

ԱՍԱՏՈՒՐ ՍԱՐԵԱՆ

Բանասիրական գիտ. թեկնածու

ՅՈՎՀԱՆՆԷՍ ՏՐԱՊԵՉՈՆՅՈՒ ԹՈՒՂԹԸ ՍՐԲԱԼՈՅՍ ՄԻՒՈՒՆԻ ՀՐԱՇԲԻ ՄԱՍԻՆ

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Ընթերցողին ենք ներկայացնում Յովհաննէս Տրապիզոնցի վարդապետի մի «Թուղթը»՝ ուղղուած Յակոբ Շամախեցի կաթողիկոսին: Այն գրուել է Բենգալիայի Սէյդաբադ քաղաքում 1763-ին: Հեղինակն այստեղ պատմում է արկածներով լի մի նաւագնացութեան մասին ներկայացնելով իր ուղևորութեան Սուրաթ-բենգալիայ ճանապարհային հատուածի ուշագրաւ մանրամասները: Նամակը ուշ միջնադարեան հայկական ուղեգրապատումի մի հետաքրքիր նմուշ է, որը համասեռ գրուածքների մէջ առանձնանում է նախ եւ առաջ իր պատկերման նիւթով: Յովհաննէսը Մայր Աթոռ Ս. Էջմիածնի միաբան է իբրեւ նուիրակ ծառայութեան նշանակուած Հնդկաստանի հայաշատ բնակավայրերում: Ներկայ գտնուելով ենթադրաբար 1762 թուականի Միւռնօրհնութեան արարողութեանը, նա Յակոբ Շամախեցի կաթողիկոսից ստանում է Սրբալոյս Միւռնի մի մասը Հնդկաց երկիր տանելու համար: Թէպէտ նամակը գրուել է որպէս հաշուետւութիւն կամ զեկոյց հասցէագրուած կաթողիկոսին, արդիւնքում ստացուել է մի գրական ստեղծագործութիւն, որը, կարելի է ասել, ձեռք է բերել նաեւ որոշակի գեղարուեստական արժանիքներ: Սոյն բնագրի արեւելահայերէն փոխադրումը կատարել ենք Երևանի Մաշտոցի անուան մատենադարանի հ. 618 թուակիր ձեռագրից, որի գրիչը Եփրեմ աբեղան է: Հետաքրքրութիւն առաջացնող որոշ կտորներ, որ ներկայ ընդօրինակողը բաց է թողել, թարգմանել ենք վերցնելով «Բազմավէպի» երկու տարբեր հրատարակութիւններից՝ արուած վենետիկեան ձեռագրերից: Այդ հատուածները դրել ենք ուղիղ գրութեամբ:

ASATUR SARYAN

Ph. D.

THE “LETTER” OF HOVHANNES OF TREBIZOND REGARDING THE MIRACLE OF THE HOLY CHRISM¹

Here we present to the reader the English translation of a “Letter” by Priest Hovhannes of Trebizond, made by the no. 618 manuscript of Mesrop Mashtots Matendaran. In the letter written in Seydabad, Bengal in 1763, the Indian legate presents to Catholicos Hakob of Shamakhi the story of his adventurous voyage.

The few extracts that the copier of the manuscript has left out, we translated from the two “Bazmavep” editions that were published from manuscripts of the Library of Venice. We have put those passages in quotation marks in italics writing.

A letter of Vardapet Hovhannes of Trebizond, legate of the Indian sides, written to Catholicos Hakob of Shamakhi, and from whose handwriting I, Ephraim monk, have copied out. I offer worship to the holy heels of God’s Chosen and Lord Hakob, Reverend of all Armenians, with insatiable wishes and fiery love.

This is our story about the events which happened to us both in the sea and on the land. And now with much humility and with gracious words, I will start to tell briefly and one by one all the incidents that happened to us. Now, what many-faced sorrows and distresses and what mortal dangers and terrible plagues and unsuccessful trials there were, that came and accumulated on us from every side, and piled upon our heads because of our numerous crimes, and how at last we were delivered by the new wonder and the most careful of the benevolent God with charity. ...So in the Armenian year 1211(1762) on the 20th of January we left the city of Basra and with all preparations, we entered the ship of the Kurd named *saleh chalapi*² and with God’s success we reached the nearest city of India, Bandar Surat, which was on the above date and on the 12th of March and there we performed the Great Holyday of the Resurrection of

1* Ստացուել է՝ 9.01.2023, գրախօսուել է՝ 1.04.2023: էլ. հասցէ՝ asa-saryan@yandex.ru:
Խմբագիր՝ Գեորգ Սարեան:

2 The author writes some names in non-capital letters, thus emphasizing his attitude toward the persons and people mentioned. In the text, we give such examples without any changes marking these names in italics writing.

