Yerevantsi's case, "centering" was carried out through the institution of the Church and the Catholicosate in lieu of (and in opposition to) a nation-state (hence my term "centering *like* a nation-state"). Yerevantsi pursued this policy of centering through various means, including his attempt to establish religious standardization and the homogenization of calendar time, both of which aimed at rooting the dispersed and polycentric nation to the institution of the Catholicosate at Etchmiadzin. Seen in this light, his *Tōnac'oyc'* thus takes on a magnified significance. Its purpose, as Yerevantsi told his readers in his Preface, was to furnish the nation with a new temporal and spatial center (i.e., Etchmiadzin), so as to allow those celebrating the holidays of national saints, synchronically across the scattered body of the dispersion and homeland, to be unified in time and space through their ritual devotion to of Etchmiadzin, and simultaneously to be set apart from the Catholic Armenians.⁷² In short, given the importance of religious holidays in shaping national memory and identity in the eighteenth century—and the success of Catholic infiltration into this domain—the publication of *Tōnac'oyc'* must be considered a significant feat for Etchmiadzin. Its dissemination throughout the communities of dispersion—particularly in Constantinople and across India⁷³—was given high priority as a vital stratagem in Yerevantsi's larger project

⁷² As Ormanian astutely remarks, "the idea of segregating Catholic Armenians from the circle of Armenians by way of introducing liturgical distinctions and obstructing their influence by making their calendar non-usable, was, in some way, part of Simeon's [i.e., Yerevantsi's] intention." The plan, as Ormanian also notes, was partially successful since the Mekhitarists, the Andonians and the Catholicosate of Armenian Catholics in Lebanon categorically rejected Yerevantsi's new calendar. *Ibid.*, pp. 3106-3107.

⁷³ The *Yisatakaran* provides detailed information on the number of copies of *Tōnac'oyc'* sent to Basra, Baghdad and India, and their allocation throughout the communities of dispersion there. See Aghaniants, *DHP*, vol. 8, pp. 422-423.

of combating the polycentric forces jeopardizing Etchmiadzin's role as the nation's center.⁷⁴ Just as important, in this regard, was the publication of *Partavčar*, to which we shall return in our commentary below. Printing of this work commenced in 1779 but was only completed three years later, when Yerevantsi had already passed away. Like everything else Yerevantsi wrote or did, this work also aimed at centering the nation on the sacral center of Etchmiadzin.

The same logic of "centering *like* a nation-state" also animates the momentous administrative changes Yerevantsi introduced into the management of Etchmiadzin's affairs. In this respect, one of his first measures as Catholicos was to literally set the Holy See's papers in order. He did this by commissioning several collections of

⁷⁴ Ironically, instead of unifying or "centering" (Apostolic) Armenians, Yerevantsi's calendrical reform may have initially reinforced pre-existing polycentric divisions within the nation. In effect, the publication of *Tōnac'oyc'*, as Ormanian and others have noted, drove a wedge between Ottoman and Persian Armenians, creating a calendrical dissonance between these two communities. On the one hand, after Etchmiadzin spent considerable efforts at flooding the diaspora with copies of *Tōnac'oyc'* and making its application mandatory through the circulation of edicts and encyclicals, most Armenians living under Persian dominion (including those in India and the East) accepted the new calendar shortly after its publication. This was not the case, however, for the Ottoman Armenians, especially those in Constantinople. The Catholic Armenians there dismissed it for obvious reasons, and particularly because Yerevantsi had incorporated *Grigor Tatewaci* and *Yovhan Orotne-ci*—Armenian Church fathers known for their virulent opposition to Rome and the Council of Chalcedon—into the pantheon of Armenian saints. As for the Apostolic community, they too failed to immediately embrace the calendrical reform. Even Patriarch Zakaria was at first disinclined to adopt it since, in his view, Yerevantsi had not consulted Constantinople in undertaking his monumental project, in light of which, enforcing the new Calendar would have only legitimized the highhanded manner in which Etchmiadzin was treating the Patriarchate. Zakaria eventually agreed to the new reforms in 1776/7, but even then the Armenians of Constantinople (and arguable most Ottoman Armenians) did not heed his decision. After Yerevantsi's death, when Zakaria was re-elected as Patriarch in 1784, he banned the new calendar and even had copies of it burned. The Calendar was re-instituted a few years later by his successor, Patriarch Daniel, at which time it became widely used throughout the Empire. It therefore took about fifteen years after the proclamation of *Tōnac'oyc'* for Ottoman Armenians to come around to restructuring their lives according to Etchmiadzin's new temporal framework. See Ormanian's perspicacious treatment of the issue in *op.cit.*, pp. 3108-3109; Aghanians, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. clxviii-clxxi; and *Awetis Perpērean, Hayoc' Patmow'iwn* (History of the Armenians) (Constantinople, 1870), pp. 2 and 5.

documents with the aim of facilitating the efficient settlement of legal disputes between the Holy See and the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem, as well as with the rival Catholicosates. These collections included detailed inventories of Etchmiadzin's diocesan sees as well as the legates it had appointed to them. Yerevantsi also pioneered the tradition of maintaining official memoirs (*yišatakarans*) or books of annals in which summaries of edicts and correspondences of Catholicoi (beginning with himself) were duly recorded.⁷⁵ In addition, he embarked on a systematic policy of archiving and taxonomizing Etchmiadzin's legal and ecclesiastical documents, its edicts, proclamations, encyclicals/bulls, its diocesan financial accounts and landholdings, starting with the earliest contracts and title deeds granted to the Holy See by the secular authorities that, at various times, had ruled over it. This extremely valuable collection, known as *Jampre* (from the French word *chambre*⁷⁶), was compiled

75 This is the collection that was later published by Kyut Kahana Aghanians under the title *Diwan Hayoc' patmowt'ean (DHP)*. (See footnote 43 above). Volumes 3, 8 and 11 of this monumental work contain Yerevantsi's *yišatakarans*, covering the period of his tenure as Catholicos. The latter not only offer us the most extensive archives on Yerevantsi, but also contain a mine of information on various aspects of life in the dispersion communities. It should be noted that the opening and closing volumes are the work of the scribe Hovhannes Keghamatsi (later re-christened as Vardapet Issahag), who was the first to undertake this laborious task. The middle volume is the work of Hovhannes the Scribe. Most of the information drawn below is from the second volume of the *yišatakaran*. For information on the compilers, see Aghanians, *DHP*, vol. 3, footnote 1 on p. 807 and vol. 11, footnote 1. After his promotion to the rank of vardapet and then Bishop in the early 1770s, Keghamatsi temporarily ceased to work as Yerevantsi's personal scribe and took upon himself, among other things, the task role of supervising Etchmiadzin's press. He resumed his former duties of compiling the *yišatakaran* following the death of Hovhannes the Scribe in 1776. The colophon of *Tōnac'oyc'* refers to him as "the spiritual son of our Holiness, Issahag Yepiscopos Keghamatsi, who, in his indefatigable labors, is the general organizer and supervisor of this work and its intendant." (*Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 562)

76 In the eighteenth century, the word *chambre* not only designated a chamber or room, but was also a term used by the Catholic Church, as well as by the European states of the time, to refer to a special chamber where official archives were stored. Yerevantsi, as Ormanian points out, most likely came across the term during his years in Constantinople where he was in frequent contact with Armenian clergy who had close ties to the Vatican. See Ormanian, *op.cit.*, p. 3029.

in 1765 but only discovered and published in 1873.⁷⁷

Jampré begins with a discourse of origins whose primary goal is to invest Etchmiadzin and the institution of the Catholicosate with Biblical authority by comparing its foundation to the Ark of the Covenant of the Israelites. Just as God had shown Moses the form of the temple to be consecrated in a sacred place, which would act as a “mother, educator and sanctuary for the Ancient People [i.e., the Israelites],” likewise writes Yerevantsi, “in more recent times [i.e., in the early fourth century CE], He showed the form of this temple to Saint Gregory (who was the leader of New Israel) to consecrate, in a special site, a dwelling place for Him [which would act] as a mother, educator and sanctuary for the New People, the nation of the Armenians.” It goes without saying that the allusion here is to Christ’s descent at *Ech-miadzin*, (the descent of the “only begotten one”) which paves way for Saint Gregory’s consecration of the Holy See on that site. In this fashion, Yerevantsi suggests, Etchmiadzin became a New Jerusalem for the Armenian nation, the pivot and shrine of the nation’s memory and identity.

Yerevantsi then describes how the Holy See was initially “resplendent in its power” but how, with the weakening of the Armenian kingdoms, its authority too began to slowly crumble. He outlines the peregrinations of the Catholicosate from its sacral site to neighboring Dvin, Argina, Ani, Hromkla and Sis, and finally

⁷⁷ Yerevantsi writes in his Introduction to *Jampré* that his goal is to use history (the record of the past, the events of the present and the possibilities of the future—this is his formulation) as a mirror through which the Mother See and its servants, including the Catholicoi, will be able to chart a course in time. He presents his endeavor as follows: “(To bring to light and to burnish the good works [*zarareceal barerarrow'iwns*] and gilded deeds [*oskepayl*] of the blessed ancestors (which have been covered as if they had disappeared in the darkness of oblivion and ignorance) so that with their brilliant names they shall be permanently glorified in the temple of God at the Holy See. Therefore, I propose to write this book ... which contains, in its entirety, the state of the Holy See, for I have recorded in it all of its conditions, that is to say how it was established, how it existed and how it and those who occupied its seat were managed or conducted, both internally and externally. [I have also narrated] the spread of its power and honor, and its occasional weakness and sorrow, and I have recounted concerning the Catholicoi who sat there... and I have related the history of their possessions, how and when they had it, that is to say, their diocesan regions, prelacies and also [certain] productive places with their conditions, such as those that paid taxes to it

back to its origins in Etchmiadzin. As regrettable as these shifts were, they were nonetheless understandable, he argues, since the leaders of the Church were concerned for the safety of their institution. In other words, given the political uncertainties of the period, Yerevantsi seems to be suggesting that rescuing the "office" could take precedence over the sacredness of the lieu or site. Once the Catholicosate returned to Etchmiadzin (1441), however, the story changed. Dissent, rivalry and polycentrism took root, first with the survival of what he considered to be the renegade Catholicosates of Sis and Aghtamar, and then with the growing defiance of the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople. The order of power and authority became disordered and the center was lost. Yerevantsi's principal reason for compiling *Jampre* was to restore the authority of this "center" and to reaffirm the supremacy of Etchmiadzin and its Catholicos. In a separate chapter addressing the Holy See's relations with the Ppatriarchates, Yerevantsi writes:

The spiritual authority of the Holy See extends and spreads out to all places and to all corners of the world where Armenian-born and Apostolic [յուսւմոքչսկիքոն] people and religious assemblies may be found. For wherever churches and clergy, priests and laymen belonging to the Armenian nation exist, under whatever name they may be called, they are entirely bound and enclosed by the authority of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin and its Catholicoi who are successors to Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia. And it is

[*mlkatow*]: villages, ... fields, watermills, ... dwellings, stores or shops... We have also recorded here those realities that are significant and worthy of being remembered, as well as the useful and harmful occurrences of the past, as examples and as a mirror for the future, so that by having what is useful at hand, you shall avoid what is harmful. We have also recorded here all the conditions of our lands and of our neighboring monasteries along with their conditions. Finally, our intention and aim of our effort has been the following: that this book become a complete compendium of knowledge [*hanrakanapēs parownakoſ*], a mirror and informant [*canowc'anoſ*] to everyone concerning the conditions and future of the Holy See and our monasteries, and an everlasting and always useful monument to the truth of the past as a precaution to what can come later." At the end of his introductory remarks, Yerevantsi commands his successors to continue his work. *Jampre: Girk' or koč'i yišatakan arjanac'owc'ič, hayeli ew parownakoſ bnawic' srboy a'otoys, ew iwroy šrjakayic' vanorēic'n* (*Jampre: A Book Called a Memoir that Registers, a Mirror and Container of all the Conditions of the Holy See, and its Surrounding Monasteries*), (Vagharshapat, 1873), pp. 3-4.

the special authority of the Catholicoi who sit [at Etchmiadzin] to consecrate all Armenian churches, to reform them, to keep them in order, to remove those that are superfluous, to bring to perfection those that are defective, to correct those that have deviated, to remove and to dissolve from the ranks of the Church those that are unworthy and incapable of being corrected...and to dispatch legates as their representatives, at the proper time, to everyone so as to ascertain and become informed about the conditions of the churches and clergy.⁷⁸

Yerevantsi's then targets Etchmiadzin's polycentric rivals one by one, beginning with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Though a relatively innocuous threat at Yerevantsi's time, the Patriarchate's offenses needed to be redressed because of its short-lived bid to become a renegade Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians.

