



GLADZOR
UNIVERSITY

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GLADZOR UNIVERSITY

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The brochure describes the activities of one of the major medieval Armenian educational centers, the University of Gladzor, its impact on the formation and development of Armenian scientific and educational thought. The following piece contains a discussion on issues related to the establishment and location of the university, as well as information on outstanding individuals who taught and studied here. Designed for a various circles of bookworm society.

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St. Hakob Church

INTRODUCTION

"Gladzor University" Historical-Cultural Museum-Reservation is situated in Vernashen village of Vayots Dzor province. The exhibition of the museum-reservation is organized in St. Hakob church located in the eastern part of the village, which is a 19th century building and was reopened after the reconstruction in 1984, within the framework of Gladzor university's 700 anniversary.

There are three cross-stones around the church. The 14-15th centuries cross-stones situated west to the church, the right side of which is fractured. The second cross-stone is leant on the western wall (1544) which has been partly saved, and the third one (17th century) is encased to the southern wall and is shattered. In the territory of the church is located Arghut's gravestone as well, which was constructed by sculptor Davit in 14-15th centuries. "Gladzor university" historical-cultural museum-reservation is dedicated to the development of Armenian scientific-educational thought and particularly to the history of Gladzor university.



0. Եզրագծային եւ լուսանկարներով համառոտ ներկայացված է միջին դարերի Հայաստանի պատմությունը։

"Gladzor University" has been one of the most noteworthy educational and scientific centers of medieval Armenia, which with its high educational level and significant role in the public life greatly contributed to the development of Armenian scientific-educational thought and culture, providing many remarkable literary men, historiographers, philosophers, teachers, miniaturists, secular and religious figures with higher education. For its prolific scientific-educational activity it was called "Second Atenk", "capital of honesty", "great seminary", "famous sacrament" and so on. Functioning during the hard and difficult historical period of the Armenian nation, teachers and pupils of the university not only saved many valuable works of Armenian and foreign bibliography from extermination but also enriched that heritage immensely due to their prolific activity.



Title-page, Nerses Mshetsi and Yesayi Nchetsi, Book of the Gospels, Gladzor, 1323, artist Toros Taronatsi (Matenadaran, typescript 6289)

Literary monuments written down by them are significant sources for us to study the university's history and activity. Manuscripts formed by the writers and painters of Gladzor are mainly preserved in Matenadaran (scientific research institute of ancient manuscripts named after MesropMashtots), while particular works are preserved in Venice's and Wien's Mekhitarists repositories, Jerusalem's St. Hakobyants monastery, London's British museum, in the USA (the book illustrated by TorosTaronatsi is preserved as a national value) and in some other places.

Chancel of St. Hakob Church





FOUNDATION, SITE LOCATION

Les opinions concernant la date et le lieu exacts de la fondation et de l'emplacement de l'Université de Gladzor restent discutables depuis longtemps pour l'Arménologie.

Selon l'analyse des sources historiques nous parvenue et les résultats des recherches des spécialistes intéressés à ce sujet, on peut dire que „l'Université de Gladzor” a été fondée en 1282. L'Université a été fondée comme une grande école et puis, en 1291, elle a été appelée université qui a fonctionné environ 6 décennies, jusqu'à la mort du patriarche Yessaï Ntchétsi, en 1338.

La question de l'emplacement de l'Université de Gladzor est aussi discutable depuis longtemps. L'église Saint-Jacob, où aujourd'hui est situé le musée-réserve historico-culturel de „l'Université de Gladzor” (à l'exposition on peut voir plus de 300 copies des travaux, y compris 27 Evangiles, 78 œuvres, 15 Bibles, 23 tableaux, l'auteur des 22 tableaux est Toros Tarontsi, l'auteur des 16 tableaux est Momik, quatre de Poghos Kilikétsi (de la Cilice) et encore quatre de Manvel), ainsi que le village de Vernachène (le village a été fondé en 1829) ne correspondent pas à l'ancien emplacement de l'Université.

D'après une des hypothèses, le monastère de Aghberts ou bien l'Université de Gladzor se trouvait tout près du monastère de Hermon, sur l'élévation nord-ouest. Le monastère de Hermon a également servi pour les objectifs d'enseignement et scientifiques de l'Université. Selon une hypothèse, le monastère d'Aghberts-Gladzor, c'est l'église détruite connue sous le nom „Gyolum-bulagh”, située à 4 km du village de Yegheguis ou bien elle était située à 1 km du village de Vernachène, à l'est de Boloraberd ou de Prochaberd. On discute aussi une hypothèse, d'après laquelle l'Université était située à proximité de Tanahat, Hermon et Boloraberd.