Easter and after 15 days from Holy Easter and until we reached the 24th of April, we performed and completed all the procedures of our consecration there. And then we set out from Surat on the same 24th of April and entered the ship of a certain fire-worshiper, whose vile name was called *mjri* and we wanted to go to Bengal, on the other side of the sea of the Indian world, a great port city called Calcutta, where there are many Armenians. And we traveled for 60 days through the infinite sea, "when we approached the city of Calcutta, however, the mouth of the river could not be seen, because the [river] was mixed with the sea due to heavy rains and foggy clouds"³ [and] because of the violent waves and whirlwinds, also from the heavy rains and the strong blowing of the winds and the collision of the clouds and flashes of lightning the ignorant and foolish boatmen, who were Muslims, were utterly lost and while rowing they went astray and could not find the direct way to the city of Calcutta, but also deviated the ship that they passed about 300 miles and "as if they wanted to go to the deep sea to save the ship from sinking because the sea water was not deeper there. And therefore the sailors wanted to move the ship to the open sea, so that the ship would not sink"⁴, but never knew where they were going or where they were.

And the ship, due to the blowing of strong winds and the fierce waves, hit the ground with its inner side and the wheel fell and sank and the ship sat on the sands and all the structures of the ship were broken and loosened and some of the boards fell out of their places and soon the ship was filled with water and the ship was level with the sea. But the uninhabited and deserted land was seen from far because the ship was far from the land as the distance from the Holy See to Yerevan. There were more than 300 people on board the ship, 13 of them were of the Armenian nation, both women and men, the others were Muslims and idolaters, especially Indians and Franks from the nation of Portugal. And while the ship was in such danger, all that was in the ship, whether food or other supplies and cargo, all the cargo was sunk by the heavy waves in the depths of the sea. Then we all began to cry, shout and scream and cry aloud to the kind God to take his anger from us. At the same time 2 women from our nation were drowned in the sea, "and some of the foreigners due to the strong waves, were drowned in the sea"⁵. Also at the same time our chest sank into the sea together with all our books and the Holy Chrism and many other things were in the chest, also the orders and all our supplies of the road sank into the depths of

3 "Bazmavep", 1883, October, November, December page 341–342.

4 Ibid, page 342.

5 "Bazmavep", 1857, February, page 43.

the sea. Oh my soul, seeing all this and especially Holy Chrism falling into the sea with our eyes, then our hope was completely extinguished and we said that we were sorry for our persons.

And the waves of the sea became stronger and stronger, but at the same terrible time, 10 sailors and an Armenian priest's son quickly got into a small boat and ran away to the shore and saved themselves from being drowned but forgot us soon and never wanted to save us from drowning or help us.

Also, the other people on board the ship, the Kurds and idol-worshippers both gathered in one place and untying all the logs and rods tied to the sails, tied with a thick and firm rope, and then the boatmen and sailors which were 10 persons, Muslims sat on the tied logs and the sea waves took them to the land and we the Christians also were eager to go with them and although we asked and begged them to take us with them, but those rascals didn't allow us to go with them, as they were many and we were few, what could we do. Besides that every day 6 or 5 or 4 persons together sitting on boards went to the land but we being miserable were left foodless and hungry for 17 days, 5 of whom were Armenians and the rest 6 were Muslims and the rest 4 were Franks from the nation of Portugal. And after 17 days on Sunday of Vardavars Barekendan at the 9th hour, because of the blowing of strong winds and from the crashing of the clouds and the flashing of lightning and the falling of heavy rains, the waves of the sea became very severe. At that time the ship started to destroy and sank and at the same time it immediately split into many parts and we were waiting with a heavy heart and crying with tears and standing on the dapus, the roof of the big ship cabin and then we remembered the Mother of Mercy the most blessed Holy Mother of God, crying out with a tearful sigh. We also hoped in our Lord Jesus Christ with warm faith and we relied on his most generous mercy. And at the same time the great roof of the dapus, on which we were standing, carefully and by the grace of our Lord Jesus, completely separated from its place and at midnight carried us to the land. And when, thanks to God, we were released from the sea and came to land, then, falling down on our faces, we worshiped and glorified the Most Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with much satisfaction.