And Jerusalem is neither a Patriarchate nor a Prelate [Առաջնորդ], for it has no specific see for itself, nor churches or a diocesan flock [վիճակապետ հող]. Jerusalem is not even a country and realm of the Armenians, because it was formerly a city and country of the Greeks and sometimes, during the rule of the Christian kings, even of their Patriarchate. Later, when it was ruled by the nation of the Ottomans, the Greek Patriarchate and the power of the Christian kings disappeared altogether from there. Thenceforth, it became a general place for the pilgrimage of all Christians, as a result of which, each of them [i.e., Christians] received a special place for themselves, where they built monasteries and Churches, and where each nation stationed its attendants and guardians, so that, by settling there, they would protect their sites and provide sanctuary for their compatriots. This is also the case with [the Armenians], who are there only as attendants and guardians of the sacred sites which belong to the Armenian nation.⁷⁹

Much the same applied to the Patriarchate of Constantinople:

And likewise with Constantinople, which is not a city or country of the Armenians but of the Greeks, where the Greek Patriarchate was

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 55. See also Siruni's commentary on this and the next passage in *Polis ew ir dera*, pp. 453-455.

located and continues to exist. But in recent times, and during the dispersion of our nation, when some of them also went there for the purpose of conducting commerce, and in the gradual increase of their population they even settled there, they began to receive their own Armenian churches as a result of which it became necessary for them to have their own prelate [սուպրոդ], which they came to acquire through the permission of the Catholicos.⁸⁰ After the power of the Ottomans increased, and when our princes [i.e., the new merchant elite] and general population began to frequent there [i.e., Constantinople], the Prelates began to protest, became arrogant and disregarded the spiritual canons or orders and disrespected the esteem of the Catholicos [սու ռոն հարկանել զպատին հայրապետին]. And through the decrees of Muslim [or foreign] kings [i.e., the Ottoman sultans], they were able to remain independent by arranging for the payment of taxes to the crown on a yearly basis, on account of which they were called patriks. Hence, it became a habit for the common people to call them patriarchs."⁸¹

The crux of Yerevantsi's worries with concerning the Patriarchate had to do with the danger that its expanding sphere of jurisdiction posed to the Mother See's role as "centering center" of both religion and nation. The Patriarchate, as Yerevantsi was quick to note, had taken advantage of its close proximity to the seat of Ottoman power, at a time when Etchmiadzin was insignificant to that power and was also in a backwater of Persian imperial (and later Romanov) realmpower. That proximity to the Ottoman center, as previously noted, enabled the Patriarch of Constantinople, over time, to gradually remove and appropriate nearly all the diocesan prelacies on Ottoman territory hitherto under Etchmiadzin's authority. The resulting breach of jurisdictional authority undermined the Holy See's symbolic place in the religious imaginary of the nation, not to mention shrinking its financial resouosurces; what is more, it curtailed the power of the Catholicos to dispense and maintain the "orthodoxy" of the faith among its dispersed flock. Yerevantsi describes

80 There seems to be no evidence that the Bishop of Bursa, who was the first Armenian "Patriarch" in Constantinople according to the conventional view, was actually appointed by the Catholicos in the then newly established See of Etchmiadzin.

81 *Jampre*, p. 56.

these encroachments and then highlights, in particular, how the Patriarchate's insubordination was fomenting heresy and corruption:

Because of this, unbelief [թերահաւատութիւն], Catholicism [Աղ-թաքսայութիւն] and many unlawful things became frequent in those parts [յանահեցան ի կողմանս այնոսիկ] and still multiply from day to day. And since their prelates reside there under the permission of the Turks and strive only to remit their taxes to the crown and to corrupt themselves, whereas the Catholicosate is under the rule of the Persians, it is not possible for him [i.e., the Catholicos] to rule over them, to impose penalties on them and to mete out corporeal punishment on others. It can only excommunicate them, which does not solve anything since the power of the Ottomans is dangerous and only harm can come from it and not any good, especially since the worm is inside and not on the surface.⁸²

It was in light of these views that Yerevantsi devised a scheme to directly subordinate the Patriarchate of Constantinople to his rule. In a brash move, he created a separate office, that of the vice-Catholicos, which would be located in Constantinople to directly supervise (hence control and centralize) the affairs of the Patriarch. To this end, in 1764 he delegated Abraham Asdabatsi to the Ottoman capital, but the plan backfired as Asdabatsi's presence created intense opposition from the local amiras who resented coming under Etchmiadzin's direct mandate. Asdabatsi attempted to consolidate power by relying on merchants from the Eastern provinces, but to no avail; he was expelled by a royal firman from the capital and returned to Etchmiadzin.⁸³

As for the Catholicosates of Sis, Aghtamar and Albania, Yerevantsi devoted separate chapters in *Jampre* to exposing their renegade claims to independent authority. The first two were under Etchmiadzin's control by the time Yerevantsi had assumed the throne of the Catholicosate. Their defiance of Etchmiadzin's symbolic authority and their attempts at infringing on its diocesan sees, according to Yerevantsi, were successfully rebuffed by his predeces-

⁸² Ibid., p. 56-57.

⁸³ See Chamchian, *The History of the Armenians*, pp. 872 and 874; Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3043-3044; and the entry under "Simeon Yerevantsi" in *Kensagrowthwn ereweli aranc'*, p. 454.

sors, despite the Sublime Porte's tendency to favor Ottoman-based representatives of the Armenian Church over Etchmiadzin. The Catholicosate of Albania, on the other hand, had continued to expand the autonomy it had acquired in the twelfth century when the Mother See was weakened due to the restless movements of its Catholicosate. By the eighteenth century it had encroached on Etchmiadzin's diocesan sees in Russia, but this too was rebuffed when Yerevantsi succeeded in restoring these sees to the Holy See and in subordinating Gantsasar to the authority of the Catholicos at Etchmiadzin.⁸⁴

But Yerevantsi reserved his most scathing remarks for the Armenian Catholics or *Akt'armayk'*.⁸⁵ In a separate text, published as the conclusion to his *Tōnac'oyc'*, he singled them out for special censure. The Armenian Catholics, he argued, were "apostates" who had "disowned the nation and church that gave birth to and nourished them" for no other reason than "bodily pleasures and unbridled gluttony."⁸⁶ They had to be branded as "foes" because, having left their church for the comforts of Europe, they had turned back to "revile" their own confession and nation.⁸⁷ In a particularly graphic passage,

⁸⁴ For the Catholicosate of Sis, see *Jampré*, pp. 98-99; for Aghtamar, see *Ibid.*, pp. 91-97; and for Albania, see *Ibid.*, pp. 63-91. On Yerevantsi's relations with the Catholicosate of Albania, clearly his most serious challenge within the Church after the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see Aghanians, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. c-cxx, and Ormanian, *op.cit.*, pp. 3052-3053.

⁸⁵ The term *Akt'armay* (*Akt'armayk'* for plural) is a Turkish loan word (from *Aktarma/k*) which means 1) to move or to change, in its verbal form, or 2) an apostate, as a noun. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was widely used among Armenian Apostolics, in its second connotation, as a pejorative designation for Armenian Catholics. Yerevantsi employs the term interchangeably with *Lo'erank'* (see footnote 65 above). For a brief explanation, see Aghanians, *DHP*, vol. 3, p. 828, footnote 23; and Ajarian, *Hayoc' lezowi patmow'iwn*, p. 283.

⁸⁶ *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 545.

⁸⁷ Inter-confessional feuds between Catholic Armenians and Apostolics were rife in the eighteenth century, especially in Constantinople, where the Patriarchate frequently resorted to the Porte in its determined and on occasion violent persecution of Catholic missionaries and converts. However, as Leo points out, the extreme to which Yerevantsi took his anti-Catholic zeal was unparalleled. "He began a campaign of persecution against Catholic priests working on the border of Georgia and elsewhere not only through the collaboration of [King] Heracles [of Georgia] but also through that of the local Muslim rulers... Wherever

Yerevantsi likened them to dangerous parasites on the body-spirit of the nation:

They are like moths who have come out of a piece of clothing and are piercing holes in that same garment, or like wood-worms who appear out of wood only to corrode that same wood. They are the small foxes [աղուկսունք փոքունք] that spoil our fields. They are the forerunners of the Anti-Christ [կաթապետք նեոինն], who have already arrived. They are the ones who stemmed from us but were not from us, for had they been one of us they would have remained with us... They are despicable and worthy of being chased away like poisonous serpents and like deceitful foxes that blight the canons and orders of our sacred church.⁸⁸

Moths or small foxes Catholic Armenians may have been for Yerevantsi, but the fact was that they were the Holy See's most formidable opponents. For, in Yerevantsi's view at least, not only did they defy Etchmiadzin's role as the supreme center of the Armenians (which is what the Patriarchates and rival Catholicosates were also doing), they also questioned the very orthodoxy and independence of the Armenian Church. They did this either by labeling it a heretical institution in need of being subsumed under the Church of Rome (which was the bellicose position of the Collegians) or by striving to "ecumenically" unite it with Rome, albeit without going so far as to label its teachings as heresy (which was the dovish policy of the Mekhitarists). For Yerevantsi, this was a distinction without a difference since, in his view, what mattered most was the charge of "apostasy." Regardless of the Mekhitarist claim that one could be Armenian by ethnicity or "nationality" and Catholic by confession, Yerevantsi insisted that membership into the nation entailed 1) belonging to the Armenian Church, and 2) accepting the "divine right" of Etchmiadzin as the sacral center of the nation. On this count, even the dissenters of Sis or Aghtamar could be seen as ope-

Armenians who had joined the Catholicism were discovered, they were sent to Etchmiadzin through the local authorities. There, Simeon would punish them and would release them only after he had received their confession of sins. These inquisitorial practices constitute the darkest aspect of Simeon's tenure as Catholicos." Leo, *Hayoc' patmowt'iwn*, p. 280. For inter-confessional violence in Constantinople, see Siruni, *op.cit.*

⁸⁸ *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 550.

rating within the fold of the nation, despite their essentially administrative, not religious, form of defiance of the Holy See; the Mekhitarists and especially the Collegians, on the other hand, according to Yerevantsi, had entirely broken with the nation, thus making them even more treacherous.

The Catholic Armenians were also pernicious for Yerevantsi because, unlike the dissenters within the Armenian Church, they were armed with the best that European power and technology had to offer, against which Etchmiadzin's resources were rather meager. "Their lands [i.e., Europe] are filled with all good things and all resources," Yerevantsi wrote, alluding to both the Collegians in Rome and the Mekhitarists in Venice. Their "instruments and craftsmen are plenty and affordable, and they are entirely free and bear no grief from being under the exactions and despotism of Muslim rulers since their authority rests with the Christians."⁸⁹ In short, unlike Etchmiadzin's workers who labored under predatory conditions, the Mekhitarists and Collegians could operate in an environment where work could be "successfully accomplished without any barriers."⁹⁰ This, in addition to their easy access to print technology ("their most powerful craft of deception"⁹¹ and the secret of their success), gave them an edge over Etchmiadzin, a fact that was not lost on Yerevantsi since one of the principal reasons why he established a press at the Holy See was to turn the weapons of the Catholics against them: [In this manner] they darken their slanderous pages [մրեմն գրուղթս] with mockery and loquacity, they ornament the exterior [of their books] as they please, load them up in their ships and send them here and there as though they were rare and astonishing new things. And they sell them at four or five times the price. Now upon seeing their beautiful appearance, our innocent and blessed nation thinks they are filled with unknown knowledge. And if it happens that among these works one out of a hundred or a thousand turns out to be useful and acceptable, that is because it has been stolen from our works.⁹²

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 547-548.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 548.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 546-547.

⁹² Ibid., p. 548.

The rest of the books, however, were "full of fables" and poisonous doctrines that "twisted and deformed" the spiritual precepts of "our blessed ancestors."⁹³ To be sure, the Catholic Armenians made much of their "suffer[ing] and toil[ing] on account of your welfare so that you shall be educated," Yerevantsi told his readers; but the fact is that "with such deceptive means they sucked and continue to suck the blood of some of our feeble people."⁹⁴

Throughout this long and extraordinary diatribe, Yerevantsi never once mentions his opponents by name. He holds no distinctions between Collegians or Mekhitarists, as noted earlier. However, on two occasions he makes oblique remarks, suggesting that the Mekhitarists were among his primary targets. The first is the allusion to Hagopos Chamchian's *Ōrac'oyc'* (again not mentioned by name), which indeed provides the overall context and condition of possibility for his diatribe.⁹⁵ The other and more intriguing pointer is the clue he drops in the context of his discussion of "small foxes" and "wood-worms," where he characterizes his foes as "those who have disowned us and our church, who consider us to be schismatic and strayed, and write their names and place them above that of ours [ի վերայ մեր դնելով]."⁹⁶ This must surely be considered as one of the most singular passages in the entire text since it reveals to the reader that the Mekhitarists are in fact behind the nameless mask of Yerevantsi's foe; after all, they were the only Catholic Armenians who printed the name of the "Catholicos of All Armenians" anywhere on their title pages.⁹⁷ Immediately after this sentence, Yerevantsi asks:

How is it worthy of us to consider such apostates [աբաղադուհի] as our friends or to accept their deviant books? On account of this, I

⁹³ Ibid., p. 548.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 546.