The detailed research of the manuscripts, as well as the results of the excavations implemented by archaeologist IgitGharibyan in Tanahat's monastic complex in 1970-1971 give us the opportunity to come to the viewpoint that Gladzor university functioned under the sponsorship of Tanahat's monastery (Tanade monastery, Garavank) and in its territory (this is the most probable standpoint at this moment).

Tanahat or Tanat is one of the most ancient monasteries of Armenia. According to Alishan, buildings used to be here in the Pre-Christian period and after the adoption of Christianity it turned into a monastery-convent. According to legend, the congregation established here was so strict that the monks refused to eat not only hot dishes, but also dairy products (buttermilk), because of which the monastery was called Tanahat (Tanat).

The first construction of the monastic complex known to us was basilica church (5-7th centuries). Further a small chapel was constructed, where in 735 from Sionmountain's foot StepanosSyunetsi was removed and buried. The main church is St. Stepanos (1273-1279) which was constructed on the foundation of an old church by the support of Prosh-Khaghbakyan. It is domed, quadrangular, with cross-shaped layout from inside and rectangular cross wings. The doors of western side altars open in the cross wings in front of each other. From the angles of the junction of cross wings stretch cylindrical pilasters, which connect with arches bearing the dome on them, the drum of which has 12 edges and a pointed spire. The entrance is from the western side. The walls are arranged with dark bluish basalt's polished stones. On the outer side of the southern wall are sculptures, a clock of sun and above the window the symbol of Proshyan dynasty- eagle with spread wings holding a lamb in its claws. Under this clock there is a record: "Enhance your knowledge every hour", which was probably the university's slogan.





Tanahat Monastic Complex



Tanahat Monastic Complex from South-West

The next church is St. Nshan (16th century). Belongs to nave basilica type. It is arranged with dark bluish basalt's polished big stones. The door is from the western side with semi round sumptuous façade stones. The sculptures on it present images of animals and riding hunters. In the vicinity of the complex ruins of buildings, holes and tonirs have been opened. Pitchers, crocks, clay dishes, objects from glass, bowls, items made of copper and bronze have been found. These used to be dwellings for students and teachers, auditoriums for lessons and household buildings (13-18th centuries). There is a cemetery in the vicinity of the monastery, where there are about more than 10khachkars of 10-17th centuries, two of which are nominal: Vahram's and Johannes's. According to sources, Nerses Mshetsi and Yesayi Nchetsi are buried in the territory of the complex.





Sculpture of Smbat Orbelyan on the northern wall of Stepanos Nakhavka Church courtyard in Noravank (13th century)



Ornament of St. Nshan Church entrance

The complex was known by "Gladzor (Gaylidzor) monastery", "Aghberts (Aghbyurneri) monastery" names as well: those names can be met in the manuscripts written in the university. In the ancient manuscripts "Tanahat" and "Aghberts" monastery names, and later "Gladzor" version could be found.

In Christian Armenia the opening of educational institutions and schools is connected to the name of Mesrop Mashtots.



Sculpture of a clawing eagle on the southern facet of St. Stepanos Church drum

Particularly the school founded in Syunik region's Tsghuk province's Shaghat village was of high educational level, about which testifies Stepanos Orbelyan. In Shaghat's school studied the founder of Armenian sheet music Stepanos Syunetsi (8th century). Besides the latter, before the foundation of Gladzor university there were other schools in Syunik as well (a school functioned in Tanahat, where science was studied, manuscripts were rewritten. The most famous representative was Khachatur Philosopher who died in 1218) and in other regions and provinces of Armenia (Ani, Sanahin, Haghpat, Goshavank, Tavush, Haghartsin, Kecharis, Ayrevank, Khor Virap, Cilician Armenia and so on). Especially noteworthy was Ani's school, the teacher of which was Hovhannes Sarkavaglmastaser. Ani's school had many common things with Gladzor and had an immense influence on it.





