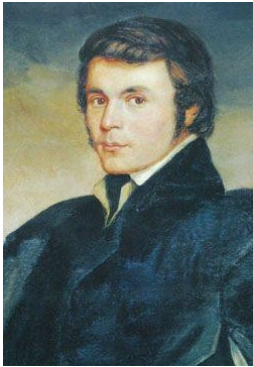


## GOLDEN PAGES

### KHACHATUR ABOVIAN<sup>1</sup>



Khachatur (or Abovian; Armenian: Խաչատուր Աբովյան; October 15 [O.S. October 3] 1809 – April 14 [O.S. April 2] 1848 (disappeared)) was an Armenian writer and national public figure of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century who mysteriously vanished in 1848 and was eventually presumed dead. He was an educator, poet and advocate of modernization. Reputed as the father of modern Armenian literature, he is best remembered for his novel *Wounds of Armenia*. Written in 1841 and published posthumously in 1858, it was the first novel published in the modern Armenian language, using Eastern Armenian based on the Yerevan dialect instead of Classical Armenian.

He was far ahead of his time, and virtually none of his works were published during his lifetime. Only after the establishment of the Armenian SSR was it accorded recognition and stature. He is regarded as one of the foremost figures not just in Armenian literature but in Armenian history at large. 's influence on Western Armenian literature was not as strong as it was on Eastern Armenian, particularly in its formative years.

He was born in 1809 in the village of Kanaker, then part of the Qajar Persian Empire and now a district of Yerevan, Armenia. 's family were descendants of the Beglaryan Melik family in Gulistan, one of five Armenian families who ruled around the current-day region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The family held the position of *tanuter* (a hereditary lordship) in Kanaker; 's uncle was the last tanuter of Kanaker. His aunt was the wife of Sahak Aghamalian, the last Melik of Yerevan at the time of the Russian annexation in 1828. His social origins and descent imbued him at an early age with a sense of responsibility to his people. He was born six years after his parents, Avetik and Takuhi, married. He had a brother, Garabed, who died at the age of three.

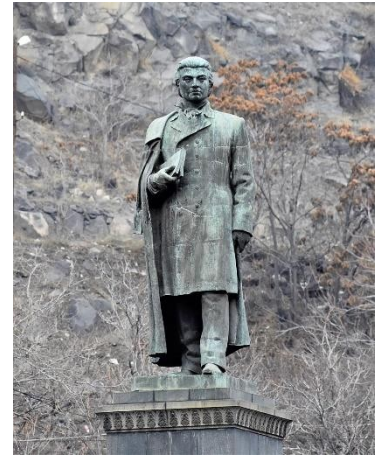
At age 10, he was taken by his father to Echmiadzin to study for the priesthood. He dropped out after five years and moved to Tiflis in 1822 to study Armenian studies and languages at the Nersisyan School under the guidance of Harutiun Alamdarian. He graduated in 1826 and began preparing to move to Venice to further his education. However, the outbreak of the Russo-Persian War (1826–28) curtailed his plans. For the following three years, he taught briefly at Sanahin and then worked

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<sup>1</sup> from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khachatur\\_Abovian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khachatur_Abovian)

for Catholicos Yeprem of Armenia as his clerk and translator. While working for the Catholicos, the twenty-year-old met many notable foreigners, including the diplomat and playwright Alexandr Griboyedov. Griboyedov's weekly Tifliskiye Vedemosti became the first paper to publish an article.

The turning point in 's life was the arrival of Friedrich Parrot in Armenia in September 1829, a professor of physics from the University of Dorpat in Livonia (in present-day Tartu, Estonia). Parrot travelled to Armenia to climb Mount Ararat to conduct geological studies and required a local guide and a translator for the expedition. The Catholicos was assigned to these tasks. With 's assistance, Parrot became the first explorer in modern times to reach the summit of Mount Ararat. The project received full approval from emperor Nicholas I, who provided the expedition with a military escort.



Abovian and Parrot crossed the Arax River into the district of Surmali and headed to the Armenian village of Akhuri, situated on the northern slope of Ararat, 4,000 feet (1,200 m) above sea level. Following the advice of Harutiun Alamdarian of Tiflis, they set up base camp at the Monastery of St. Hakob some 2,400 feet (730 m) higher, at an elevation of 6,375 feet (1,943 m). was one of the last travellers to visit Akhuri and the monastery before a disastrous earthquake completely buried both in May 1840. Their first attempt to climb the mountain, using the northeast slope, failed as a result of a lack of warm clothing.

Six days later, on the advice of Stepan Khojants, the village chief of Akhuri, the ascent was attempted from the northwest side. After reaching an elevation of 16,028 feet (4,885 m), they turned back because they did not reach the summit before sundown. They reached the summit on their third attempt at 3:15 p.m. on 9 October 1829. dug a hole in the ice and erected a wooden cross facing north. He picked up a chunk of ice from the summit and carried it down with him in a bottle, considering the water holy. On 8 November, Parrot and Abovian climbed up Lesser Ararat. Years later, in 1845, the German mineralogist Otto Wilhelm Hermann von Abich climbed Ararat with . 's third and last ascent of Ararat was with the Englishman Henry Danby Seymour in 1846.

On 14 April 1848, he left his home for an early morning walk and was never seen again; his disappearance remains unresolved. His wife, Emilia, did not report him missing for a month. Their children, Vartan (1840–1896) and Zarmandukht (later known

as Adelaide; 1843–1909), were ages eight and five, respectively, at the time of the disappearance.

Numerous theories have been proposed attempting to explain his disappearance: that he committed suicide, was murdered by his Persian or Turkish enemies, or was arrested and exiled to Siberia by the Special Corps of Gendarmes, among others. Given his love for his children and their young age, it is generally disregarded that he committed suicide. Writer Axel Bakunts put forward the theory that was in Western Europe engulfed in the Revolutions of 1848.

From the day of its foundation, the Armenian State Pedagogical University bears the name of the great enlightener Khachatur Abovian.