⁹⁵ See the discussion above and the Preface of *Tōnac'oyc'*.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 550-551.

⁹⁷ This custom, which was an integral part of the Mekhitarist orientation on matters concerning the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church, was discontinued in 1800. Since the Collegians or other Catholic proselytizers working for the *Propaganda Fide* did not recognize the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church, they did not place the name of the Catholicos on their title pages.

beseech you all, my dear Armenian nation, [...] to totally scorn and despise them [խոսեցաք զնոսա իսպառ], to shun them [խոթեցաքուք ի նոցանէ], to chase them from your midst as deadly enemies of your souls and bodies. In the first place, condemn and annihilate [անհետ արարեք] their deceitful and poisonous books from among you. For though on the surface they may appear beautiful, their contents are filled with fetid substance [զարշահոտութեամբ] and deception, as is the case with fatal medicine that is covered with honey. If they [these books] are about matters of faith and belief [վասն հաւատոյ դասանութեան] as well as the traditions of the church, then we have quite a few such books from our blessed ancestors.⁹⁸

Though Yerevantsi anathematized the religious publications with which the Mekhitarists and Collegians were flooding the markets of Constantinople and India, it is interesting to note that his attitude towards their strictly secular books (i.e., those that did “not contain things against our faith, confession or church”⁹⁹) was slightly more accommodating. Faced with the growing demand for and unrivaled quality of Mekhitarist publications in the field of grammar and lexicography in particular, Yerevantsi could not but yield to the pressures of the reading public. He thus grudgingly granted his flock permission, if need be, to consult such books. However, he counseled them to treat these works as though foreigners had written them. Readers should “enter” their pages, he wrote, invoking the metaphor of the book as a distant and alien country, as “spies” entering a foreign land; that is they should take what is useful and leave aside what is “vile.”¹⁰⁰ In any case, he promised his followers that Etchmiadzin would soon outpace the Mekhitarists and Collegians by producing “better and more important works than theirs, for we have been working and keeping a vigil for five years in order to acquire and establish this craft [of printing].”¹⁰¹

Yerevantsi's diatribe against Catholic Armenians demonstrates the seriousness with which he took the Catholic threat. More than all other rivals, these “newfangled Catholics” [նորաբոյս Լոթերա-

⁹⁸ *Tōnac'oyc'*, p. 551.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 553.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 553.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 553-554.

լաւթ] (be they Mekhitarists or Collegians) jeopardized Etchmiadzin's sacral position as "centering center" of both religion and nation. The diatribe also suggests that Yerevantsi was selective in his condemnation, at least as far as the Mekhitarists were concerned. He rejected those aspects of their intervention in the crisis of the eighteenth century that dealt with religious matters. But he was compelled to reluctantly accept their contribution in the realm of language and Western knowledge. Even this, however, was a provisional measure, since he planned to devote Etchmiadzin's press to the task of overtaking the Mekhitarists in their own game. How he would have reacted to the Mekhitarist "conquest of the historical world"¹⁰² pioneered by Mikayel Chamchian's masterpiece (not to mention their interventions in geography and in the field of education), had he lived long enough to see it, is an interesting question. More than likely, like his former student Archbishop Arghutiantz, he would have dismissed it on grounds that it distorted the history of the nation and the doctrines of the Church.¹⁰³

Let us now turn to the discourse of dispersion and the nation found in *Partavčar*. As we shall see, the latter contains the theoretical elaboration of the policies Yerevantsi pursued while in office. It is also an epistolary form of the classificatory scheme and strategy of "centering like a nation-state" found in Jampre and *Tōnac'oyc'*, including the diatribe against Armenian Catholics contained in its Conclusion. Moreover, *Partavčar* is a pivotal text in Yerevantsi's *oeuvre* because it is in its pages that Yerevantsi most explicitly links his strategy of "centering," elaborated in the two previous works, to

¹⁰² The term is from Ernest Cassirer's classic work, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, (Princeton, 1951). For its application to the Mekhitarist enterprise and particularly to Chamchian, see Nichanian's discussion in "Enlightenment and Historical Thought," pp. 96-97.

¹⁰³ Arghutiantz was one of the first to reproach Chamchian's *History of the Armenians* as a work filled with distortions, a charge that Chamchian refuted in a sardonic letter he sent to the Archbishop, bearing the signature of Bishop Harutiun Basentsi of Constantinople. Arghutiantz's text was published in Madras in 1791 as *Orinak handisawor canowc'man ew othoc'*... (Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult this source.) For the polemic between Arghutiantz and Chamchian, and the texts of their correspondence, see Leo, *Hayoc' Patmowt'iwn*, pp. 464-467; see also a fuller version of the texts in Aghaniants, "The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi," pp. cxxxviii-cxlv, and Djemjemian's brief discussion in his *Mikayel Č'amč'ean*, pp. 65-66.

the larger problematic of dispersion and diaspora. Hitherto, the link between these three works has not been noted by others, including Ormanian and Aghaniants, who are two of the most prolific commentators on Yerevantsi's life and work.

Girk' or koč'i Partavčar and the Doctrine of Divine Rights

From Nerses the servant of Christ and, through his compassion, the Catholicos of the Armenians to all of you believers of the Armenian race, to those living in our realm of Armenia in the East, to those who have migrated and settled in the numerous countries of the West, to those who have moved among nations with foreign tongues, to those who, because of our sins, have been scattered to all the corners of the world, to cities, castles, villages, lands—to all of you, to the high priests, princes and subjects, to mounted and foot soldiers, to heads of regions and overseers, to the landed nobility and peasants, to the merchants and craftsmen, and to all of them who, according to their preferences and will, have embraced the various fields of life, and also to the men and women, to the children and youth, to the adults and elderly, who conduct themselves in accordance, to rules of this world and to those who follow a celestial calling, we greet you all with love and peace from the redeeming Holy Cross that is most agreeable to God, from the apostolic relics that have received the fiery tongues of the spirit, from the right hand of the Illuminator, and from our Seat.¹⁰⁴

With these words, Nerses Shnorhali opened his *Towlt' Endhanrakan* (General Epistle) in 1166, nestled in the castle of Hromkla, where sixteen years earlier his family had been forced to relocate the institution of the Catholicosate.¹⁰⁵ Shnorhali's graceful and poetic epistle is marked with the spirit of urgency. It was composed on the heels of the displacement of his people and the loss of their last kingdom in the homeland. Shnorhali had just mounted the throne as

¹⁰⁴ Nerses Shnorhali, *Nersēsī Šnorhalyow Kat'olikosi Hayoc' towlt' andhanrakan ar hamōrēn hayasēr azins* (The General Epistle to the Entire Armenian Nation by Nerses Shnorhali, the Catholicos of the Armenians), (Venice, 1830) p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Between 1066 and 1203, the Catholicosate remained in the *naxarar* family of the Pahlavuni, from which Shnorhali hailed.

the Catholicos. His Church was wracked by dissensions. In his epistle, he writes about his responsibility to discharge God's injunction to become a "good shepherd and bring down the providential commandments to the flowing meadows, and to rear our flock with the nourishing waters of the wisdom of the spirit."¹⁰⁶

But how can we perform our duties, [he wrote,] ... and chase the wolves and cure the wounded when the shepherd and the flock find themselves so far apart from each other? How can we become a guide to those who refuse to follow their leader's traces towards the royal course to heaven, but rather choose to advance along the wide boulevard that conducts them directly to the bowels of Hell? How can we be interceders of God with such men who do not want to maintain the covenant sworn with God ... but rather, breaching it, willingly follow evil... Now, because this is the general picture, I am terrified and I tremble from the fear of God's judgment, lest this work of stewardship entrusted to me by Him shall give rise to disrespect instead of glory, to shame instead of an unfading crown. What am I to do to save my soul from these terrifying threats? I am perplexed because on account of the calamities of our times and the presence of multiple powers it is impossible to go around to all of them [i.e., the Armenians], to all the parts of the world, and to preach God's word like the holy apostles. Our nation does not even have a capital where the king resides or an assembly so that, sitting on the pontifical and doctoral seat, we could teach the commandments of God to our people like the first patriarchs and doctors. Rather, we have fled like deer from the hunters and the hounds and have taken shelter in this cavern [i.e., *Hromkla*]...¹⁰⁷

Then, comparing his predicament to that of the apostle Paul who, though in manacles, dutifully preached the Gospel of orthodoxy through his epistles from afar, he wrote: "Like him, constrained in this scorching cavern—as in a voluntary prison and manacles—we are forced to speak through the writing of our hands with everyone who has ears to listen instead of speaking through words."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 7

A little over six hundred years later, Simeon Yerevantsi addressed the nation from his own "scorching cavern" at Etchmiadzin. He too wrote with the same siege mentality. Though, unlike Shnorhali before him, his pontifical throne had finally come to rest in its original site at Etchmiadzin, he too felt confronted with what he perceived as unprecedented dissension and polycentric dispersion. His ability to travel among his scattered followers, to "bridle" and "redirect" the diffusers of heresy and dissent in their midst, was also restricted by the presence of "multiple powers." Thus, self-consciously modeling his discourse after Shnorhali's, Yerevantsi likened himself to the apostle Paul: On account of the calamitous events of our times, I am unable to come and to appear in person before all of you, which is in any case impossible to do. As a result, I am compelled to write this small booklet and to send it to you all, informing you in particular...about that which I am obliged to tell you and that to which you are obliged to listen and know, and especially to carry out. Because of this, I beg you all in the name of Christ to accept it willingly, to read it intelligently, and to comprehend and carry out its ideas, as though I were present before you and speaking to you in person.¹⁰⁹

Girk' or koč'i Partavčar, pace its author's admission, is not a "small booklet." It is rather a lengthy polemic and exhortation in one. The work is comprised of two sections, the first of which addresses doctrinal issues dividing the Armenian Apostolic Church from that of Rome. Yerevantsi presents here a spirited defense of Etchmiadzin's official position against the Council of Chalcedon and a theological vindication of the doctrine of monophysism as the core doctrine of the Armenian faith. His arguments in these pages are rehearsals of earlier points raised by others, including Nallian.¹¹⁰ What is original about *Partavčar*, however, is the second and longer section of the work.

Chapter six of the second section, running for nearly sixty-five pages, contains the kernel of Yerevantsi's peculiar discourse on the nation and the key to understanding his policy of "centering like a nation-state." It is entitled: "Exhortation to the Armenian Nation,

¹⁰⁹ *Partavčar*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Leo, *Hayoc' Patmow'iwn*, p. 461.

so that they may be emboldened in their learning of books, may bear with patience their various temptations for the sake of their faith, may keep in mind our Saint Gregory the Illuminator and his Seat of Holy Etchmiadzin, may recognize it [զմեսութիւն] as their unique spiritual parent and as the cause for the enlightenment of the Armenian nation to which they are obliged to remain obedient and true [հաւաքատուրքիւն] wherever they may be, and [finally] so that they may remain unwavering in their faith and confession."¹¹¹ In the fashion of Shnorhali (though his name is not invoked), this epistle within an epistle is addressed to the entire nation. The context, however, suggests that its primary recipients are the wealthy merchants and literate elites in urban diasporic centers stretching from Constantinople, the Crimea and Transylvania in the West to New Julfa, India and the far-flung commercial settlements in the East. The fact that Shnorhali's *T'owlt' Andhanrakan* is like a specter informing almost everything Yerevantsi writes in these pages is not arbitrary; Shnorhali, after all, was among the first Armenian Catholicos to invoke the term *Spiurk* or dispersion/diaspora in his sermon, and certainly the first to examine the malaise of the Church-nation through the lens of dispersion. But the motives and historical context for Yerevantsi's own epistle are decisively different from that of Shnorhali. *Partavčar* is in fact deeply marked not only with the trauma of dispersion (which was, in any case, much more widespread in Yerevantsi's time) but also with the concerns of a Catholicos who was eminently aware of the fact that he was living in the shadows of the modern; allusions to the superiority of European states, technology and knowledge, a faint cognizance of the Enlightenment and its impact on shifting the semantic terrain of nation and dispersion—these are all present but repressed under the surface of Yerevantsi's writing; they are also precisely what make this text such a unique document for reading the eighteenth century crisis.