Sculpture of a dabbling bird on the southern wall of St. Stepanos Church



Sundial on the southern wall of St. Stepanos Church



The founders of Gladzor university managed to use and develop the achievements and experience of other schools as well. The establishment of Gladzor university coincided with a number of historical events and occurrences. On the one hand it was necessary to educate highly professional monks to struggle against the unitors (preachers) arrived to Armenia from Europe, and on the other hand, as the existence of this kind of schools was impossible in Armenia because of Mongol-Tatar and Kurd invasions, there was a need to create a new higher school-university.





Tanahat Monastic Complex

The foundation of Gladzor university in Vayotsdzor was not accidental, as the most outstanding dynasties of Syunik and Vayotsdzor regions-Orbelyans and Proshyan (Khaghbakyan) could make good relations with the Mongol authorities (in 1251 Smbat Orbelyan went to Karakorum where got the right from Mangu khan, with which Syunik was liberated from Mongol authorities and came under the authority of Great Khan house maintaining Smbat's hereditary rights), due to which in comparison to other regions of Armenia and dynasties, the settlements under their reign were liberated from oppressions and which, in its turn, prepared a space for the economic and cultural development of those regions. During the reign of these dynasties most of Vayotsdzor's historical monuments were erected (Noravank's temples, Arates's, Tanahat's, Eghegis's, Tsaghkatsqar's monasteries, Selim's and Aghavnadzor's caravanseries and so on), many valuable khachkars, as well as Geghard's temples hollowed in rock.

Besides the support of the above mentioned dynasties (especially by the support of Prosh Khaghbakyan in the period of establishment), Syunik's diocese was also interested in the foundation of the university.





Statue of Yesayi Nchetsi in Yeghegnadzor



Statue of Nerses Mshetsi in Yeghegnadzor



Benefactors of one of the best monasteries of the time Msho Arakelots monastery, teacher Nerses Mshetsi, who became the founder of the university and the first teacher working till 1284 and Yesayi Nshetsi were invited to Gladzor. Mshetsi mastered Greek and Latin languages, was educated in Khor Virap by Vardan Areveltsi. Contemporaries remember him with "Great orator", "Clever philosopher" and "The great illuminator of the Armenian nation" titles. Mshetsi who had sheltered in Kajberunik with his pupil Yesayi Nshetsi because of Kurd invasions, leaving Taron province in 1279, managed to organize the activity of the university with high scientific level inviting qualified teachers from other places, making the school unique among the other schools of the medieval period. So Gladzor became not only number one intellectual center of Eastern Armenia but also turned into a pan Armenian high educational institution. People came to study in Gladzor from Yerznka, Cilicia, Sasun, Bjni, Tsop, Vorotan, Archesh, Garni, Basen, Artaz, Aprakunis, Khachen, Tavriz, Nakhchivan, and other places.





Tanahat Monastic Complex

ACTIVITY

Materials concerning the scientific-educational activity of Gladzoruniversity are rare, but the information about Tatev's university give certain explanations in this case. As Tatev's university after Vorotan was Gladzor's "successor" (at the end of the 1330s because of adverse political conditions, the university was moved to Vorotan from Tanahat, and further to Tatev). In TatevGladzor's alumniHovhanVoroetnetzi was a teacher, who continued the educational process like in Gladzor.

The subjects taught in Gladzor corresponded to "Aristotle's philosophical tree" (manuscripts rewritten in Gladzor, N 353). According to that "tree" the rational was considered to be the mother of science, which was divided into two groups: theoretical (science of nature, education and theology) and practical (morality, economics, politics). Four subjects were included in the education process: arithmetics, music, geometry and astrology. Subjects taught in Gladzor corresponded to the "seven free arts" of the medieval Europe's universities (grammar, oratory, logic, arithmetics, geometry, music, astrology). Today in front of the western façade of "Gladzor university" historical-cultural museum-reserve are erected seven monuments, on which the names of these seven subjects are engraved.





Monuments dedicated to the seven liberal arts



Special attention was paid to theology. Students thoroughly studied Old and New Gospels, the works of the early Christian theorists (Kyuregh Aleksandratsi, BarseghKesaratsi and others). Doctrinal knowledge was also primary because of the struggle against unitors (preachers). YesayiNchetsi wrote a number of doctrinal works. Philosophy was also seriously studied in Gladzor. The students studied the scientific works of Plato, Aristotle, Philo of Alexandria, Pythagoras, BarseghKesaratsi, Davit Anhaght and others. A number of the above mentioned philosophers' works were rewritten and interpreted in Gladzor (knowledge of Aristotle's 5 books was mandatory), as well as NersesShnorhali's, VahramRabuni's and others' works. The moralizing sayings of antique authors in university's seven manuscripts about public life's different phenomena, which was also in all probability taught, have also reached to us. What concerns the research and copy of antique and non canonical literature Gladzor-university was even ahead of Paris (Sorbon) university, where Vatican had forbidden Aristotle's "Metaphysics" book, considering it full of tricky ideologies.