We were 15, who were saved from the sea, but I remember 5 of them, who were Armenians, writing their names: first me unworthy, our lord Hovsep, 2 teenage virgin girls who were the daughters of late khoja Grigor Minasyan agha, a servant boy from Ghars and the others were Franks and Turks. But two days after our release,

on the Tuesday morning of the Vardavar lent, we suddenly found Holy Chrism with its complete bowl and externally tied with a net and sealed with mirth as it was before, we found it untouched. And that day at the same time that we lived the joy, cannot be told in writing, because there were about 100 books in the same chest, not counting all the other goods, nothing came out of the sea at all, but we only found the Holy Chrism which we took with much joy and pleasure and went but we did not know where we were going. And then we wondered here and there in the uninhabited jungles and shore for 40 days and were looking for people to ask the way to a residence but there was not any possibility and we couldn't find the way to the building, as the sea was in one side and on the other side, opposite the sea there was a forest with very thick trees and the marsh. The forest was also inhabited by beasts and there was not any way out. And on the other 2 sides, there were profound rivers. We walked on the seashore for 2 days, there was a small river which we passed and then met a profound river which entered the sea and there we stayed for 2 days and not being able to pass the river. And one night, in the evening, when 1 hour had passed after night, 2 furious lions attacked us and they took 4 persons with them, snatched and tore them, and we the remaining ones escaped crying and screaming passed the small river, which we had passed at the beginning. And holding each other's hands we ran away so that we didn't lose each other, because it was a very dark night. And when escaping from that place full of beasts, we had a rest. And after 15 days, of escaping from the danger of the beasts, thinking we were safe and one night, when we were awake, the same furious cruel lion attacked us again unexpectedly and snatched another person from us. And we again escaped frightened from there at midnight and we walked for 1 hour and then trembling on the seashore we sat until morning. And in the morning, in the same place, where we had found the Holy Chrism, we stopped and stayed for 15 days. Thanks to God the impure beast didn't come there, although we were trembling from fear. And there, close to the sea, there were 10 trees which were separate, which were one hour far from the jungles and because of our fear of the beasts, in the evenings we climbed the trees and stayed there during the whole night until the sunrise and then we descended from the trees. This place was far from the place inhabited by the beasts at one day's distance. And because when that furious beast approached us at night from the place inhabited by them in a furtive way, and by climbing the trees we became safe. And there God surprised us with 3 charities, first, we found the Holy Chrism there, second after changing different places and running from the beasts, we found

the last refuge, whereby climbing the trees, we stayed safe from breasts, and the third, after many mortal dangers, we found freedom thanks to our Jesus Christ by his compassion.

And during these 40 days, when we stayed in the jungles, our food was sometimes fruits from the thorns and grass and sometimes crabs and land and sea insects and also sometimes we found newly dead roes and putting them under the sun to dry, we ate them. And in this way we lived our lives with bitterness for 40 days because for 2 months we hadn't eaten bread and our heads were unshaved also, all our clothes were spoiled because of the heavy rains because in this country even in summer, there were heavy rains every day, day and night and we had that experience in such weather as our appearance was changed and we were far from human look and had become wild animals having reached our death.

And so, one day while we were sitting bitter and pitiable, I told our master Hovsep: " You see brother, where we have reached because of our sins while we were in the Holy See eating that blessed "jlpur"⁶ grumbling and gossiped that "jlpur" was smoky or the meat we ate was not fat, so this was the punishment that we were really worthy which we bore by God's just order and saying so cried bitter tears.

Thus, now when the 40 days ended, while we were in the jungles, it was the Armenian year of 1211(1762) on August 16, the Friday of the most blessed Maria's assumption weekly lent, the English major came from the town Paharganj with 200 soldiers and other people, who had come to the shore by the river with 20 ships also with all kind of preparations, guns and cannons with the purpose of collecting the articles or the cotton baggage dropped from our sunken ship.

At that time suddenly he came and found us and seeing us, he took pity on us and took us to his boat and placed us on his side. Then he fed us with bread and other food, also gave us clothes, kept us with him for 6 days, and then with care sent us to his apartment in the town called Paharganj where he had come from, which was a 2-day journey from the seashore to Paharganj. And there too, in the apartment of that blessed Englishman, we were kept with care for 8 days and there was no one from our nation.

But in the beginning, when that blessed Englishman found us at the seashore, on the same day through the couriers he sent letters to all the cities and informed our Armenian nation that we had been found. Immediately the younger brother of

6 A meal with onion and eggs.

Petros Agha, Barsegh Agha, who lived in Dhaka at that time which was a 4 days distance from Paharganj, sent 3 boats with his Armenian servant and other people, who came and brought us food and clothes and took us to Dhaka to our Christian nation. We were sick for 1 month and they brought a doctor, gave us medicines and cured us because we were weak with bitter pains.

And when it became known about our release everywhere our compatriots and other nations were immensely surprised, as they were sure that 2 months had passed from our ship's wreck, doubtlessly they considered us to be dead, and as many of us died from hunger and by the beasts. Because on the first day when the ship sank, those 10 sailors who went in the boat and the priest's son were saved but he never cared about our release, but had declared the news of our being drowned orally and in written form.

*“Also he had told the sad news to the brother of the two virgin daughters of the late khoja Minasyants Grigor Agha, who were saved with us by the merits of Christ and also to the other relatives”*⁷, for which they did not think we were alive because 2 months had passed. But when they heard about our release and especially about the foundation of the Holy Chrism by God's wonder our compatriots from India lived great joy and happiness. And also a true pride and wonder in our Holy Belief in the Armenian Sacred Church. And really, our Master showed his great mercy to our nation, because in these bitter and declining times, the sweetest merciful God showed a new saving wonder to our Armenian nation about the finding of the Holy Chrism.

But let me also express what is in my heart about the indescribable joy and happiness of my soul, because this Divine Holy Chrism, which you delivered to this Indian land by handing it to me, the unworthy, was the fruit of the Holy Light Chrism blessing of the previous and inaugural bestowal of your great and holy lordship, which at the hour of blessing and performing the order of the Holy Chrism, I, the unworthy, also appearing at the same hour and witnessed in a great crowd in the desired Holy See. For which thousand thanks and glory to the benevolent God, thanks to whom we were saved from the sea and the beast's fangs in such a wonderful miracle of the Holy Chrism.

Because of the Holy Chrism, which was found on the seashore, the Turks and the Franks who were with us saw it too and testified it. But we don't need their testimony.

7 “Bazmavep”, 1857, February, page 45.

And when we were saved from the sea, we were 15, and 5 of us were Armenians, as I mentioned their names above, we 5 Armenians lived safe and sound both from the sea and the beasts, but from the 10 persons, the beast took 3 Turks away, and also took 2 Franks from us and one frank died in the jungles and finally, out of 15 people, 9 people were released, both us and the remaining 4 foreigners, from which 3 were Turks and one was Frank.

And finally, having truthfully written all these events and the history before the Almighty God, I informed my lord Bishop about all our events and I omitted many things for the sake of length, so I will not cause boredom to my Holy Master or other readers and listeners, because some of the pious princes of the place asked us to write down all our incidents and give them as a new story and news, and we did not do it, but now the obligation made us notify all the history to my Glorious Master.

It was written by me in the city called Saidabad in Bengal province of India in the year 1212 (1763) and on January the 15th, on the Wednesday of Saint Sargis lent.

KEY WORDS:

Holy Chrism, letter, epistle, Vardapet, Hovhannes of Trebizond, Holy Trinity church, Saidabad, Bengal, India, Armenian Church.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Представляем вниманию читателя «Письмо» преподобного Ованеса Трапезундского, адресованное Католикусу Акопу Шамахеци. Оно было написано в Сейдабаде, Бенгалия, в 1763 году. Здесь автор рассказывает о богатом происшествии путешествии, приводя увлекательные подробности об участке дороги Сура-Трапезундская Бенгалия. Письмо представляет собой интересный образец позднесредневековых армянских путевых заметок, выделяющихся среди подобных сочинений прежде всего описательным материалом. Ованес был членом Конгрегации Первопрестольного Св. Эчмиадзина, нунцией в Индии. Присутствуя на церемонии мироосвящения, которая состоялась в 1762 году, Акоп получил от католикоса часть св. Мира для дальнейшей перевозки в Индию. Хотя Послание было написано как отчет или доклад на имя Католикоса, в результате

получилось литературное произведение, которое, можно сказать, приобрело и определенные художественные достоинства. Мы сделали перевод оригинала на восточноармянский язык опираясь на рукопись Матенадарана им. Маштоца № 618 из рукописи, написанной Ефремом Абегой. Некоторые интересные фрагменты, опущенные настоящим писцем, мы перевели из двух разных изданий «Базмавепа», опубликованных на основе венецианских рукописей.