The chapter on exhortation opens with a diagnosis of the crisis of education. "I see everywhere," Yerevantsi writes, "that the knowledge, study and reading of books has decreased and lessened as though it were regarded as a superfluous thing, as a result of which it has been extinguished and has disappeared from our nation." He

¹¹¹ *Partavčar.*, p. 264.

then compares this to the high levels of literacy and knowledge of books in other nations, especially the Christian ones (that is to say the nations of Europe), but also among the Muslim and even the pagan nations. The other nations, Yerevantsi states, have schools and special places of learning in their cities, towns and marketplaces, "as if it were an obligation for everyone to know how to read and write according to their capabilities."¹¹² In the Armenian nation, on the other hand, the opposite is the case. The Armenians, wherever "they happen to be in the dispersion, have no schools of learning, nor teachers or instructors nor any students."¹¹³ This was partially because those who were "wealthy and belong to illustrious families deem it a great shame and a mark of failure for themselves and their reputation to educate their children in the learning of books, as though it were a vulgar and useless craft unworthy of them."¹¹⁴ That is why instead of educating their young they train them in the secular crafts. Yerevantsi also blames the diasporic merchant elite for neglecting to create institutions of learning for their less fortunate compatriots, despite the possibilities and wealth at their disposal.¹¹⁵

Given the lamentable situation in the diaspora, the task of educating the nation's children should have naturally fallen on the monasteries and schools in the homeland. But it was precisely here that the crisis had struck most severely. In one of the most striking passages in *Partavčar*, Yerevantsi addresses this issue and interestingly links it to the dispersion of the nation from its native lands and its consequent alienation from the mother Church in Etchmiadzin. Referring to "the blessed and golden age" in the past, he writes:

Alas in these times, everything has changed for the opposite. Our nation almost in its entirety was exiled from its native lands [ի քուն երկրէ] and scattered among all nations and foreign kingdoms. The land of the Armenians has remained almost desolate and has ceased from being worked upon by our nation [շարաքացեալ յազգէս մերմէ]. Our divine monasteries and churches have become desolate and now serve as dwellings for wild beasts. Only the Holy See of

¹¹² Ibid., p. 265.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 266.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 273.

Etchmiadzin with so many run down monasteries has remained as a mother deprived of her children. She is in inconsolable grief, for she sees her offspring withdrawn from her through a journey without return, separated and estranged from each other physically and in habits [և բարու], through language and manners, and she is not capable of bringing them to unity, of domesticating them [ընտանեցուցանել]. She sees those who are thirsty for books and knowledge and she is not able to satiate their thirst. She sees among them many disorders and much disobedience to the commandments of God and the canons of the Church and she is not able to bridle them and to redirect them. What is the good of reaching out to such people when the pain grows more intense than the medicine is able to cure. Thus, without discussing this at length, let me tell the truth to my dear nation. The country of the Armenians, your native land, has a great dearth of useful and intelligent men. Because those who have remained behind from our nation are not the first harvest [ի յառաջնաբաղէ], but the consumed, hail-stricken [կարկտահար], worm-eaten [որդնակեր], emaciated [վտիւր] leftovers.¹¹⁶

As we have noted above, Yerevantsi was not the only Armenian leader to perceive the crisis in education as one of the primary symptoms of the larger crisis of dispersion and polycentricity. The Mekhitarists had also realized the severity of this crisis and had turned their efforts to "totalizing" the ensemble of the nation's cultural and literary artifacts (rare manuscripts and so on) into an archive, which they then used to restore the "purity" of the classical language and to reconstruct the nation's history. The crisis was also felt on the distant shores of Madras, where it was diagnosed in modern national terms, that is to say, for the intellectual-activists of Madras, ignorance was seen as the principal barrier preventing the new generation from remembering the illustrious deeds of their ancestors; hence the reason why they looked upon education as an instrument for resuscitating the lost virtues and glory of the nation (see below). In contrast to the latter, Yerevantsi's reading of the crisis, as with everything else he undertook as Catholicos, was inflected by his fears over Etchmiadzin's vulnerable place in the polycentric fi-

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 271-272.

eld characterizing the religious-national imaginary of Armenians. For Yerevantsi, the difference between education and ignorance was the difference between faith and apostasy or spiritual purity and pollution, which in turn meant the difference between being Armenian and non-Armenian:

It is on account of this ignorance of our nation that so many people adhering to the Catholic faith [Լօք-հրադաւանք], so many Armenian Catholics [Ախք-արմայք] and deceivers freely enter our nation and circulate fearlessly and audaciously from house to house, city to city, and town to town...and [in this fashion] they corrupt our nation. For they see [us] as a city without fortifications ...and they say and teach as they please. And as our whole nation, including the prelates, priests and population, is ignorant and uninformed about its own laws [օրհնաց] and confession, there is no one who can confront and vitiate their false preaching.¹¹⁷

In short, for Yerevantsi education was a means of fortifying Etchmiadzin's religious traditions, and by extension maintaining the religious boundaries around the nation. It is in this light that he therefore exhorts the Armenians, particularly the diasporic merchant elite, to instruct their children at an early age before they are trained in the crafts, provided they heed the following caveat: "Strive to follow the orthodox persons of our nation and take care not to mix with the Armenian Catholics [ախք-արմայից]." ¹¹⁸

In the same epistle, Yerevantsi counsels his flock to willingly bear the sorrows, grief and tribulations of life in the dispersion with patience. These hardships may seem bitter, he writes, but they are nonetheless "signs of God's supreme love and not of hatred."¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 267-268. Addressing the connection between education and religious uprightness, Yerevantsi writes elsewhere that other nations did not deem it worthy to "consider [illiterate people] in the ranks of men. Consequently, if there happened to be arguments or discussions on matters of faith, religious precepts or other things that pertain to religion, all of them, even their peasant laborers, women and children, would instantly and freely reply by defending their religion as though they were accomplished vardapets of the Church aware of their laws, as we have certainly witnessed and know. As for our nation, we have witnessed the opposite of what we have said." Ibid., p. 266.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 282.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 282.

fact is that God "loves the Armenian nation in a special and unique manner among all the Christians and finds it particularly suitable and worthy of his kingdom."¹²⁰ On account of this, he "punishes and admonishes us [հրատէ, կշտամբէ] more and places us at the mercy of foreigners so that they may torture and beat us mercilessly and discipline us with various calamities [եւ պէս պէս փորձութեամբ գնեզ մարգիցեն] for us not to be educated in a disorderly way following our impudent manners [զի մի' ըստ տղայական քարուց մերոց ի յանկարգութիւն ինչ կրթիցիմբ]".¹²¹ In other words, for Yerevantsi homelessness and suffering in the dispersion are the only paths to following Christ, so long as they are suffered in the name of the faith. In this, the predicament of the Armenians is a continuation of the exile and dispersion of the Israelites. The only difference is that the Israelites, according to Yerevantsi, had broken their covenant with the Lord, following which God had abandoned them and had instead taken the "New Israel" into adoption, namely the Christians.¹²² And from the nations of the New Israel, he had marked the Armenians for distinction, which is why unlike the other nations who lived in comfort,¹²³ God subjected the Armenians to the temptations and tribulations of exile as he had once done with the Israelites.

Elaborating on the view that the Armenians had inherited the mantle of chosenness once bestowed upon the Jews, Yerevantsi refers to the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. His paradigmatic text is the Book of Jeremiah, where the prophet bewails the dispersion and separation of the Israelites from the bosom of their mother Jerusalem.¹²⁴ Yerevantsi's concerns are also those of Jeremiah's,

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 286.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 286.

¹²² Ibid., p. 283.

¹²³ "All these difficulties that you bear, the persecutions, the sorrows, poverty, your exile from your ancestral lands and your servitude to foreigners—all of these in their entirety are signs of the utmost love and compassion that God has towards us than towards any other nation, whom he keeps in comfort in this life. For he wills that we provisionally bear [all this] here so that he shall make us eternally joyful upon delivering us there, provided that we endure [these sufferings] in patience and contentment." Ibid., p. 286.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 291-293.

namely that diasporic existence might prove to be too difficult and tempting for the Armenians, that on account of the vast distances separating them from their own Jerusalem at Etchmiadzin they might forget their (religious) identity and traditions:

Because of your sins and as punishment to you, God removed and exiled you from your fatherland, from your native country [ի քնիկ ազգէ] and noble inheritance [սեպուհ ժառանգութեմէ]. And he separated you from the bosom and embrace of your mother—the holy church of Armenia—and he sent you into exile by scattering you among foreign nations and foreign tongues where you shall remain until he takes pity on you and once again visits upon you. For that reason, he commands you with compassion through this epistle that upon entering the various countries and various nations, and upon your seeing the diverse sects, faiths and religions of the many nations, you should take caution from them and should not follow or resemble them. Rather, you should keep your own faith saying in your mind and heart that our faith, confession and religion is that which we have received from the hands of our ancestor Saint Gregory the Illuminator.¹²⁵

In sum, despite its dark side, dispersion was a mark of providential distinction. It transformed the Armenians (like the Jews before them) into God's "chosen people." Like the Jews, but superseding and replacing them, the Armenians would be delivered to the Promised Land if they kept their covenant with the Lord, which could only occur if the nation in dispersion was unwavering in faith and commitment to its own Jerusalem, that is to say, Etchmiadzin.

At this juncture, Yerevantsi addresses the unique features of the Armenian nation. The immediate comparison he can make is with the European nations of the same period.

Among so many nations, the Armenian nation is unique, singular, notable, and famous. Dispersed and scattered to all the uttermost extremities of the world, it does not have a earthly kingdom or a special realm or assembly [կամ յատուկ գտեղի եւ գծողովարան], or an exclusive support or bond [եւ կամ գլխատուկ յեմարան եւ զկապ մի] that can enable our entire nation to ground itself on it, and al-

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 293-294.

ways, keeping that into consideration, to remain connected and dependent on it [առ որ քոյոր ազգս մեր յենուցու՝ եւ միշտ ընդ այն նկատելով՝ ի նա կայցէ կապեալ եւ զնմանէ կախեալ մնայցէ]. Other sister nations, having a corporeal head, rely upon it, and connected to it, always remain dependent on it and are recognized in name through it [նանաչին եւ անուանմն]. And wherever they move and however long they remain there, in the end they always have recourse to their particular head [ի յատուկ գլուխն], their support and their realm upon which they are dependent. And if they don't take recourse to it by themselves, the head forcibly draws them towards itself, as is evident.¹²⁶

Immediately after this normative inversion of the Armenian predicament, he writes:

The Armenian nation does not possess this corporeal head in order for it to be able to assemble our nation around itself and to preserve it in its name, as we have stated. On account of this, if they [the Armenians] happen to be in a comfortable and safe place, they remain there. And if they suffer in that place, they move to another one, as is certain. However, in the realm of spirituality [ըստ հոգեւորին], by the grace of God there remains for our nation, in the native and noble lands of the Armenians, a special place and support, and a special head and lever [?] [քոնեաղ^ո] on which our entire nation relies and where it is connected to itself, where everyone being dependent, can be recognized, renowned and distinguished from other nations.¹²⁷

What is remarkable about these passages is the distinction Yerevantsi introduces between "special head," on the one hand, and "earthly kingdom," "particular realm" and "special assembly," on the other. The "special head" in Yerevantsi's description really means the sacral center of Etchmiadzin that can act as both a compass of orientation and anchor and root for the fragments of the nation; it is the supreme "centering center," both temporally (in terms of the Calendar), spatially (in terms of its sacred lieu in the heart of the

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 319.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp.319-320.

homeland) and religiously/culturally (in terms of being the origin and dispenser of religious/cultural orthodoxy that helps define the Armenians as a bounded nation and, in doing so, segregates them from the "other," especially the Catholics and Muslims). This is the seal that makes the Armenians so exceptional; though they are a nation without a territorialized secular center, and though they are scattered and spatially fragmented, they nonetheless have a holy site in their homeland that "represents" them religiously and keeps them distinct from their neighbors. Yerevantsi was conscious of the fact that these traits set the Armenians apart from the modern norm of nationhood that was beginning to coalesce in eighteenth century Europe. That is why he characterized the latter by the triangulated hallmarks of "earthly kingdom," "particular realm" and "special assembly" or, to put it in other words, by a centralizing state, a clearly demarcated territory, and governmental or administrative institutions such as assemblies or parliaments (as was the case with France and especially Britain). Yerevantsi was also aware that the European norm had certain advantages absent in the Armenian case; after all, the "corporeal head forcibly draws them [those members of the nation that had strayed from the center, both geographically and in terms of "moral deviance"] towards itself."¹²⁸ Despite these advantages, however, he still regarded the Armenian exception as a mark of distinction bestowed by God. The dispersion, albeit violent and painful, had to be endured by the nation because it was the price for being "chosen"; it tested the nation's character (through hardship, punishment, and temptation) and prepared the way for the "Promised Land." Here is the crux of the matter for Yerevantsi: the Promised Land both in the sense of the "living land" (կենդանեաց աշխարհ) of Ararat (i.e., the Armenian homeland) and the kingdom of God, could only be vouchsafed though the Messiah. Providence is the historical actor in this scenario, not the "nation."¹²⁹ Herein lies

¹²⁸ Although I cannot produce textual proof for this, I think it is safe to assume that Yerevantsi acquired first hand experience of the advantages of the European model while serving as legate in Constantinople, where the representatives of the European states had legal and political rights over their subjects on Ottoman territory.