Yesayi Nchetsi with teachers and students of Gladzor, Gladzor, 14th century, artist Toros Sarkavag, (Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, typescript 365), photo by Hrayr Baze



Armenian writing centers in the 5th – 15th centuries



From the perspective of control, Gladzor and the other religious unities were much freer, which is always of positive significance for a scientific center. Gladzor was noteworthy with other advantages as well: it had special auditoriums and storeys for students and teachers, while in Paris students had to sit on straws because of absence of auditoriums and furnishings.

Gladzor conceded Paris with the number of students (40-50 students per year), but the lessons in Gladzor were in Armenian while in Paris they were in Latin. Besides, the establishment of Paris's and other European universities (Oxford, Cambridge) coincided with the favorable economic and political period in Europe which cannot be said about Armenia during the same period, where in that conditions the provision of university's activity was itself a heroism.



Schools established by Gladzor students



However, in general during the flourishing period of Gladzor, these were two completely comparable universities. Like in Europe, in Gladzor as well for getting a degree students had to defend a graduation thesis (these generalities are the evidence of the fact that Armenian thought was always in touch with European intellectual movement). In Gladzor it was done orally by the presence of university's scientists, authoritative class and was led by Yesayi Nchetsi (general teaching lasted 7-8 years, in the last years of which students chose the themes of their thesis. This ceremony was called "Celebration of anointment", by the end of which Nchetsi handed a cane to the graduate awarding with the title of teacher. With the letter, the newly elected teacher got the right to preach in the whole territory of Armenia.



Mark the Evangelist and Apostle Peter, Book of the Gospels, Noravank, 1292, artist Momik (Matenadaran, typescript 2848)

Armenian language and its grammar were studied and taught in the university. Yesayi Nchetsi wrote a coursebook of Armenian language grammar based on Dionysus Thrax and Hovhannes PluzYerznkatsi's works. Hovhannes Yerznkatsi who studied in Gladzor also formed a textbook about grammar, which was used not only in the schools of Gladzor but in the other schools of Armenia as well. Great attention was paid to the research of dialects and languages of neighboring nations.

Especially much attention was paid to the sphere of calligraphy. Master rewriters were prepared who copied canonical manuscripts, textbooks and handwritings. Nchetsi proofread all rewritings by himself, following the beauty and correctness of the writings. The art of making parchment, sleeking paper and forming handwriting was taught in Gladzor. Miniature painting was also in the center of attention, the auditorium of which was located in the workshop of the monastery. Architect, sculptor and miniaturist Momik, Toros Taronatsi, Avag Tsaghkogh, Matevos Nkarich, Poghos Aknetsi and others studied in Gladzor, who spread their art all over the country. They made floral illustrations in Cilicia, Crimea, Persia. In the manuscripts reached to us generally woven miniature painting was used. Almost every page of the manuscripts is full of images.



*Title-page, Holy Bible, Gladzor, 1318, artist Toros Taronatsi
(Matenadaran, typescript 206)*



Chief Rabbi Yesayi Nchetsi, Holy Bible,
Gladzor, 1318, artist Toros Taronatsi
(Matenadaran, typescript 206)



Self-portrait of Toros Taronatsi, Holy Bible, Gladzor, 1318 (Matenadaran, typescript 206)

Almost 50 historical books were researched in Gladzor, among which were works of Armenian and Greek historiographers (Khorenatsi, Agatangeghos, Buzand, Eghishe, Parpetsi, Kaghankatvatsi, Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates). The result of Gladzorhistoriographical school is considered StepanosOrbelyan's "Sisakan region's history" book. Despite the fact that he was a monk, this story does not include Gospel narratives. He was the first in Armenian historiography to use lithographic records, presenting information about social-economic, cultural life. The story begins from Trdat I and reaches to 1297.

