

ՀՈՐԵԼՅԱՆՆԵՐ JUBILEE



VAHAN ARAKEL BAYBURDYAN – 90

On September 11, 2023 Professor, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Iran Vahan Bayburdian celebrated his 90th anniversary. Throughout his entire life V. Bayburdian has been a scientist, diplomat and a mentor for specialists in the Iranian and International studies.

His parents, craftsman Arakel Bayburdian and housewife Togoohi Bayburdian came from Erzurum, Western Armenia who after the Treaty of Adrianople, in 1829 migrated and settled in the city of Akhaltsikhe in Georgia, where Vahan Bayburdian was born and got his primary education at the local school. However, in 1949 his parents decided to move to Armenia and settle there for good.

In 1951 with great academic performance he graduated from School named after 26 Commissars in Yerevan, entering the Faculty of Chemistry of Yerevan Polytechnical Institute in the same year. However, a different fate awaited him. After studying for less than a year at the Polytechnical Institute he dropped out and the next year entered the Faculty of Philology, majoring in Oriental (Persian) Studies. While studying at YSU Vahan Bayburdian received a scholarship named after A. Shirvanzade. Graduating from University in 1957, he worked as a translator up until 1959. During this period he got acquainted with specialists in Oriental Studies, who, appreciating his command of language and knowledge of history, invited him to work as a junior researcher at the Iranian section of the Department of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. In 1961 the promising young man started his post-graduate studies, continuing his education at Moscow Institute of Asian Peoples at the National Academy of USSR, at present well known

as the Institute of Oriental Sciences. In 1961 V. Bayburdian defended his PhD thesis on "The Armenian Diaspora's Settlement in New Julfa in the XVII Century" (The role of New Julfa in the political-economic relations between Iran and European countries) and was awarded the scientific degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences. The work was so valuable that in 1961 it was translated into Russian and published as a monograph. The given research topic became V. Bayburdian's main scientific interest, which he did not give up throughout his entire scientific trajectory, dwelling on it in various articles and monographs published also in foreign languages.

After the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences was conferred on him, Bayburdian returned to Armenia and from 1968 up until 1980 started working at the Department of Oriental Studies (transformed into the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1970) of the National Academy of Sciences. He started his career there first as a junior researcher, later occupying the positions of Scientific-secretary, senior researcher, Head of Source Problem Group.

As Bayburdian has delved into issues on the Iranian Diaspora, the National Academy of Sciences trusted him with the introduction of the section on the Armenian Diaspora of Iran in the "History of Armenia" published in many volumes in 1972. Later, in 2014 he was entrusted to write the same section of the academic publication of the "History of Armenia".

In the 1990s along with his diplomatic mission V. Bayburdian also spared time for scientific activity. In 1996 his monograph entitled "The World Trade and Iranian-Armenians in the XVII Century" was published in Tehran. Renowned historians R. Hovhannisian from the USA and T. Torosian from Tehran were the reviewers of the work. In the monograph V. Bayburdian succeeded to demonstrate compellingly and factually that in the late Middle Ages Armenians played an indispensable role in bridging the Eastern and Western civilizations. The main thesis of the work was that due to the whims of the historical fate, the Iranian-Armenians lived in a foreign country, they had an important influence on the economic and political life of their homeland. Moreover, in the XVII century the Iranian-Armenian Diaspora became one of the most outstanding centers of the Armenian intellectual and economic life.

Thence, the already acclaimed scientist's scope of interests was expanded, and included also the History of New Ages and the Modern period. His main focus being the Iranian-Turkish relations at the beginning of the XX century, the researcher

shed light on the internal restraining mechanisms between the two crucial countries of the Middle East. In 1974 his voluminous work entitled "Turkish-Iranian Relations in 1900–1914" was published. In 1975, it was presented and defended as a doctoral thesis and recommended for a translation into Persian as it sparked great interest among specialists. The translation was accomplished in 1989.

In 1991 at the initial stage of Armenia's independence, a need for establishing diplomatic ties with the closest neighbors of the country occurred. The Armenian government, finding its bearings right away, invited the best specialists like Vahan Bayburdian for a diplomatic mission. On February 9, 1992 the document on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Armenia was signed and in a month an Embassy was opened in Tehran. However, it functioned only at the level of temporary plenipotentiary in the person of V. Bayburdian. Undoubtedly, this was a hard time for the scientist and diplomat, the country was at war, as the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem imposed a blockade on Armenia, trying their best to involve Iran too in the anti-Armenian activities. During that period many provocative acts were performed, but thanks to the Iranian and Armenian political figures all the misunderstanding was cleared. Moreover, on November 9, 1994, the status of temporary plenipotentiary was elevated to the status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary which was occupied by V. Bayburdian.

A new path of life started which continued up until 1998. During the years of Bayburdian's ambassadorship in Iran many problems were resolved, among which a number of fundraising events for the Republic of Armenia were held. In these years on January 9, 1996 thanks to titanic work the main bridge between Iran and Armenia was opened, the significance of which cannot be overestimated. In 1998 returning to Armenia from his diplomatic mission, Bayburdian worked as an advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia up until 2003.

Being re-engaged in scientific-pedagogical activity, V. Bayburdian was fully dedicated to the instruction of the new generation of professionals and publication of monographs. In 1999 his monograph entitled "Iran Today" came out. The work, in its essence, was drastically different from his previous monographs. The study included a comprehensive introduction of Iran in its modern times and was a crucial clue for specialists in the International Studies for understanding Iran and its life. In the book a special emphasis was laid on the history of the Armenian Diaspora in Iran and the elucidation of the community issues. In 2005 a book on the History of Iran was published which was really important for students as it enabled them to

read about the historical, political, economic developments of the neighboring country, starting from its ancient times up until the modern period. In 2011 V. Bayburdian published another monograph entitled "The History of the Ottoman Empire", where he introduced the invasion of Turkish-speaking tribes into Asia Minor, the formation of the Turkish-Ottoman state and the eventual downfall of the Empire.

V. Bayburdian has also focused his attention on the Kurdish issue. Still in 1989 he published the monographs "The Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire at the Beginning of the XIX and XX Centuries", and in 2008 – "Kurds, the Armenian Question and Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Light of History". In the monographs the author has dwelt on the disputed issues between Kurds and Armenians also discussing the political and economic problems that Kurds faced first in the Ottoman Empire, then in the Turkish republic. Bayburdian has written many valuable articles, covering the aforementioned topic.

Professor's work has also been relevant in pedagogical and scientific-managerial fields. For many years he has been Scientific Secretary at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Head of Source Problem Group, being in charge of the Iranian department for more than 20 years. Bayburdian has been Head of Chair of World History, Vice Rector for Academic Programs, Rector ad interim at Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan and Head of the Chair of International Relations and Diplomacy at YSU. In those years thanks to his efforts, the directions in the profession of international relations and diplomacy were outlined at the Department of International Relations at Yerevan State University. It was then that the main course programs including modern subjects were compiled, making an attempt to address the needs of future diplomats.

Under his supervision more than 50 researchers defending their PhD theses, work in the fields of history, Iranian and International Studies and in their turn instruct new specialists. He has co-authored a number of works, edited and reviewed various monographs in the field of Armenology, Oriental and International Studies.

For many years V. Bayburdian has been the member of the editorial board of the series of books "Near Eastern and Middle Eastern Countries and Peoples" published by the Institute of Oriental Studies at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia and presently he continues this important mission in the

editorial board of the four-volume series "The History of Neighboring Countries of Armenia".

For his inestimable scientific-pedagogical contribution V. Bayburdian received "Fridjof Nansen" medal (in 2015), YSU Gold Medal, special Diplomas awarded by the Armenian World Congress and Ministry of Diaspora of RA, "Dawn of Revolution" Gold Medal from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Medal "For Outstanding Achievements in the Sphere of Diplomacy" from the Foreign Ministry of the RA, "The Armenian State Pedagogical University" Medal.

Throughout all his life V. Bayburdian has tried his best to serve his country's interests, both in the sphere of education, instructing new knowledgeable specialists, and in science, developing Armenology and Oriental Studies. Bayburdian has used his vast field of knowledge in the sphere of diplomacy. During his ambassadorship in Iran, he spared no effort to deepen Armenian-Iranian relations.

Vahan Arakel Bayburdian has dedicated 70 years of his life to the development of science in Armenia, to the instruction of new specialists along with this he has played a crucial role in strengthening the ties between Armenians and Iranians.

Professor, scientist, diplomat Vahan Bayburdian apart from his professional success has a wonderful family, thus presenting the embodiment of a true Armenian. His friends and family love him, he enjoys his colleagues' great respect and his students' appreciation.

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