¹²⁹ Tölölyan's claim that references to Providence in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Armenian national discourse in India amounted to seeing God as a secular agent of

the difference between Yerevantsi's essentially millenarian or messianic discourse and, as we shall see below, that of his Enlightenment counterparts in Madras. We shall come back to this later, but suffice to say here that, despite Yerevantsi's strategy of "centering like a nation-state," there is no modern diasporic discourse of "return to the homeland" in his work, nor any hint of privileging the liberation of the nation on its territory. On the contrary, as his bellicose confrontation with the Madras activists demonstrates, Yerevantsi was opposed to schemes of "national liberation" inspired by Enlightenment ideals not only because they were impractical and perilous in his view, but also because they went against the prerogatives of the Holy See as the representative institution of the nation. This, in part, explains his staunch opposition to the liberation efforts of Joseph Emin, a Madras-raised Armenian who had traveled to England to learn the "art of warfare" and the fruits of European wisdom (i.e., the Enlightenment) and had then "returned" to the homeland to dispense his new ideas to his countrymen.¹³⁰ Thus in the absence of messianic intervention, the task of "unifying" and "bridling" the unruly nation in dispersion would fall on Etchmiazin and its Catholicos as the "spiritual head" of the nation.

To top things off, Yerevantsi then outlines what can only be referred to as the "divine right"¹³¹ of the Catholicosate as the sole spiritual head or representative of the nation. He ties his argument to the medieval notion of kings as elected representatives of God on earth. In his view, God initially appointed kings to maintain order and rank in society and to act as his divine representatives. Howe-

history is true for the Madras intellectuals, but certainly does not apply to Yerevantsi. For him God was anything but a secular agent. See Tölölyan, "Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture," *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy (eds.) (Ann Arbor, 1999), p. 90.

¹³⁰ Joseph Emin, *Life and Adventures of Emin Joseph Emin 1726–1809, Written by Himself*, 2d ed., ed. Amy Apcar (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1918), pp. 321–322. The first edition was published in London in 1792 as *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin, An Armenian, Written in English by Himself*. All references here are to the second edition.

¹³¹ The use of the term in this context is Tölölyan's. See his brief but cogent comments on Yerevantsi in "Textual Nation," p. 90. Yerevantsi, it should be noted, does not explicitly use this terminology, though his discussion makes it abundantly clear that this is what he means.

ver, since there was no order and God was not properly worshipped, God sent his only begotten one to act as his representative. Christ thus became king and lord, the bearer of both supernatural and natural authority. He then delegated his powers to the twelve disciples and ordered them to convert all the nations. "And among these twelve substitutes [for Christ], two were allotted to the country and nation of the Armenians, that is Thaddeus and Bartholomew."¹³² When they were unable to fully convert the nation, they asked God to bestow the future right of conversion and of divine representation onto Saint Gregory. "Therefore, in accordance to the pleas of our holy evangelists, Christ conferred [the right of divine representation] to Saint Gregory the Illuminator."¹³³ The Illuminator then founded the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin and emancipated the Armenians from the dominion of the "invisible pharaoh," that is from idolatry and Zoroastrianism. After his passing away, his authority was transmitted to the Catholicoi who succeeded him. Thus the institution and person of the Catholicos, as well as the site of the institution, acquired the divine right to represent the nation. The Catholicos became the sole intercessor of Christ with the Armenians, the link in a long chain of surrogates for Gregory and through him to the two evangelists and to Christ.

Gregory the Illuminator is ours; only he and no one else is the leader of your religious order [սիրայապետ?], whom you are fully obligated to follow, especially in matters of faith and tradition. Because he is the successor to Christ [սա է երկրորդն Քրիստոսի] and is his closest kin from our nation, and it is through him that our entire nation communicates with and recognizes Christ and partakes of his grace. And only his replacement [i.e., the Catholicos] is the commander and spiritual ruler at the head of the entire nation, and everyone is obligated to obey him in accordance to the arrangement of Christ, our God. Because only the successor [of Gregory] directly and completely [լրապէս] receives spiritual grace and all orders from Christ [զամենայն կարգ] and renders and distributes them by himself to those closest to him, to his successors [երկրորդացն], and through

¹³² *Partavčar*, p. 306. For a more thorough discussion of Thaddeus and Bartholomew's role in converting the Armenians, see chapter 2 of *Jampre*, pp. 9-17.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

their hands to all the flock until the last one.¹³⁴

To sum up, thus far I have been arguing that throughout his three principal texts (i.e., *Tōnac'oyc'*, *Jampré* and *Partavčār*), Yerevantsi pursues what I call the strategy of "centering *like* a nation-state." The purpose of this strategy, I have shown, is to offer a cure to the general crisis of dispersion afflicting the Armenians during the eighteenth century and particularly to two of its primary symptoms: the crisis of education and polycentricity. I have also attempted to demonstrate that this cure took the shape of a new discourse on the nation that represents the latter as *an imagined community dispersed in space but bounded by religion and centered on the institution of the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin*. To tease out this discourse from Yerevantsi's texts, I have been reading the latter, up to this point, against the backdrop of Yerevantsi's critique of the polycentric tendencies stemming from the rivalry of the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople and the competing Catholicosates (Sis, Aghtamar and Gantsasar), on the one hand, and from the Armenian Catholics (including the Mekhitarists), on the other. I would like to now interpolate another element into my reading of Yerevantsi, namely the work of the Madras intellectual-activists. Such a move is indispensable for a thicker interpretation of Yerevantsi's discourse, especially in *Partavčār*, since the latter was also written as an implicit or symptomatic response to and criticism of the Madras activists and their work.

Dissent and Punishment: Burning Books in Madras

Seven years before the printing of Yerevantsi's book, another work was published in the Armenian community of Madras. Like *Partavčār*, it also addressed the problematic of dispersion, polycentrism and their discontents. But its interpretation of this problematic and the solutions it prescribed were antithetical to those embraced

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 314. See also *Jampré*, chapter 8, pp. 51 ff. It is interesting to note that as Yerevantsi was battling the "heresies" of Rome, he was simultaneously borrowing one of its ideological stratagems, namely the religious and earthly power of the Pope as the sole intercessor between Christ and his believers.

by Yerevantsi. The book was *Nor tetrak or koč'i yordorak*¹³⁵ [New Book Called Exhortation] authored by Hagop Shahamirian, the son of the most prominent Armenian merchant in Madras (Shahamir Shahamirian) and an influential member of the Armenian diasporic merchant elite.

Yordorak began with a different diagnosis of the crisis plaguing Armenians in the eighteenth century. It traced the source of this crisis to the collapse of Armenian statehood in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. The latter had deprived the Armenians of their defining center and had turned them into "vagabonds and drifters in foreign lands, dispersed from their homeland like brushwood and reed in the wind, and scattered on the face of the world."¹³⁶ Stateless and dispersed, the Armenians, it argued, had lost their lands to alien nations who ruled over them and to whom they paid onerous taxes; their morals and virtues, under the weight of diasporic existence, were also corrupted and decayed. What was worse, they had fallen into a deep "slumber" marked by the loss of historical memory of their own past glory. *Yordorak* was thus "composed for the awakening of the Armenian youth from the weak and idle drowsiness of the sleep of slothfulness."¹³⁷ The book's narrative sections opens with the following diagnosis of the dual crises of education and historical memory:

As we have directed so many exhortations to our nation, we feel obliged to inform/explain to our compatriots about our illustrious royal power, which we have lost in its entirety and which remains al-

¹³⁵ *Nor tetrak or koč'i yordorak* (Madras, 1772/1773). For the controversy surrounding the authorship of this book, see footnote 156 below. For the secondary literature on *Yordorak* and other Madras publications, see, among others, Tadevos Avdalbekian's path-breaking essays published mostly in the 1920s and collected in his *Hayagitakan hetazōtow'iwnner* (Armenological Studies), (Yerevan, 1969); Leo, *Hayoc' Patmow'iwn*, vol. 3, book 2, (Yerevan, 1973); A. Hovannisian, *Joseph Emin*, 2nd edition, (Yerevan, 1989); and M. Telunts, *Hay azgayin-azatagrakan šaržowmā XVIII dari erkrord kēsīn ew irawak'atukakan miškō* (The Armenian National Liberation Movement during the Second Half of the XVIIIth Century and Legal-Political Thought) (Yerevan, 1995). The latter discusses the relationship between Joseph Emin's work and the activities of the Madras activists, a topic that deserves further treatment but lies outside the scope of the present essay. All subsequent references to *Yordorak* are to its Eastern Armenian translation by B. Khatchatrian (Yerevan, 1991).

¹³⁶ *Yordorak*, p. 133.

¹³⁷ This is *Yordorak's* subtitle.

most unknown to many. The reason for this is the following...with the disappearance of our power, all of our virtues also disappeared from us. Our schools-universities and educational-secondary schools were also plundered, and with the exception of the monasteries, which are not [open] to the common people, there was no place where perhaps education and knowledge could have been propagated, so that in such manner our nation could have once again flourished. Hence the reason as to why neither the works of the philosophers nor the history books of our ancestors or the ancients were preserved, by reading of which perhaps [our compatriots] could have become informed about the lives of those mighty fighters [զօրաւոր կարիւնների] and men, and by means of which they could have become informed [հասուն դառնալով] in their deeds and thus endeavored to emulate their ancestors. Therefore...we desire nothing else but to reclaim our rightful and noble inheritance, which we have lost because of our disorderliness, laziness [and] ignorance... through prudence and courage.¹³⁸

Yordorak then provided a history of the nation as a means of remedying historical memory and exhorting a unified armed struggle against Persian and Ottoman domination. The latter was to be carried out by training the Armenian youth in the "arts of warfare" and coordinating an uprising with the assistance of the remnants of Armenian nobility (or meliks) of Gharabagh. The model for this uprising, as Tölölyan and others have noted, was the Davit Beg rebellion of 1722, whose memory was fresh for the generation that grew up under British influence in India, but had frequent contact with the homeland.¹³⁹ Like the Davit Beg rebellion fifty years earlier, the armed struggle advocated (but not explicitly outlined) by the author of this pamphlet was to take place under the auspices of the Bakration dynasty of Georgia and possibly through Russian support.

What is more significant, *Yordorak* offered a novel explanation and cure for the nation's dispersion. We noted earlier that for Yerevantsi the final cause for the disappearance of the Armenian kingdoms, and the origin of dispersion and degradation, was God's wrath against the sins of the Armenians and simultaneously his

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

¹³⁹ Tölölyan, "Textual Nation," p. 91.

election of them as His new "chosen people." Similar Biblical accounts (but not necessarily with the same emphasis on the doctrine of "chosenness") are found in the works of Armenian historians, Catholicoi (such as Shnorhali) and scribes before the late eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, *Yordorak's* account is truly modern; its vocabulary is not drawn from the books of Exodus, Jeremiah, or the Gospels, as it is in Yerevantsi's discourse (although this too exists as a

¹⁴⁰ To fully appreciate the originality of *Yordorak's* discourse in this respect, consider for a moment the remarkable narrative found in Simeon Lehatsi's *Travel Journal*, composed in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Leaving his native Poland on a pilgrimage to the holy sites, Lehatsi arrived in Venice and then Rome in 1612 only to be dazzled by the extraordinary wealth and comfort he found there. Rome's "numerous riches, state treasures, palaces and multiple-story houses made of limestone" left a deep impression on the Armenian pilgrim. But what astonished him most was the fact that "their kingdom and pontificate have stood firm from the beginning until the present." This, Lehatsi attributed to Roman piety and purity of faith. The Romans, he wrote, had avoided the seven cardinal sins "on account of which God has filled them with spiritual and worldly virtues and has bestowed a plenitude of riches upon them—with gold and silver, houses and places, property and goods, with sons and daughters, so that, as they say, they can live to see the children of their children." (91) More importantly, they had preserved "good juridical distinctions" between religious and secular realms, subordinating secular affairs to the power of the Church hierarchy. Lehatsi then lamented over his countrymen's degraded status: "Alas...these good distinctions [բարի սահման] have been entirely removed and have disappeared from our nation. They have become confused and disordered [խառնափնթռթալ], leaving no distinctions between the great and the small, the priests and the laymen. For the laymen judge the clergy and the monks, and also the priests, the vartabets and the bishops. They not only pass sentence on them, but they also beat them with bastinado, fine them, exile them, revile them, pour scorn over them and refuse to accept their authority [գոչ տուեալ իշխանութիւնս առնուն ի նցանէ]... They have no fear of God and suffer no shame from men; rather they are lewd and audacious [յանդգմի], and this not just at the present moment, but also from the beginning and from the times of our kings. For what kinds of evil deeds did they bring to bear, while they were Christians, on our holy and God-pleasing Catholicoi Nerses, Sahak, and other saints, as well as on the grandchildren of our holy Illuminator? On account of all this, they received the appropriate punishment from the just Lord, because of which the principalities and kingdoms of the much-celebrated clans of the Arshakuni, Pakraduni and also the Pahlavuni were taken away. And we became the ridicule and scorn of our neighbors, and were delivered into the hands of iniquitous enemies...Dispersed and scattered, we fell from the esteem of all nations because of our sins." *Simēon dpri Lehac'woy owlegrow'iwn, taregrow'iwn ew yišatakarank'* (The Travel Journal, Annals and Colophons of the Scribe Simeon Lehatsi), edited by Nerses Aginian, (Vienna, 1936) pp. 109-110 and 82.