The science of chronology was also studied, and Hovhannes Sarkavag's "The copy of chronology" was used as a textbook. Arithmetics was taught by HovhannesImastaser's HaghaksAnkiuna vorTvots (about Polygonal Numbers) work and AnaniaShirakatsi's manual, which included four arithmetical operations, and book of problems named "Krahchank" (buster). For educational



Entrance to Jerusalem, Gladzor, 1337, artist Avag the Perforating (Matenadaran, typescript 212)

զնորօք ճորձս և նս
 տաւ ի վերա նոցա և
 բաղում ժողովորդք
 տարածանէին զհա
 նդերն ի տեանց ի
 ճանապարհին և
 ժողովորդն ո
 րառաքին և զկնի եր
 Թային, աղաղակէի

նւասեին օրհնո
 րին որդիդարձի
 օրհնեալ որպատյա
 նունսն օրհնո
 րին ի բարձունս
 Ի մտանէն նորա
 յիմ դըրդեցաւ քա
 ղաւն ամենայն և աա
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purposes riddles were written by Tsor-
 soretsi and one of the most eminent
 teachers of the university Tiratur. Ge-
 ometry was studied by Euclid's "Ele-
 ments of geometry" book, one part of
 which was translated in the 11th cen-
 tury by GrigorMagistrosPahlavuni. The
 geographical position of Vayotsdzor
 contributed to the study of astrology,
 from where the sky full of stars could
 be seen.

Medical-anthropological books
 were also copied and studied in Glad-
 zor. Miniaturist Avag copied the "Book
 of notes" from which it can be conclud-
 ed that Avag studied in Gladzornote
 writing, as he taught there music: shara-
 kans, psalms. The admonition of one of
 the teachers is: "Don't sing senselessly
 just like water flows in the pipes".

The subject of oratory was also
 taught which made the speech of the
 students polite and influential. As a
 textbook was used Movses Qertogh's
 "Girkpitoyts" and EznikKoghbat's
 "Yeghts aghandzots" (negation of
 sects) books.

One of the most eminent alumnus of Gladzor was Davit Sasnetsi, HovhanVorochnetsi. The latter became the teacher of Tatev's university and one of the greatest philosophers of the time who gave "independent from theology significance" to some philosophical questions, which was an exceptional approach for the middle age. KhachaturKecharetsi had close relations with the university. According to some sources, poet Frik was also here for a period of time. But Gladzor university's most outstanding representative was YesayiNchetsi who was the chief teacher of the university for more than five decades (1284-1337/38), rewarding with a degree of teacher about 350 students, founding schools, monasteries, convents (Davit teacher in Noravank, MkhitarSasnetsi in Metsopa monastery, MatevosKoghb, Archishetsi in Ayrivank, KirakosYerznkatsi in Yerznka and so on). Besides linguistic and denominational works, Nchetsi wrote theological works as



Excerpts from the permanent exhibition



well. His "Prophecy of Ezekiel" book is valuable with its unique annotation and used literature of Armenian and foreign authors, most of the works of Greek and Assyrian authors have not been saved. Nchetsi's fame was so great that while dating the era the authors mentioned his name among the secular and spiritual leaders: "1310 is the year of great wise man Yesayi, Mongolian Kharbanda khan's ascendancy and Armenian king Ali-nakh Hetumyan's reign".

The methods of teaching and the upbringing of children was paid much attention to, they had regulations and were led by them. Interesting enough was the fact that the education of the poor was free. The role of the teacher was primary in education and he was equal to apostles and prophets. But they needed serious qualifications, otherwise they wouldn't correspond to the teacher's criteria.



According to the people of Gladzor a child is a "clean parchment" (In Europe it was John Locke who referred to the fact that a child is a "clean slate", and further French preachers as well). Comparisons were made between children and adults on how one should work with them: "children must be taught with fear, adults with delights and the perfect learners with philosophy". Parents were advised to make their children go in for any handicraft, so that not to grow up as a thief and robber.

Besides secular and spiritual activities, the teachers and alumnus of the university accomplished public-political activities as well. Stepanos Orbelyan, Yesayi Nchetsi and further Hovhan Vorotnetsi struggled against unitors who wanted to turn the Apostolic church into a Catholic one, taking



Transfiguration and the entrance to Jerusalem Book of Gospels, 1302, artist Momik (Matenadaran, typescript 6792)

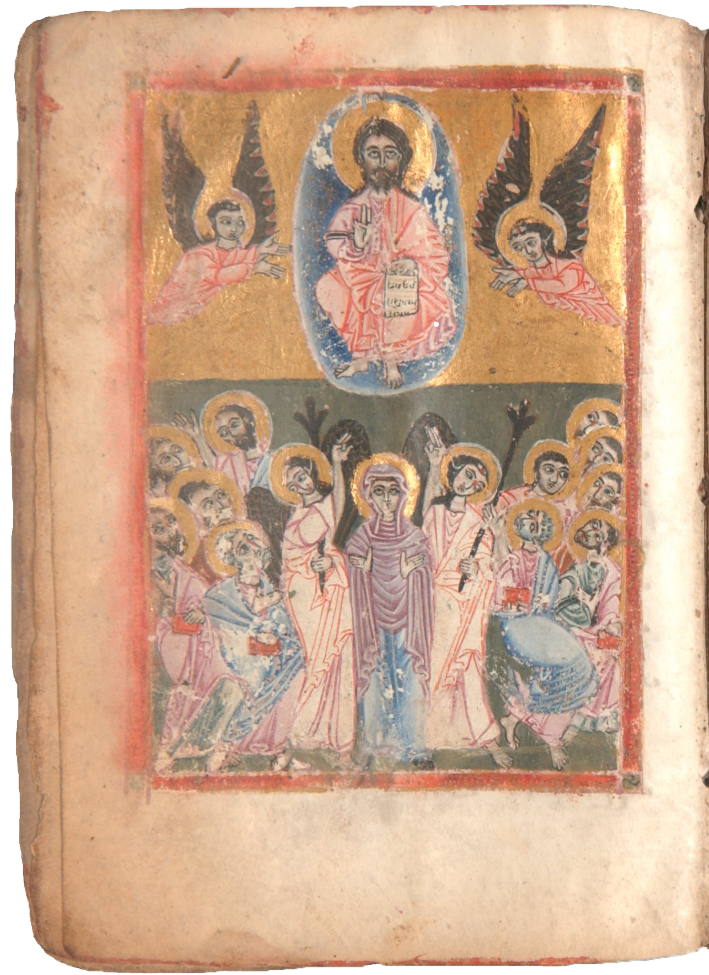


the advantage of the absence of statehood in Armenia and the fatal condition in Cilicia. The Catholicism of Armenian church was dangerous with its forthcoming consequences: the change of Armenian language into Latin, the loss of the national culture and the subordination of the church under the Pope of Rome.

The people of Gladzor and their successors did their best to preserve the national church through theological works, circulars and sermons. It was due to their efforts that Franciscans and Dominican preachers did succeed and in 1441 the seat of the Catholicos of all Armenians was moved to Etchmiadzin from Cilicia's Sis town.

In the manuscripts reached to us quite interesting materials have been saved concerning the public relations of Armenia, about which the students gave their comments and appraisals. It was mentioned about the feudal society, princes, the rich, farmers, handicraftsman, appreciating their role, contemplating about the society's structure, unfairness of time and disadvantages (particularly about the fake behavior of priests and judges, immoral women, cheating merchants, sycophant relations and disunity in the royal court, fake traitors and alcoholism), which are great sources for the contemporaries to form an idea about the life of medieval Armenia, formed relations and praising professions and deeds.

The problem of the loss of statehood, the reason of which were the mistakes of religious and secular authorities. According to them, the country must be ruled by "fair reprisal and deliberation" and not by violence.



Hambarzum and Hogealust, Book of Gospels, 1302, artist Momik (Matenadaran, typescript 6792)



CONCLUSION

1. The representatives of Orbelyan and Proshyan dynasty managed to reach to partial political independence, which in its turn contributed to the improvement of social-economic conditions of the settlements under their authority and made it possible to found Gladzoruniversity.
2. The university was active in 1282-1338, and in the 14th century it was moved to Vorotan, and further to Tatev. Their alumnus continued the activity of their teachers founding new schools in different provinces and struggling for the preservation of Armenian secular identity.
3. Gladzor used to be the most important educational center of medieval Armenia where came to study from different regions of Armenia, even from Cilicia.
4. The university was not only the contemporary of Paris university but also did not concede it with educational program, having certain advantages over it.
5. In Gladzor used to teach and study such eminent people of medieval period such as Nerses Mshetsi, Yesayi Nchetsi, Davit Sasnetsi, Tiratur, StepanosOrbelyan, Momik, TorosTaronatsi, Avag Tsaghkogh, Grigor and Mkhitar Yerznkatsis, Poghos Aknetsi, Matevos architect and others preserving and enriching Armenian manuscripts and Armenian culture.

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