layer in the text) but principally from the works of the Enlightenment in Europe. Following Montesquieu, Voltaire and others (though without mentioning any of them), *Yordorak* proposed "causal explanations" for worldly events. The collapse of Armenian statehood, it argued, stemmed from the peculiar nature of the *naxarar* system that characterized Armenian society in the classical period. This social structure fostered despotism or autocratic rule and created centrifugal tendencies (a form of polycentrism *in situ*, on the pre-diasporic ground of the homeland) that jeopardized and enfeebled the nation, thus leaving it vulnerable to foreign conquest. Lack of education, internal enmity and disunity, the gradual decay of virtues, and slothfulness were other factors contributing to the collapse.¹⁴¹ "From all that has been said," Shahamirian wrote at the conclusion of his discussion, "it appears that we alone are to blame for our own misfortunes and not God."¹⁴² These explanations were later elaborated in a theoretical and historical introduction to a constitutional treatise entitled *Orogayt' p'arac*¹⁴³ [Snare of Glory] where "absolute monarchy" and what Montesquieu had earlier dubbed as the "spirit of despotic regimes" were seen as primary causes for the nation's lamentable state.

¹⁴¹ See *Ibid.*, chapter 7, pp. 129-151 for these arguments.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁴³ *Girk' anowaneal Orogayt' p'arac* (Book Entitled the Snare of Glory) (Madras, 1787/88, reissued in Tiflis, 1913). The authorship and date of publication of this work, like that of *Yordorak*, have been a source of controversy. *Orogayt'*'s title page attributes the work to Hagop Shahamirian and gives the date of publication as 1773. Before the publication of Tadevos Avdalbekian's brilliant studies in the 1920s, most scholars accepted this information at face value. Avtalbegian, however, noted that several passages in the text (including references to George Washington and the American War of Independence, as well as allusions to the death of the Persian ruler Kerim Khan, both of which occurred in the second half of the 1770s) would be anachronistic if the information on *Orogayt'*'s title page were to be taken for granted. Moreover, through a rigorous examination of Shahamir Shahamirian's correspondences with Etchmiadzin and King Heraclius of Georgia, Avdalbekian concluded that 1) the work in question must have been published between 1787 and 1788, and 2) it was authored not by Hagop Shahamirian (who had passed away in 1774) but by his father, Shahamir. A. Hovanissian's subsequent work on Joseph Emin reinforced Avdalbekian's claim concerning the book's publication date, but conclusively demonstrated that *Orogayt'*'s first, theoretical section was written as early as 1773, and 2) was most likely authored, in part, by Hagop. See footnote 154 below. All references below are to the Tiflis edition of *Orogayt'*.

But the most remarkable feature of *Yordorak* and especially of *Orogayt'* was their radical re-imagining of the nation's "center" or what Yerevantsi called the "special head." Breaking away from traditional modes of thinking, these works advocated that such a center could only be located on the native territory of the homeland, the myth-symbol complex represented by the land of Ararat. More importantly, they asserted that only a popularly elected senate or parliament (*town Hayoc*¹⁴⁴)—and by implication not the sacral institution of Etchmiadzin and its ruling Catholicos—could serve the role of "centering center" for the nation. The parliament, consisting of representatives elected on the basis of their merit and held accountable to an "unshakable and incorruptible constitution,"¹⁴⁵ would then represent the nation's collective or general will. A prime minister (*naxarar*) would also be elected every three years and would be held in check by the constitution. In this fashion, the entire nation would be sovereign over itself. Shahamirian explained this in *Orogayt'* after highlighting the dangers of absolute monarchy or despotism (whose arbitrary sovereignty, he argued, was against natural law) against which he defined his new republican concept of popular sovereignty: "Therefore, it would be very beneficial for us and our country, if the Armenian nation in its entirety, and freely with its natural nature [քնական քնութեամբ], ruled over itself. As there won't exist any distinctions between the great and small, hatred, jealousy and avarice will be removed and everyone will equally

¹⁴⁴ On the significance and radically new usage of this term, see Avdalbekian, "*Hay azatagrakan šaržman erkow hosank' XVIII dari verjerowm*" (Two Currents of the Armenian Liberation Movement Towards the End of the XVIIIth Century). *Hayagitakan hetazōtlow-t'winner*, pp. 220-222.

¹⁴⁵ *Yordorak* is very parsimonious in its discussion of the future shape of sovereignty. In one of its few references to this matter, it states: "It would be best if authority depended on select and great councilors and various kinds of houses of parliament by means of an unshakable and incorruptible constitution." (132) It then goes on to explain how such a system would be beneficial both for the king and the population, suggesting that the regime of preference in *Yordorak* is a constitutional monarchy envisaged on the British model. In contrast, the detailed discussion of sovereignty in *Orogayt'*'s first section (which is then codified in the constitutional statutes contained in the text's lengthy second part) indicates a preference for a mercantilist republic, albeit modified to accommodate the possibility of lifetime tenure as prime minister for one of the members of the Bakration dynasty in Georgia.

assume the glory of monarchy [շուք բազմադրութեան] at the time of their birth, and they shall all stand as kings over their own country for all the days of their lives.”¹⁴⁶ The upshot of this republican vision was that Etchmiadzin would be stripped of its “divine right” to represent the nation; indeed, the proposed constitution even restricted the power of “ecclesiastic” officials to interfere in the nation’s secular affairs.¹⁴⁷

In short, what Shahamirian and the other Madras activists were striving for, albeit by ever so dexterously dressing their new ideas in the old language of the gospels, was to turn Yerevantsi’ on his head. Rather than accept dispersion as a normative hallmark of Armenian nationhood (or as a mark of providential distinction), they called for its reversal. And instead of centering the dispersed nation around and through the religious institution of the Catholicosate, they appealed for the establishment, in the homeland, of an “earthly kingdom,” a “particular realm” and a “special assembly” (the triangulated hallmarks of European nationhood that Yerevantsi noted only to define his “singular” nation against them) that would “be able to assemble [the] nation around [themselves] and to preserve it in [their] name.” In other words, they wanted to transform the Armenians “from a series of religious communities” in dispersion to a “collectivity that could become a nation”¹⁴⁸ in the Enlightenment sense of the term. They aspired to do this by appropriating, and interpolating into their discourse, two novel elements introduced by the Enlightenment into pre-modern ways of imagining nationhood and identity: territoriality and popular sovereignty.

¹⁴⁶ *Orogayt’ p’arac’*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁷ Article 156 of the Constitution states: “Let it not happen that any members of the clergy dare to interfere in the deliberations or the work of sovereignty or in the affairs of secular members [of the nation], save for those ecclesiastics who are representatives in parliament.” Ibid., p. 263. The same stipulation is present in the legal statutes of the Armenian community in Madras contained in Shahamir Shahamirian’s *Girk’ or koč’i nšawak* (Book Called Guideline) (Madras, 1783). Though *Orogayt’*, like *Nšawak*, advocated the separation of church and state, it nonetheless reserved certain privileges for Etchmiadzin such as the constitutional caveat restricting the post of Prime Minister to a member of the Armenian Church and making membership into the national Church a prerequisite for the right of land ownership.

¹⁴⁸ Tölölyan, “Textual Nation,” p. 80.

Given these views, it should come as no surprise that the Madras treatises would not be well received by the new Catholicos. Initially though, it seems that Shahamir Shahamirian and Mikayel Khojajanian, the two leading merchants who had invested their money and hopes into printing *Yordorak*, were unaware of the backlash their work was to provoke. On the contrary, they had anticipated winning over Yerevantsi's support. To this end, a year after the book's publication, Khojajanian wrote to his friend the Catholicos, informing him that two copies of the new treatise were on their way to Etchmiadzin. He also asked the Catholicos to send one copy to Melik Hovsep in Gharabagh, with whom (as with others in Gharabagh) he and Shahamirian were already in contact.¹⁴⁹ Yerevantsi wrote back saying that he would dispatch a letter of gratitude to Shahamirian as soon as the books had arrived. At this point, the scribe, who kept a detailed summary of the correspondences, takes note of the Catholicos's growing apprehension concerning the new publication. The Catholicos, it seems, was taken aback by the fact that the Madras community had founded a press (incidentally in the same year as Yerevantsi's own press) and had dared to print books without Etchmiadzin's prior consent. In a letter dated May 1775, he therefore "ordered Shahamirian to inform him [i.e., the Catholicos] about the books he intended to print before their publication, lest they may be unskillful and unworthy in their composition and intention, and therefore give occasion for our enemies to smile."¹⁵⁰ The Catholicos was also aghast at the possibility of "new and deviant things [արտուղիքսն ինչ]" that might create additional "barriers for our nation, church, faith and religion."¹⁵¹

These suspicions were borne out when the two mentioned copies of *Yordorak* finally arrived in Etchmiadzin in 1776. Evidently, a letter by Khojajanian and Shahamirian accompanied the books counseling Yerevantsi to mediate a pact between King Heraclius of Georgia and the "princes of *Atowank*" (i.e., the meliks of Gharabagh). The two Madras merchants also advised the Catholicos to begin a correspondence with Catherine the Great of Russia (under

¹⁴⁹ *DHP*, vol. 8, pp. 413.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

whose protection they wanted to establish their new republic), going so far as to provide his Holiness with templates of letters.¹⁵² In addition, they recommended that the Holy See collect special taxes from the population to fund military training and to organize an armed struggle.¹⁵³ There is also conclusive evidence, based on extensive summaries provided by Yerevantsi's scribe, that Shahamirian had sent a manuscript copy of *Orogayt*'s first theoretical and historical section in response to the Catholicos's order to inspect copies of future works slated for publication.¹⁵⁴

Yerevantsi's reaction to the texts and letters could not have been more irate. As the head of the Church and a seasoned negotiator with the various powers that ruled over his flock, he was concerned with the inherent political dangers the work posed to Armen-

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 575. The practice of providing templates for letters or petitions was an integral part of the Madras Group's activities. See the sample templates in *Orogayt*'s constitutional section.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Yerevantsi's *Yiṣatakaran* gives a detailed description of the constitutional arrangements proposed by the Shahamirian circle, including the replacement of the Prime Minister every year, the creation of a standing army, the election of twenty-two members of Parliament and so on. (Ibid.) Since these details are not mentioned in *Yordorak*, it is most likely that the information was culled from a manuscript copy of *Orogayt*'s first section. If this were to be the case, as I think it is, then it would mean that *Orogayt*'s main outline and first theoretical part was already composed in 1773, thus corresponding to the date of composition given on the book's title page and colophon. For additional arguments to this end, see A. Hovannisian's masterful appendix in his *Joseph Emin*, a work that, in addition to Avdalkbekian's studies, remains the standard bearer in the historiography of the Madras Group. Hovannisian bolsters this thesis with a scrupulous examination of five manuscript copies of *Orogayt* found in the Matenadaran. As he points out, one of these manuscripts contains only the first "historico-theoretical" section of the work, minus the anachronistic paragraphs mentioned in footnote 143 above, indicating that 1) the core of the first section was composed in 1773 before the following section containing the statutes and articles of the future constitution was written, and 2) that it was sent to Etchmiadzin in response to Yerevantsi's new policy of press censorship. Interestingly, the scribe who provides the resume of the Madras Group's constitutional theories mentions that the Prime Minister would be elected every year, which corresponds to the manuscript copy but differs from the provision of three years mentioned in the final printed version of *Orogayt*. (See *Orogayt*, p. 155) For the *Yiṣatakaran*'s summary of *Yordorak*'s main arguments, see Ibid., p. 574. I thank Professor Marc Nishanian for providing me with the Eastern Armenian translation of Hovannisian's work.

ians living under Persian and Ottoman rule. Rebellion, in his view, would not usher in liberation but destruction both for the masses and for the Church. But what is more interesting from our perspective is his rejection of the book based on its "diabolic" [դիւաշունչ] and "impure" [պղծոյթ]¹⁵⁵ or sacrilegious ideas and their ramifications on the authority of the institution he led. After all, the role assigned to the Church in the book's constitutional section was at best minimal, and Yerevantsi was naturally unwilling to endorse a work with an Enlightenment conception of secular authority that would signal an end to Etchmiadzin's divine right of representing the nation.

The Catholicos vented his wrath directly on Movses Baghramian, who is listed on the title page of *Yordorak* as the work's "assistant," but whom Yerevantsi took to be the real author of the tract.¹⁵⁶ In a special edict, he excommunicated the Gharabagh native and forbade his compatriots from consorting with him. "Let his offspring be cursed," Yerevantsi wrote, "for he has disgraced us and our

¹⁵⁵ *DHP.*, vol. 3, p. 580.

¹⁵⁶ Yerevantsi's scribe provides the following biographical sketch of Baghramian: "For at this time, there was a deceitful person [in Madras] by the name of Movses, who they say had spent some time with the now-deceased Prelate of New Julfa, Vardapet Kevork, from whom he had received a modest education and some training in the crafts. This native of Gharabagh, though brainless, bereft of intellect, and without circumspection and imprudent, was treated with great respect in Madras as an illustrious scholar. The son of Shahamir Agha, Hagop, studied at his feet. And Shahamir Agha, having established a press, had placed his son at the helm and appointed this demoniac as the organizer and corrector/editor of the books published at the press." Referring to *Yordorak* and the proposals sent to Yerevantsi, the secretary writes: "As we stated earlier, that book was written by the raving [խիւղճոյ] Movses, but perhaps because he was fearful of being punished by his Holiness, he did not attribute the authorship of the book to himself but rather to Hagop, the son of Shahamir Agha. And we realized that these proposals and the authorship of the book came from that demoniac, and that he was the one who exhorted them [Shahamirian's group including the two Shahamirians and Khojajanian] to this end by praising the gallantry of the Meliks of Khamsa [i.e., of Gharabagh], on account that he himself is from Khamsa." (*DHP.*, vol. 3, p. 576) The vexed question of *Yordorak's* authorship revolves around this quotation. Before the publication of this volume of Yerevantsi's *Yiṣatakaran* (1908), scholars, following the information provided on *Yordorak's* title page and colophon, had unanimously attributed the work to Hagop Shahamirian. Subsequently, it became the ruling consensus to ascribe the work to Baghramian, mostly based on the statements made by the *Yiṣatakaran's* scribe and Yerevantsi's decision to excommunicate

nation before other nations, and has entirely dismantled the Armenian race [խայտառակ արար գնեց եւ զազգս մեր ի մէջ ազգաց, եւ փակեաց իսպառ զտունս Հայոց].¹⁵⁷ Interestingly though, he was unable (and unwilling) to publicly condemn Shahamirian (both father and son¹⁵⁸) or Khojajianian for their involvement in the project. They were, after all, wealthy merchants or *işxank'* (princes) whose monetary support was indispensable to the Holy See. He did, however, personally rebuke Khojajianian for coming under Baghramian's deceptive sway, and addressed the following severe reprimand to Shahamirian, which is intriguing for what it reveals about Etchmiadzin's outlook on the role of printing in Armenian society and on the relations of power and authority between the Church hierarchy in Etchmiadzin and the merchant elite in the diaspora:

The founder of a printing press must be either the head of a nation and the caretaker of the general public, who prints the works of the blessed ancestors for the illumination of the nation, as did Catholicos Hagop Jughayetsi; or he must be a wise or learned man, notable and famous for his knowledge, who publishes useful writings compiled by himself for the benefit of the populace. Or, there are even those who, though they may not be learned men or leaders of a people, having established printing presses, publish and sell works acceptable to the public with the permission of the superiors, for the purpose of earning a livelihood. Now, you are neither a ruler nor caretaker of a people, nor an acclaimed man of learning, nor are you a mere commoner in need of a livelihood. Rather, you are a prince [իշխան] from a noble family, most wealthy and prosperous, and a lea-

Baghramian for having authored the "diabolic" work. Some scholars, such as Leo and Avdalbekian, have also attributed the work to Baghramian on grounds that 1) *Yordorak's* discourse was deeply shaped by the ideas and activities of Joseph Emin, and that 2) Baghramian, who was Emin's collaborator, was the person most likely capable of transforming these ideas into a book. One of the few scholars to challenge this "orthodoxy" and to re-attribute the work to Hagop Shahamirian is A. Mnatsakanian. See his persuasive analysis in "Օ՞ր է «Nor tetrak or koči yordorak...» ցրկի հեղինակը" ("Who is the Author of the book 'New Book Called Exhortation...'?"), *Patma-banasirakan Handēs*, 2, 1962.

¹⁵⁷ *DHP*, vol. 3, p. 580.

¹⁵⁸ In any case, Hagop Shahamirian had passed away in 1774 at the age of 29 while on a commercial visit to Malacca, East Indies, where he was buried on his own estate. See Seth, *op.cit.*, pp. 251 and 592.

ding lay merchant occupied with worldly concerns [գլխաւոր վաճառական մի աշխարհական՝ պարսպեալ ի հոգս մարմնական]. So why was it necessary for you, or how was it befitting your honor, to have printing characters brought with so much labor from France to set up a press and to appoint the son of a prince [i.e., Hagop] as a printer, which is a profession for commoners and the meanest pauper? And to print such books which are destructive for the nation, compiled by a nonentity [i.e., Baghramian] who is an insignificant pedant!¹⁵⁹

In the same letter, the Catholicos ordered Shahamirian to close down his press, burn existing copies of the offensive book, and even threatened the wealthy merchant with public excommunication. Shahamirian's only path to redemption was to comply with the following five conditions:

First, you must burn that book in its entirety, and those that are dispersed here and there you shall also strive and succeed in burning them. Second, you must completely shut down that printing press. And while they print books in Constantinople, and at one point in Amsterdam and also at times in Smyrna, they do not do so without [our] permission, whereas you only recently founded your press and printed that harmful [կորսաւթիք] book without asking for our consent. Let it not happen that, on account of the extreme distance of that place, either you or your proselytes print such a thing again without first consulting with us! Therefore, the best thing for you is to abolish your press, since you do not even have skilled workers who, with prudent intentions, can choose what is useful from that which can bring harm. As for that pedant who passes himself for a skilled person, he does not know what he does! Thus, your publication, bereft of skill and prudence, cannot bring any good to the nation but only shame and harm. ...Third, do not write any more letters to the Meliks [of Gharabagh] with such pernicious words, since from the traffic of your letters rumors might arise, or one of your letters might fall into the hands of the Muslims [ի ձեռք տափկաց անկանի], which will be harmful to our nation. Fourth, I order you not to send any more useless proposals [to us] ... Fifth, that the

¹⁵⁹ DHP, p. 577.

deceitful [խաբեբայ] Movses should be either driven away from you or, considered as a pariah [ի տեղի ոչընչի համարելով], should not be brought into contact with you, since it is a great shame for you to follow the hair-brained ideas of such a fool and to place them in the nation's mouth [եւ անկանիլ ի քերան ազգի]. Finally, I am issuing an excommunication for that non-entity [չիք] Movses and ordering everyone there not to communicate with him either in words or through deeds lest they join his curse and condemnation [եւ կոտորեացի անիծից եւ դատապարտութեանց նորին]. And if you comply with these five commandments, which are entirely beneficial, you will be praised and shall be blessed by God and by us. But if you ignore them and fail to carry them out, I will be forced, through a general encyclical sent to all countries, to write about your illegal acts.¹⁶⁰

The threats seem to have worked. Immediately afterward, the activities of the Madras group came to a halt. The Shahamirian press did not publish another work during Yerevantsi's lifetime.¹⁶¹ Baghramian, who was excommunicated, was forced into exile, spending the next seven years roving between Persia, Yemen and Egypt, where he conducted commerce as an "incognito" agent for Shahamirian.¹⁶² More significantly, due to the risk of excommunication from Etchmiadzin, Shahamirian had to suppress the first part of *Orogayt'*

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 578-579.

¹⁶¹ To be sure, two other works were published at this time: *Patmow'iwn mnac'ordac' Hayoc' ew Vrac'* (Remnants of the History of the Armenians and Georgians), and *Patmow'iwn varowc' ew gorcoc' Natēr Šah tagaworin* (History of the Life and Work of Nader Shah, the King). The first was published in 1775, just before Yerevantsi imposed his press censorship, while the second appeared in 1780, the year of the Catholicos's death.

¹⁶² Baghramian's excommunication was lifted in 1780 by Yerevantsi's successor, Catholicos Garnetsi, in response to Shahamir Shahamirian's continued pleas. In a letter to Shahamirian, the new Catholicos informed him that the decision to release Baghramian from his anathema was taken by Yerevantsi before he had passed away. See *Diwan Hayoc' patmow'tean, Nor šark, Łowkas Karneci* (Archive of Armenian History, New Series, Ghugas Garnetsi), vol. 1, edited by Vartan Grigorian, Yerevan, 1984, p. 205. For Baghramian's peripatetic life as a fugitive merchant, see Joseph Emin, *Life and Adventures*, pp. 472-473. Baghramian, it should be noted, was Emin's relative and collaborator in the 1760s, when the two were active in the Caucasus. Emin then met up with him in Madras during his first visit there in 1772, where he also met, for the first time, Shahamir Shahamirian. (Incidentally, Emin's arrival in Madras coincided with the founding of Hagop Shahamirian's press and the publication of *Yordorak*.) Subsequently, on Emin's second visit to India eleven years

(already written as early as 1773), a manuscript copy of which he was compelled to send to Yerevantsi. It was only after Ghugas Garnetsi was elected in 1780 as the next Catholicos that the Madras elite resumed their publishing and revival activities. In 1783 they published Shahamir Shahamirian's *Girk' or koč'i Nšawak* (A Book Called Guideline), which outlined the "republican" statutes for the Armenian community of Madras and specifically demarcated a separate and subordinate role of authority for the Church. (Interestingly, *Nšawak* also contained a proposal to repatriate Armenians to Khizlar in southern Russia as a way-station for their eventual return to the homeland.¹⁶³) Four or five years later, when Etchmiadzin had loosened its grip on censorship in Madras, Shahamirian was finally able to print his constitutional treatise.

The above episode sheds important light on the intellectual fissures and cracks setting apart the responses of Etchmiadzin and Mad-

later, he stayed with Baghramian in Bombay, where the latter had temporarily settled after his excommunication was lifted, thus ending his years of truancy in exile. Concerning Baghramian's past, Emin provides the following cryptic account (circumventing the issue of Baghramian's excommunication) in his autobiography (written in the third person): "when [his relation Mussess, i.e., Baghramian] left Emin in Georgia, [he] went prudently to Madras; where, understanding tolerably well the Armenian grammar, he introduced himself to Mr. Chamier's [sic] favour, and was retained to teach his sons. In two or three years, Mr. Chamier gave Mussess a commission with goods to Suez, and thence to Egypt. On his coming back from that voyage with some gain, Mr. Chamier, finding him capable, entrusted him with greater merchandize, and a ship for Bushir in Persia; and also with valuable India goods and China wares to Shiraz...in order to establish a factory there, and to sell his merchandize. ...Mussess, wisely observing that the country [i.e., Persia] was going to ruin through destructive civil wars...went to Bombay...[where] he thought proper to stay...by the order of Mr. Chamier till such time as he should be called for." Ibid., p. 472. By the time Emin had come across his former collaborator in Bombay, Baghramian had apparently become rich while acting as a shipper and broker of Shahamirian's goods, thus earning a ticket into upper class Armenian society in India. Emin found him so "transformed, behaving imperiously and haughtily," that he only lodged with him for two weeks. So much had Baghramian's social status changed that Catholicos Garnetsi addressed him as "Baron Baghramian [sic]" and kept up a correspondence with the former apostate, going so far as to beg for his forgiveness involving a case where Etchmiadzin's legate to India had failed to pay him a special visit. See Garnetsi's letter dated 1791 in Aghanians, *DHP*, *Łowkas Katolikos 1780-1800*, volume 4, (Tiflis, 1899), pp. 559-562.

¹⁶³ Avdalbekian, "*Šahamir Šahamireann ow hndkahayoc' hamaynakan ink'navarowt'iwnə XVIII darowm*," pp. 268-269; and Tölölyan, "Textual Nation," p. 93.

ras to the eighteenth century crisis of dispersion and polycentricity. First, it illustrates that Etchmiadzin's reading of this crisis was framed in a biblical narrative that represented the Armenians as a geographically dispersed and extra-territorial community, religiously unified through its loyalty to the institution of the Catholicosate. Though, in this picture, dispersion and the absence of statehood are seen as sources of the nation's ills, they are tolerated and indeed justified as signs of religious distinction, or as proofs for the "chosen" status of Armenians. Emancipation or "liberation" are present in this reading, but they are couched in the rhetoric of millenarianism whereby only an external intervention from Providence (as in the figure of Moses or the Messiah) can reconstitute the lost glory and homeland of the past. Yerevantsi's discourse also suggests that legitimate authority for the nation flows from above; it is Christ who bestows upon Etchmiadzin and the Catholicos the divine right to represent and rule the Armenians. All of this stands in stark contrast to the Madras group's Enlightenment-inspired concept of the nation as a politicized and territorialized collectivity. In light of this (European) model of territorially embedded nationhood, the Madras intellectual-activists could only see in the dispersion state of their nation an aberrant stigma of decadence and decay, an anomaly to the ruling European paradigm. Dispersion and diaspora in their reading thus become a symptom of illness, despite the fact that for them it had meant prosperity unattainable in the homeland, which needed to be cured by a return to and restoration of the re-territorialized nation's grandeur. Moreover, relying on the Enlightenment's new discourse on the nation, the Madras group conceived of legitimate authority not by recourse to the language of divine rights (of Catholicos or kings) but through that of natural rights and popular sovereignty. For them, the nation contained its own source of legitimacy. In addition to highlighting these crucial distinctions, the clash between Yerevantsi and the Madras activists demonstrates that the line separating those who espoused Enlightenment ideals from their counterparts who represented institutionalized religion was not as blurry as some scholars have suggested.¹⁶⁴ On the contrary, it was fraught with tension and antagonism leading to censorship and book burning.

¹⁶⁴ This is unfortunately one of the leitmotifs in some of the essays gathered in *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian and

Coda, or the Secularization of Yerevantsi's discourse

I began this essay with a general discussion of the crisis of dispersion afflicting the Armenians during the eighteenth century, and outlined, in particular, three of its symptoms: the crisis of education and language, the crisis of historical memory and the crisis of the center. Under the cumulative effect of this general crisis, I suggested that the leading Armenian elites of the period perceived their people as a polycentric nation, scattered and fragmented geographically, linguistically, and most importantly in terms of religious and confessional loyalty. Of the three principal groups of elites to address this problem, Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi, leading the revival movement in Etchmiadzin, sought to center the nation on the sacred institution of the Catholicosate. In the process, Yerevantsi formulated a discourse on the nation that represented the Armenians as a "chosen people" who were territorially dispersed, but religiously unified in their devotion to the Holy See in their homeland.

The emergence of a new constellation of secular elite during the nineteenth century undermined and displaced Yerevantsi's views on the nation. The latter elaborated a secular discourse on nationality and nationalism that rejected dispersion as a justifiable hallmark of the nation and sought to invest the Armenians with the right to self-determination in their homeland. To be sure, while they secularized Yerevantsi's ideas, these elites retained many features of his discourse, such as the view that Armenians were a "chosen people" destined to fulfill a special mission in history, or that the Land of Ararat was specially marked as a sacred site for the nation.¹⁶⁵ But this sacredness was no longer that of religion but of the nation.

One of the most explicit forms of secularization involved not only Etchmiadzin's sacral place as the center of the nation, but also the very category of religion as a constitutive and founding element of the nation's identity. This transformation was already present, albeit in a marginal form, in the work of the Madras activists, but it

David N. Myers, (Atlanta, Georgia, 1999). See Ara Sanjian's review in *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 2001.

¹⁶⁵ On the notion of "chosen people" and its role in nationalist discourse, see the special issue of *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5, part 3, July 1999.

was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that it became an integral part of Armenian intellectuals' "articulation of the nation." The novelist and nationalist intellectual Raffi highlighted this in one of his essays on national belonging. Writing in the late 1870s, on the heels of renewed Apostolic-Catholic clashes in Constantinople, Raffi rebuked some of his countrymen for once again stoking the flames of inter-confessional dissent. In his view, the advocates of both religious factions were rekindling "an outdated view that had lost its significance for the Enlightened nations" of Europe, namely that "religion, which is to say the Church, ought to be recognized as the foundation of the nation, so that whoever leaves that church is severed from belonging to the whole nation."¹⁶⁶ In place of a church-centered view of the nation, Raffi appealed to a new discourse of nationhood which was so radical and novel that it had required the coining of new words in the Armenian language: *Azgowt'iwn* or nationality, and *Azgaynowt'iwn* or nationalism. "The idea of nationality (*Azgowt'iwn*)," he wrote,

is established not by religion but rather by [a nationality's] *racial characteristics*, among which language occupies the first place, which is and always remains the base for the preservation of the nation. ...Whether he is a Catholic, Protestant or an Apostolic, the Armenian always remains an Armenian on account of the fact that he or she shares the same racial characteristics, speaks with the same language, belongs to the same clan (*dohm*).¹⁶⁷

In this picture, confessional or religious preferences (including the choice of being an atheist, for Raffi) are seen as secondary identities belonging to the private sphere of the family and civil society. As such, for Raffi, they are subordinated to a more integrationist view of nationality as a trans-religious and trans-regional political community of common descent. Thus, notwithstanding Yerevantsi's earlier claims, "confessional differences" did not signify "national differences." This was because, for Raffi and his generation of secular elite, the real ties that transformed a people into a nationality were no longer religious but consisted of the post-Enlightenment notion of "racial characteristics" and the Ro-

¹⁶⁶ Raffi (Hagop Melik-Hagopian), "*Inčov enk mxi'arwown*" (What Are We Consoled With?), *Erkeri zołovacow* (Collected Works), vol. 9, (Yerevan, 1964), p. 499.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

mantic (Herderian) view of language as the principal vehicle for "expressing" a nation's "soul."¹⁶⁸ Relying on this novel conception of *Azgowt'iwn*/nationality, Raffi thus exhorted his countrymen to strive to unify the detached segments of their nation "not through religious ties but in the name of nationality." Only then, he argued, would the Armenians cease to be a series of religious communities and would begin making themselves recognized as a *nation*.¹⁶⁹ Seen in this light, what Yerevantsi had articulated in his *Partavčar* and other works could not have been a nation or nationality, but an ethno-religious community.

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, these ideas, along with the Madras activist's Enlightenment-inspired formulation of the nation as a territorialized and politicized community, paved way for the emergence of Armenian political parties. By that time, the Shahrāmīrians (both father and son) and their intellectual coterie (Baghramian, Emin and others) were no longer part of Armenian memory; Joseph Emin's work, for instance, was only translated into Armenian in 1958,¹⁷⁰ and of the other Madras publications, only *Orogayt'* was reissued and only in 1913, long after the rise of the political parties had altered the course of Armenian history. Despite their neglect, however, the Madras activists' pioneering ideas had indirectly come to define Armenian political and social life on the eve of the entrance of the political parties onto the stage of history. The latter displaced Yerevantsi views on Etchmiadzin's role as sacral center and representative institution of the nation, but not without first secularizing the notion of chosenness and the sacred nature of the motherland as the site of the nation, to which Yerevantsi had done most to contribute. They also politicized the Mekhitarists's concept of the nation as a culturally unified and historically rooted community. Lastly, the political parties and the new elite indirectly appropriated the Madras activists' discourse on the nation as a political community grounded on its center in the homeland, but sought to transform what was a minority and peripheral discourse into a political reality through galvanizing and mobilizing the masses in the name of nationalism.

SEBOUH ASLANIAN

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 503.

¹⁷⁰ *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin*, H. Kashmanian (trans.) (Beirut, 1958).

Ամփոփում

Սփիւռֆապատում եւ քազմակեդրոն ազգւ-
Սիմէոն Նրեւանցիի «Գիրք որ կոչի Պարտավնար»ի դերը
ԺԸ. Դարու ազգային վերածնունդին մէջ

Սեպուհ Ասլանեան

ԺԸ. դարը ճգնաժամային շրջան մըն էր երբ Հայ ժողովուրդի ընտրանին ու հասարակական գործիչները, առաջին անգամ ըլլալով լրջօրէն կը մտահոգուէին Հայ մշակոյթի անկումային ու բեկորային իրավիճակով:

Նոյն ժամանակաշրջանին, մշակութային վերածնունդի շարժում մը կը ստեղծուէր սփիւռքի եւ հայրենիքի մէջ, իրարմէ անկախաբար եւ գրեթէ համաժամանակեայ: Այս շարժումը ղեկավարուած էր ընտրանիի երեք տարբեր խմբակներէ. ա) էջմիածնի կաթողիկոսութեան ներկայացուցիչները հայրենիքի մէջ բ) Մխիթարեան միաբանութեան պատկանող ներհուն վանականները Վենետիկի մէջ գ) ինչպէս նաեւ սփիւռքի մէջ Հնդկաստանի վաճառական-գործիչները, որոնց կեդրոնատեղին էր Մատրասը:

Այս ընտրանիներու խմբակները, երբեմն իրար հակասող եւ տարբեր նպատակներ հետապնդելով հանդերձ հասարակաց մէկ տեսութիւն ունէին. երեքն ալ ազգի ճգնաժամը կը վերագրէին ժողովուրդի ցիրուցան ու աշխարհասփիւռ վիճակին:

Էջմիածինը կը փորձէր դիմագրաւել ու դարմանել այս ճգնաժամը, ջանալով համախմբել ազգը իր «աստուածային հեղինակութեան» ներքեւ, որպէս հոգեւոր հովիւ՝ աքսորուած եւ իշխանազուրկ հօտի մը: Այս միջոցին, էջմիածինը կը մշակէր ազգային գաղափարախօսութիւն մը, կեդրոնացած եկեղեցւոյ վրայ, որ քիչ թէ շատ ընդունած էր ժողովուրդին ցրուումը իբրեւ ազգի բնորոշիչ առանձնայատկութիւններէն մէկը: Մխիթարեանները իրենց հերթին, ազգին ցրուած մշակութային բեկորները հաւաքելու շարժում մը կը ծաւալէին, լեզուն մաքրազտելով, բառարաններ ու քերականութեան նուիրուած հատորներ յօրինելով: Բացի ասկէ, իրենց մշակութային աշխատանքը կը պսակէին հրատարակելով առաջին ազգային պատմութիւնը (Հ. Միքայէլ Չամչեանի Հայոց պատմութիւնը), որ կը փորձէր ներգրաւել պատմագրութեան ոլորտէն ներս այն ինչ որ ազգը կորսնցուցած էր աշխարհագրական ու քաղաքական ասպարէզին մէջ: Մատրասի մտակորական խաւը, միւս կողմէ, կը ջանար տեղաշարժել Հայ աւանդական ինքնանկարը՝ իբրեւ աշխարհագրականօրէն մասնատուած ու ցրուած էթնօ-կրօնական համայնք եւ ապա կը փորձէր զայն փոխարինել Լուսաւորական նոր յղացքով մը, որ կը ներկայացնէր ազգը իբրեւ քա-

ղաքական համայնք մը, խարսխուած անոր բնիկ հողին վրայ եւ ներկայացուած ու առաջնորդուած անոր ընտրեալ գերիշխան (sovereign) ղեկավարներով:

Սոյն յօդուածը կ'ուսումնասիրէ վերածնունդի այս եռակողմանի ընդմիջումներէն լոկ առաջինը, ու անուղղակիօրէն՝ կ'անդրադառնայ միւս երկուքին մասին: Ներկայ մենագրութիւնը կը հետազօտէ ԺԸ. դարու ամէնէն տաղանդաւոր ու հմուտ անձնաւորութիւններէն՝ Սիմէոն Երեւանցի Կաթողիկոսի բարենորոգչական գործունէութիւնը: Սիմէոն Երեւանցին, թէեւ անտեսուած է ԺԸ. դարու նուիրուած՝ ներկայի գիտահետազօտական ուսումնասիրութիւններու մէջ, այսուհանդերձ առանցքային դէմքերէն մէկն է իր ժամանակաշրջանի ճգնաժամը հասկնալու համար: Արդարեւ իր երկը «Գիրք որ կոչի Պարտավճար», այս ճգնաժամին ընծայուած խոկում մըն է եւ մասամբ պատասխան ու հերքում մէկ կողմէն Մխիթարեաններուն, իսկ միւս կողմէ՝ Մատրասի հայ գործիչներու առաջարկած դարմաններուն: Յօդուածը կը ջանայ Երեւանցիի վերոյիշեալ երկասիրութեան վերլուծական ընթերցում մը ներկայացնել, նախ զայն տեղադրելով ԺԸ. դարու ճգնաժամի ընդհանուր համագիրին մէջ, եւ ապա ուսումնասիրելով այս աշխատանքը՝ համեմատելով մասնաւորապէս Երեւանցիի «Տօնացոյց» եւ «Չամբու» գրութիւններուն հետ: