

ON THE HISTORIAN OF VARDANANTS EGHISHE'S PERSONALITY ACCORDING TO NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF EARLY MEDIEVAL LITERARY DATA

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During the study or examination of the works of each prominent author of ancient Armenian literature the personality and identity of the author gain an exclusive importance along with the problem of discovering his exact epoch. Since the second half of the 19th century the hypercritical examination of philological and historical works by some researchers resulted in the unfounded and baseless revision and denial of centuries old traditional notions. Prominent authors (Agatangelos, Eghishe, Movses Khorenatsi) whose names had been pronounced with veneration were proclaimed as “forgers” of history. According to the revisionists, the above mentioned authors as if had lived in later centuries but “strived” to introduce themselves as contemporaries and witnesses of the events occurring in previous centuries in order to give their stories a more reliable and valid essence as well as for making themselves more outstanding¹.

Who is Eghishe, the author of the history of Vardanants?

“Story of the Saint preceptor Eghishe” is an old anonymous narrative preserved in the early literature. The anonymous biographer elucidates many interesting conditions referring to the life and asceticism of the preceptor Eghishe, the historian of Vardanants (“History of Vardan and the Armenian War”). Here the anonymous author presents Eghishe as a devoted servant of Saint Vardan: “The blessed preceptor Eghishe was a devoted servant of Saint Vardan and was faithful to him in divine and human ways; and he lived and was accustomed to piety and devotion to learning and he reflected upon every occasion when Armenians were endangered by Persians. He was familiar to wars and victories and persecutions to the church and merits and courage of Saint Vardan and those who martyred together for the sake of Christ’s faith and became worthy to a crown neglecting the delusions of Zoroastrianism and following the preachments of bishops, priest, their testimonies and commands. It was the battle of all of Saints where they fought against the tyrants and defeated them. The tyrant had arrogated against the holiness of the church. And he narrated all these in words and events relevant to them. The blessed Eghishe studied the lives of Saint Vardan and his soldiers and gave them a written form cautiously and in canonical ways of the church in order to make it proper for God and people”. “Since that day he became an ecclesiastic and undertook asceticism

¹ The hypercritical approaches have been criticized in Armenology by Armenian historians and philologists. Particularly, A.Mousheghyan devoted a special monograph to the life and the epoch of the founder of the Armenian historiography Movses Khorenatsi and proved that he undoubtedly is an author of the 5th century and his classical “History of Armenia” is a product of the exceptionally fateful period of the historical biography of the Armenian people (Ա.Վ.Մուշեղյան, Մովսես Խորենացու դարը, Երևան, 2007).

and endeavored fasting and praying and the blessed Eghishe became the most powerful person and the winner of all, and he was living in a cave refining himself all the time and the cave was named after Eghishe and it was called *Saint Cave* of Eghishe and now it is honored to everyone and it is a witness of the Blessed Saint to all nations. And shepherds came and found the Saint outdoors; they saw a wonderful sign and proclaimed the name of the cave and the place in honor of the wonderful Blessed Saint. But he obviated wishing to be unknown and came to live to a cave near the beach in the district Rshtunik and this cave was also called the Cave of Saint Eghishe. And after a long while of asceticism and endeavoring in the first cave and scarce time in the other the Blessed Saint deceased in the second cave". "Then some people came and found him deceased and they had been apprised by a vision that he was Christ's servant as the vision of the saint should not be hidden, so that others would be admonished. He was considered to proclaim himself but then much study was done and it was proved and announced to everyone that this was Saint Eghishe who previously had been living in the province Mekk' where they built his grave, the cave was altered into a grave and many healings occurred in this place."

"And the ruler of Mekk' heard of this and had white envy as the death of the blessed saint did not take place in his territory and he went to the saint's grave with an excuse of treatment and created a lodge; every night having the saint as an advocate to God probably to deserve getting a part of relic of the blessed and make the first place of living also deserve God's honor. But he scrupled to approach and take a part of the relic evidently for the fear of inhabitants of the province as well as the ruler of Rshtunik. And he stole a part of the healing relic like the woman in Evangeline, he cut the head and the hand of the corpse and run away from the province and there was a great outcry but it was pacified by the divine providence as God wished to award the saint's first place of living too. And he brought the relic of the blessed saint and built a chapel near the first cave where he lived and required to honor that place more than the one where he had deceased and here the gifts of Christ's philanthropy appeared by the saint hermit who lived in that place: all the maladies were cured and those who suffered from impure spirits were healed and everyone blessed the God and a festival was established in honor and praise of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever"².

Judging by the content one can assume that Eghishe's biography was recounted not too long after his death, anyway much more earlier than 9th century as Tovma Artsruni used this biography in his work: "History of Artsruni house". He referred to the forgeries about the history of Vardanants done by Bartsuma³ who was a follower of the

² «Սոփերք հայկական», հ. ԺԱ., Վենետիկ, 1854, էջ 39-45:

³ According to Tovma Artsruni this Bartsuma belonged to the Nestorian schism. After being convicted at the council of Ephesus in 431 and being chased in Byzantine the Nestorians found a shelter in Iran and were patronized by the Persian kings for a long while. In the 430s they even occupied the patriarchal seat of the Armenian Church, namely Brqisho (Barqisho) and Shamuél (Samuel). This Bartsuma had committed a great deal of sanguinary crimes informing the Persian king Peroz against Armenian ministers with defamation. Pretending to make reparations he came to Armenia, to the provinces Arzruni and Mekk' and asked Eghishe for his history not merely for reading but rather for censuring it.

Nestorian church. He quoted the following passage word by word: “And at that time the preceptor Eghishe lived in the district Rshtunik, near the beach where the deceased Eghishe, the saint of the God passed away and went to Christ. And coming back to the writings of the province Mokk’ ”⁴. Unlike other prominent authors of the 5th century such as Agatangelos, Pavstos, Koryun, Yeznik (Yeznak), Gyut, Mambre Vertsanogh and others whose names are recalled in the works of authors of the same century, Eghishe who was the historian of Vardanants surprisingly is not mentioned by any prominent author of the 5-7th centuries. Even His Holiness Gyut and Ghazar Parpetsi do not mention Eghishe although the first made some citations from the history of Vardanants in: “Bishop Gyut’s paper to Saint Vache”⁵ and the second used greatly Eghishe’s the history of of Vardanants in the second part of his work “History of Armenia” (chapters 20-50) and at the beginning of the third part. This work was completely devoted to the rebellion period of Vardanants. He retold the whole content of Eghishe’s work and completed everything that he himself Ghazar had heard lately from Arshavir Kamsarakan who had returned from the Persian exile and from other rulers.⁶ Parpetsi’s silence is not adventitious; he also used Movses Khorenatsi’s “History of Armenia” in the same way: without referring to the source. In spite of this it appears in the paper presented to Vahan Mamikonyan that Ghazar knew well the philosopher Movses and his enlightening books that were persecuting emptiness.⁷

A historian of the 7th century Sebeos definitely mentions Eghishe’s history of Vardanants without mentioning the name “Eghishe” but from the given data it is not difficult to conclude that the Bagratuni bishop certainly meant the author of the history of Vardanants Eghishe from the 5th century. “Red Vardan” mentioned by Sebeos is the hero of the Avarayr battle and the commander of the Armenian army⁸.

Afterwards, as his identity has been discovered Eghishe moves to the district Rshtunig and shelters in a cave near the beach in order to avoid the honor and worship

⁴ Թովմա Արծրունի եւ Անանուն, Պատմութիւն Տանն Արծրունեաց, Երեւան, 2006, Բ. ք. էջ 93. Although Tovma promises to show Bartsuma’s instigations of Artsruni house, but he does not keep his promise

⁵ Մովսէս Կաղանկատուացի, Պատմութիւն Աղուանից աշխարհի, Երեւան, 1983, Ա. ժա. էջ 17-28 (այսուհետ՝ Կաղանկատուացի). Հմմտ. Եղիշէ, էջ 197-199. Gyut had been his Holiness Catholicos of Armenia since 461 which means that bishop Gyut had written the paper before it.

⁶ See details about this Ա. Մուշեղյան, Եղիշէ եւ Ղազար Փարպեցի՝ պատմիչ եւ վերապատմող. «Քրիստոնյա Հայաստան», 2004, հունվար Բ., թ. 2 (166)

⁷ Թուրթ առ Վահան Մամիկոնեան, էջ 202 - Ղազարայ Փարպեցոյ Պատմութիւն Հայոց եւ Թուրթ առ Վահան Մամիկոնեան. աշխատ. Գ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան եւ Ստ. Մալխասեանց, Տփղիս, 1904

⁸ Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, աշխատ.՝ Գ. Վ. Արգարյանի, Երեւան, 1979, գլ. է., էջ 64-65: H.Bartikyan considered “Red Vardan” to be the leader of the 571 rebellion (see: Օտար աղբյուրները Հայաստանի և հայերի մասին, 6, Բյուզանդական աղբյուրներ, Բ, Կոստանդին Ծիրանաձին, թարգմանությունը բնագրից, առաջաբան և ծանոթագրություններ Հ.Բարթիկյանի, Երևան, 1970, էջ V). As noted E.L. Danielyan, “Red Vardan” mentioned by Sebeos is the leader of the rebellion of 451, the commander of the Armenian army Vardan Mamikonyan (see: Դանիելյան Է.Լ., Հայաստանի քաղաքական պատմությունը և Հայ Առաքելական եկեղեցին (VI-VII դարեր), Երևան, 2000, էջ 70, ծան. 91).

of laics. Tovma mentions Eghishe and his history of Vardanids with praise sometimes calling the historian a priest and sometimes a preceptor⁹.

Unlike Sebeos, Movses Kaghankatvatsi in his work "History of Aghuank" does not mention the name of Eghishe, the author of the history of Vardanants. However, the second chapter of the second volume where he describes that Vardan Mamikonyan's legion moves to Aghuank and gives a victorious battle against the marzipan Sebukht at the riverside Kur near Khakhagh and then conquers Tchora Pahak and conspires with the Huns, are almost word by word abstracted from Eghishe's history¹⁰.

The historian of the 13th century Kirakos Gandzaketsi also mentions Eghishe by name along with the main disciples of St. Sahak and Mesrop: "Their preceptors and teachers were St. Sahak and Mesrop and the main disciples were St. Hovsep and Hovhan and Ghevond and Sahak and father of history Movses and Mambre Vertsanogh¹¹, his brother, Yeznik and Koryun, Saint Eghishe, philosopher Davit and Hovhannes, father Abraham, Ardzan, Mushe¹², Khosrov, Ghazar and then Stepannos bishop of Sunik and Hropanos Samostatsi who considered writings beautiful and many others some of which having a degree of bishop and other leaders assigned by people"¹³. Then Gandzaketsi reflects upon the books translated and written by them including Eghishe's "History of Saint Vardanants"¹⁴. A great deal of scholars assumed that the historian of Vardanants is Eghishe bishop of Amatunig himself who is mentioned in the list of participants of the council of Artashat in 450. In the 16th place in Eghishe's history it is written Eghishe bishop of Amatunig¹⁵ and in the 17th place of Parpetsi's history it is written Eghishe bishop¹⁶ of Amatunig. This identification appeared even on the title page of 1823's edition of Constantinople: "History of Vardan and the Saint martyrs, Ghevond and other priests. Created by renowned preceptor and archbishop of Amatunig Saint *Eliša* who was the disciple of our blessed holy translators Sahak and Mesrop. Edited by the Father preceptor Andreas Narinean from Akn. 1823". Similarly, German theologian Welte calls Eghishe *Eliša Amatuni* right in the title of the article "About demon possession": *Elisau von Amathunik uber die Bessenheit*¹⁷. This article was printed in 1848 in a theological magazine published in Tuebingen. H. Gatrtchyan also assumes that the historian Eghishe's being a bishop is mentioned right in the history of Vardanants considering the relevant bishop *Eliša Amatuni* who has

⁹ Թովմա Արծրունի, Ա., գ., էջ 35 եւ Բ., ք., էջ 93

¹⁰ Մովսես Կաղանկատուացի, Բ., ք., էջ 112-117: Հմմտ. Եղիշէի Վասն Վարդանայ եւ Հայոց պատերազմին, ի լոյս ածեալ բաղդատութեամբ ձեռագրաց աշխատութեամբ Ե. Տեր-Մինասյան, Երեւան, 1957

¹¹ Vertsanogh. New haykazyan dictionary includes the word Vertsanogh (inferred) and Mambre Vertsanogh under the same word (Նոր Բաղդիրք Հայկազեան լեզուի, հտ. 2, էջ 813).

¹² Here after Mushe Ardzan is repeated.

¹³ Կիրակոս Գանձակեցի, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, աշխատ. Կ. Ա. Մելիք-Օհանջանյանի, Երեւան, 1961, ք գլուխ, էջ 2:

¹⁴ Գանձակեցի, Բ. գլուխ, էջ 28-29:

¹⁵ Եղիշէ, էջ 28:

¹⁶ See Փարպ. դրուագ Բ. գլ. իգ., էջ 45:

¹⁷ Welte, Theologische Quartalschrift, Tuebingen, 1843, S. 633-644.

signed the response to Mihrnerseh's letter¹⁸. However, it is improbable that this candidate is the historian of Vardanants as Eghishe has never been mentioned in Armenian literature as a bishop. Furthermore, the historian of Vardanants always willingly mentions that he has been a witness and participant of the events. Therefore, in this case he would not refuse to show that he was the Amatunyan bishop Eghishe like Koryun mentions in the Life of Mashtots "/... /and the second Koryun (myself) /.../"¹⁹ or like Parpetsi writes about himself "/.../ I, Ghazar Parpetsi received the command/.../"²⁰.

Reflecting upon the question of Eghishe's personality A. Garagashyan refuses multiple hypotheses made on that occasion and assures only the fact that Eghishe was a historian and bibliographer of the second half of the 7th century: "No one has ever said anything certain about Eghishe's personality: some of the historians coming after him consider him to be a secretary of Vardan and his army, others consider him to be a bishop and others an hermit, and nothing is trustworthy. But it is certain that the history is written by Eghishe and not by an author of the second half of the 5th century. The language is free of the Hellenisms and does not have the character of a translated language"²¹. N. Adonts has a unique opinion about this. He does not identify the historian Eghishe with the relevant bishop of Amatuniq merely because he considers Eghishe to be an author living later than the 5th century: "...there is no certain ground to assume that the historian Eghishe and the member of the same council (Artashat) Eghishe bishop of Amatuniq are the same person.

Can Eghishe's manuscript be considered to be contemporary to the council of Artashat taking into consideration the Armenian translation of Philo?"²² Yervand Ter-Minasyan who has devoted many years to the examination of various questions concerning Eghishe's personality and history of Vardanants decisively assures that the historian of Vardanants is known by many in the Armenian literature as preceptor Eghishe and has never been mentioned as a *bishop*: "The dedicatory of Eghishe's history does not give the impression to be written by a bishop: it is more relevant to a modest preceptor. If the historiographer were a congregational bishop of the council of Artashat, he would somehow imply his contribution to it as he likes to mention that he was a witness of events". And finally "all the historians indiscriminately call this author *preceptor Eghishe* and there is no basis besides the identity of the names to assume that he had a higher clerical category"²³.

¹⁸ Գաթըրճեան Հ., Հինգերորդ դարու չորս հայ պատմագրութեանց ժամանակը. «Հանդէս Ամսօրեայ», Վիեննա, 1887, թ. 1, էջ 9-12 (իրապարակվել է ետմահու):

¹⁹ Կորյուն, Վարք Մաշտոցի, հրատ. Մ. Աբեղյանի, Երևան, 1941, [Ժթ.], էջ 74:

²⁰ Փարպ., Դ. (Նախաբան), էջ 5:

²¹ Գարագաշեան Ա. Մ., Քննական Պատմություն Հայոց, մասն Ա., Թիֆլիս, 1895, էջ 106:

²² Ադոնց Ն., Երկեր, հտ. Բ., Երեւան, 2006, էջ 133:

²³ Տեր-Մինասյան Ե. Գ., Եղիշեի «Վարդանանց պատմությունը» եւ նրա քննադատները, Պատմա-բանասիրական հետազոտություններ, Երևան, 1971, էջ 123: The study was first published as the introduction to the modern Armenian translation of Eghishe's "Վարդանի և Հայոց պատերազմի մասին", Երևան, 1946, էջ 5-95.

Certainly, Yervand Ter-Minasyan is completely right excluding that Eghishe Amatuni is the historian of Vardanants. However, the identity of the historian Eghishe remains in question. This condition led to pointless hypotheses of certain scholars who represent him as a defalcator living in the 7th century that presumably had invented a false story based on the material of Ghazar Parpetsi's history. However, now when my previous study "Who are Christ's zealot officials?" completely affirms the validness of the preface of the assembly of Shahapivan (444/445) and consequently affirms its historical value, the court pastor Eghishe mentioned the last in the list of 8 pastors in the preface already appears to be an indisputable historical person. In the preface of other manuscripts he is called "Father Eliša's" (genitive case, in nominative: Father Eliša) and therefore he is absurdly identified with Father Eghishe, bishop of Amatuniq known from Ghazar Parpetsi's history. Thus, his original and exact title is "court pastor". By the way, Gh. Alishan attaches the following notification to the name "Father Eghishe": "Some people write: "Court pastor Eliša's: what court's pastor?" And immediately he answers to his question himself: "certainly Vardan's"²⁴. Thus Alishan connects Eghishe directly with Vardan Mamikonyan from the council of Shahapivan where Vardan Mamikonyan was present as a senior nakharar with the marzpan Vasak Syuni. In this case there was perfect solidarity in the assembly and in the original of the preface there is no hint about any conflict and disagreement between Vardan and Vasak Syuni. Conversely, the unity of secular and religious officials is emphasized: "And bishops and a great deal of pastors, deacons and Christ's zealot officials /.../ nakharars of the first marzpan Vasak and *chiliarch*²⁵ Vahan and *makhaz* Vriv /.../ the first senior nakharars :the brave and vigorous Vardan Mamikonyan and Arshavir (Arshur) Kamsarakan and the Armenian commander of Rshtuniq Manatchihr, Zeka Dimaksean and other nakharars *came to the council* by the command of the community and they considered the sacraments of the church. They were *unanimous* and *convinced* of the righteous laws and worship of Christ and this way they drove unanimously"²⁶.

Gh. Alishan's word "դրան" *dran* (court) of Vardan is a haste assumption as well as a much undefined one. In that case how to understand the title "դրան երեց" *dran yerets* ("court pastor"). In old Armenian the word *դրան* *durn* (genitive case դրան *dran*) is a synonym to the word *արքունիք*=*arquniq* (court), for instance : "And a person from the big city Rome whose name was Agatangelos received the command, /.../ he came to the *court of Arshakuni* under the reign of the brave and virtuous, strong and warring king Trdat"²⁷.

²⁴ Ալիշան Ղ., Հայապատում, Վենետիկ, 1901, էջ 159, ծան. 12:

²⁵ In old Greek means a commander of a thousand men.

²⁶ «Կանոնագիրք Հայոց», հտ. Ա., աշխատ. Վազգեն Հակոբյանի, Երևան, 1964, ծան. էջ 628 (henceforth Կանոնագիրք Հայոց), cf. ՄՄ ձեռագիր No 659, թերթ 233բ-236ա:

²⁷ Ագաթանգեղոս Պատմութիւն Հայոց: Աշխատասիրութեանք Գ.Տէր-Մկրտչեան և Ստ. Կանայեանց, Էջմիածին-Տփղիս, 1911, 12:

Similarly Koryun writes about Mashtots: “[Mashtots] who was from the region Taron, the village Hatsekats, /.../ came and reached to the *court of Arshakuni*, great Armenian kings, lived in the court, was a servant and perpetrated the orders of the king. In these examples the word *դռնիւ/ durn* is used in the meaning of *court*. And at that time Aravan²⁸ was the chiliarch of Armenia. In the study “Who is the chiliarch Aravan?” I showed that after the king Arshak II had been exiled to the fortress Anhush (368) Shapuh II appointed the chiliarch Aravan as the ruler of Armenia Magna. His seat was the Armenian court of Arshakuni. Here Mashtots served as a secretary²⁹ and was ordained as pastor by the Catholicos Sahak³⁰. Probably the court pastor Eghishe also performed the same work. In 444 the council took place in Shahapivan where the former Armenian Arshakuni kings’ court and camp were: “And came and gathered in command of the community to the assigned place Shahapivan which was the camp of Armenian kings by the time of the granted festival. And it was the 6th year that Hazkert³¹ was the king of Persia and Vasak Syuni was the *marzpan* of Armenia and Vahan Amatuni was the *chiliarch* and Vriv Khorkhoruni was the *maghkhaz*”³².

We have a similar testimony also in Pavstos Buzand’s history: “And the king’s army was in Shahapivan, in the original place of the army of Arshakuni kings”³³. Shahapivan was situated in the district Bagrevand near Bagavan, not far from the district Tsaghkotn³⁴. After the collapse of Arshakuni kingdom, in the 440s Shahapivan was aspiritual and administrative centre of Armenia where was located the court and there Eghishe was a court pastor and maybe also court secretary who conducted the recording of the council, therefore his name is mentioned in the end after all the participants of the assembly as the composer of the inscription. This means that Eghishe’s title of a court pastor is really primary and reflects his current position in the assembly of Shahapivan at the Armenian marzpan’s office. Probably, he served there as a secretary like Mesrop Mashtots did at the time of the chiliarch. Therefore, he was

²⁸ Կորյուն, Վարդ Մաշտոցի, [Գ.], էջ 36:

²⁹ See Ա. Մուշեղյան, Ո՞վ է Առավան Հազարապետը. - ԳԱԱ «Լրաբեր Հասարակական Գիտությունների», 1983, թ. 7, էջ 67. Our conclusion about the chiliarch Aravan is included in the 2nd volume of “The History of the Armenian people” («Հայ ժողովրդի պատմության», հ. Բ, Երևան, 1984, էջ 424, ծան. 4). We identify the chiliarch Aravan with the Armenian minister Arrabanes mentioned in a manuscript of “Roman history” kept in Vatican. It is written by the 4th century Latin historiographer of Greek origin Ammianus Marcellinus. Aravan’s position was *magister armorum* (commander). Based on this we prove that the chiliarch Aravan is the commander Vahan Mamikonyan assigned by Shapuh II, Samvel Mamikonyan’s father and the brave commander Vasak Mamikonyan’s brother. In all the other manuscripts the name “Arrabanes” is deteriorated and written as Artabanes which led to scholars’ different distorted opinions.

³⁰ Ադոնց Ն., Երկեր, հտ.Բ, էջ 189:

³¹ In other manuscripts «ի Ե. ամի թագաւորութեանն Յազկերտի Պարսից արքայի», Կանոնագիրք Հայոց, հտ. Ա., էջ 427:

³² Կանոնագիրք Հայոց», հ. Ա. էջ 628. Հմմտ. ՄՄ ձեռագիր No 659, թերթ 233բ-236ա:

³³ Փաստոսի Բիւզանդացոյ Պատմութիւն Հայոց», (Pavstos Buzand “ Patmutyun Hayots”, “History of Armenia”) քննադիրը Ք. Պատկանյանի, Երեւան, 1987, Դ., ԺԵ, էջ 184:

³⁴ See Մ. Չամչեանց, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, հ. Բ., ի Վենետիկ, 1785 (Երևան, 1984), գիրք Գ., գլուխ Բ, էջ 15-16:

the last to sign in the list of the preface of the Assembly mentioning his position: “Eliša’s: the court pastor’s”. There is no other way to explain why in the preface where only three great state officials are introduced: *marzpan* Vasak Syuni, *chiliarch* Vahan Amatuni and *maghkhaz* (head guards), Vriv Khorkhoruni Eghishe is mentioned with his modest official position: court pastor.

The condition that pastor Eghishe here is listed among the court officials served basis for identifying him with the author of the history of Vardanants. Certainly, the fact that the personality of the court pastor Eghishe is introduced as the famous historian for the first time can lead to certain doubts. But we refer these doubts not to this identification but rather to the question of how the above mentioned personality of the pastor Eghishe could be ignored by scholars in the long chain of philological discussion.

Kirakos Gandzaketsi considered just this Eghishe in the group of Saint Sahak’s and Mesrop’s main disciples along with father of history Movses, his brother Mambre Vertsanogh and many others. This group had been sent to Alexandria by St. Sahak and Mashtots in 437-38 when Eghishe should have been 19-20 years old like juvenile Movses Khorenatsi. Thus, at the council of Shahapivan, in 444/5 he was 24-25 years old and served as a court pastor in the Armenian marzpan’s office and in 449 (according to others 450) at the council of Artashat he was only 29-30 years old which is not a relevant age for a bishop. There is no doubt that Eghishe is a quite different person than Eliša bishop of Amathunik or Father Eghishe (according to Parpetsi).

Therefore, the author of the history of Vardanants is not the bishop Eghishe, participant of the council of Artashat, but the court pastor Eghishe, participant of the council of Shahapivan. Thus, the first authentic mention about this historical person and the future historiographer is henceforth indissolubly connected with the Church Council of Shahapivan, in 444.

The fact that, according to the above mentioned traditional biography, after finishing the history of Vardanants and other canonical writings Eghishe devoted himself to clerical life in the province Mekk’ leads to assumption that he was born there. And there are all the grounds to identify this Eghishe from Mekk’ with the court pastor Eghishe. The dedicatory or brief introduction of the history of Vardanants gives additional grounds for this as under its light the court pastor Eghishe’s personality is more clearly drawn as a historiographer, as well from the point of view of his age, acquired philosophical education and his occupied position. The book was “requested by the pastor David Mamikonyan”. After the battle of Avarayr, about in 445 the pastor David requests Mamikonyan Eghishe as equals to write the history of Vardanants.

The introduction is a kind of conversation with the person who ordered it. It is a report about finishing the recommended history: “I created the speech that you The Sagacious³⁵ requested. You requested to write about the Armenian war where many

³⁵ «Ով Քաջ» “The Sage “Is Translated By Y. Ter-Minasyan as «Ո՛վ Առաքինի» “The Virtuous”. The last word exists in the Continuation: «Բազումք Առաքինացան», “Many became virtuous”. With the words “The Brave” Eghishe means the pastor Davit’s being sagacious and shrewd.

became virtuous. Here I annotated in these seven parts /.../³⁶. Therefore, the introduction of the history of Vardanants was written in about 464 after composing and finishing the whole history just like the “preface” of the history by Agatangelos. The introduction uncovers the cordial relationship between former classmates who accompanied each other during the voyage to Alexandria and education when they studied philosophy and theology. They studied together, *wandered in the high circuits of philosophy even higher than dangerous airs giving birth to storms* that is far from schismatic influences. And now receiving this request-command the author who has survived the battle of Avarayr and is already 35-36 years old, who witnessed many episodes when some became heroes and others were humiliated, *meets with the soar of youth the request of his friend* who is no one else but the philosopher David the Invincible although the Y. Ter-Minasyan who has studied Eghishe skillfully does not consider this hypothesis to be fundamental. In this sense Kirakos Gandzaketsi’s above-mentioned testimony is very remarkable. Here Saint Eghishe and philosopher David are mentioned side by side as if to show their steady connection with the history of Vardanants as an author and a person who ordered it; who have worked together since the second half of the 5th century. Here Eghishe himself reveals the personality of the philosopher David with a great appreciation: “And you, the great, recognized by God, what else you would request if not the best? As it is known to me, to you and those who *wandered in philosophy*, this is a sign of heavenly love and not of worldly vanity”³⁷. And he finished the introduction emphasizing his being the witness of events: “Thus, as we have received the request of the unenvying command of your kind nature, it is worth to start; although we are not willing to lament for the misery of our nation. Here without deferring we will reproduce with a tearful lament the various blows to which we ourselves happened to be witness”³⁸.

Being unfamiliar with the personality of the court pastor Eghishe many scholars considered him to be Vardan Mamikonyan’s soldier or secretary striving to explain this way his presence in the maelstrom of the crucial events for Armenia and the Armenian nation. Eventually, it becomes possible to find the logical explanation to all this. Naming Eghishe we deal with an intelligent chancellery in the court preserved during the first period of marzpanate (marzpans nominated by the Persian kings) in Eastern Armenia. His competence about demeneaur of the Persian court and *keshts* (religious doctrines)³⁹ and the reflection of diplomatic relations of Eastern Roman Empire in his work suggest that Eghishe associated with interior and exterior affairs of the

³⁶ Եղիշե, էջ 3:

³⁷ Եղիշե, էջ 4:

³⁸ Եղիշե, էջ 5:

³⁹ Eghishe calls the chief mage of the province Apar *Hamakden* (omniscient) who “knew Ampartqash, he had studied Bozpayit and had both Pahlavik and Parskaden. As all these five are keshts they possess all the laws of magiarism but besides them there is the sixth one which is called Petmogn” (p. 143-144). We do not come across the above mentioned doctrines of Persian religion even in Yeznik Koghbatsi’s comprehensive work «Եղծ աղանդոց» (“Refutation of the Sects”).

government of marzpanate. The Greek language studied in Alexandria and Assyrian and Persian languages well-known to him assisted to this. Thanks to all this, the History of Vardanants appears to be a unique historical source reflecting completely the Armenian, as well as Persian and Roman realities of the second half of the 5th century.

Eghishe emphasizes his being the witness of events several times also in the body part of the history. Some scholars such as Babgen Kyuleseryan⁴⁰ considered this to be a sign of false validity. But contrary to it, emphasizing his being witness or present to events the historian demonstrates that he considers the reader's trust towards him (the historian) and his words to be very important. As a court pastor and court secretary Eghishe had been present at the meetings invited by the king of kings Hazkert; Eghishe had heard his speeches which sometimes were threatening and sometimes veiled with hypocrisy. With these speeches the tyrant seethed like a sea the multinational armies consisting of various tribes. And the historian communicated this all to today's multilingual readers after more than 1550 years: "Neither I expressed my opinion, nor did I receive the news but I myself happened to be at that place and saw and heard the sound of Hazkert's voice who was speaking impudently like a violent wind that blew in a line and this way moved and swung the crowd of his army"⁴¹.

Similarly Eghishe describes the bitter insult and shame addressed to those who had adjured while returning to Armenia from Tizbon in the caravan: "Neither we tell all the malicious events that happened to the Armenian legion in the caravan, nor we wish to conceal the sorrow of trouble, we tell about this more or less to be unanimous with those who lamented bitterly for us"⁴². But being witness is not defined only by the word *witness*. Very often exact chronological data spread in Eghishe's history are not paid attention to. They assure the historian's presence in the events described by him more than the word *witness*. The 12th year of Hazkert's enthronement⁴³ which as mentioned by Eghishe was not 450 as assumes Maghakia Ormanyan, when the Holy Saturday of Easter was on April 15th ⁴⁴, but in its previous year, 449, when the Armenian church celebrated the Holy week from March 21st to March 27th ⁴⁵. This coincided with Zoroastrian spring solstice celebrated on March 21st in Iran. This unusual coincidence was an occasion of a good omen for the mages to prompt the king of kings Hazkert to follow their counsel of making Armenia worship fire. Behold an example: on Holy

⁴⁰ See P. Կիլեսերյան, Եղիշե, քննական ուսումնասիրություն, Վիեննա, 1909:

⁴¹ Եղիշե, էջ 15:

⁴² Եղիշե էջ 54:

⁴³ Even the European Iranologists are not of the same opinion concerning the first year of Hazkert II's enthronement: whether it was in August of 438 or 439. In fact, Eghishe considered 438 after which Hazkert's 12th year would be counted 449.

⁴⁴ Օրմանյան Մ., Ազգապատում, հտ. Ա, Կ.Պոլիս, 1912, էջ 406, 411:

⁴⁵ Das Zeitrechnungswesen der Völker. iii. Band, Leipzig, 1914, s. 411 (Tafel III): Eghishe «ի մեծի շաբաթու զարկին» was translated into modern Armenian by Y. Ter-Minasyan as "the holy Saturday of Easter" (Եղիշեի Վարդանանց պատմությունը թարգմ. և ծանոթ. Ե. Տեր-Մինասյանի, Երևան, 1958, էջ 43), while Eghishe meant the whole holy week without mentioning an exact day.

Saturday before the Armenian Easter in 450, Hazkert, prompted by mages, decided to make the Armenian nakharars invited to Tizbon adjure Christianity and worship the sun and fire. On Holy Saturday of Easter the nakharars arrived in Tizbon and appear to the king Hazkert's court⁴⁶. Hazkert demands that they accept the religion of magiarism threatening to expel the nakharars to Sagastan making ownerless Armenia an underfoot for elephants. The nakharars, somehow convincing sparapet Vardan, were compelled to undertake seeming apostasy in order to save the country and the nation from unavoidable wreck. Therefore, the fake apostasy of 11 Armenian nakharars took place in 449, on days following March 27th. Adding multitudinous cavalry and more than 700 mages and some great chief mage, Hazkert sent them to the country Armenia⁴⁷. They reached Armenia on the fourth month⁴⁸; the big borough called Angl and camped there⁴⁹.

M. Ormanyan considers Eghishe's *deadline, the sixth month* the beginning of the deed: "this was the term of beginning the deed". And one year was given for finishing; *from Navasard to Navasard*⁵⁰. According to Julian calendar the moving Armenian year was from August 6th, 450 to August 5th, 451⁵¹. Yervand Ter-Minasyan who has comprised and composed Eghishe's critical original, in his translation into modern Armenian also considers the sixth month as "the beginning of starting the deed", that is to say the first month of the new year: Navasard. Therefore, he counts the *fourth* and *sixth* months from the beginning of the new year as *fourth* and *sixth* months of Armenian or Persian calendar which match (with slight differences) to the months November and January in Julian calendar, thus the Persian months of the year, where the first month is frawardīn (which is Armenian Navasard), the fourth is tir and the sixth is sharewar⁵², are mentioned in the 73rd notification of the modern Armenian translation.

Y. Ter-Minasyan, like M. Ormanyan, misunderstood the piece in Eghishe's original "from Navasard to Navasard" which Y. Ter-Minasyan accepted as a basis in the text of critical publication. I do not consider right Y. Ter-Minasyan's interpretation of the piece of Eghishe's work included in the critical original: "from Navasard till Navasard, it is said, everywhere" but the interpretation "till Navasard, it is said, everywhere" as is included in four manuscripts⁵³. Unlike Y. Ter-Minasyan, M. Ormanyan is absolutely right noticing the time irrelevance concerning the *fourth* and *sixth* months and considers the Persian religious year for calendar calculations: "Counting from August 1st the beginning of the

⁴⁶ Եղիշե, էջ 43:

⁴⁷ Եղիշե, էջ 51:

⁴⁸ Let us mention for comparison that after the battle of Avarayr Hazkert demanded the newly appointed marzpan of Armenia Atrormizd to gather all the prominent priests of Armenia headed by the Bishop Hovsep and sent them to Tizbon in bonds and they arrived there in 2 months and 20 days: «Իսկ զսուրբ քահանայսն՝ վասն զի կապանօք տանէին, յետ երկուց ամսոց և քսան ատուր հասանէին ի ձմերոցն արքունի» - Եղիշե, էջ 130:

⁴⁹ Եղիշե, էջ 58:

⁵⁰ Օրմանեան Մ., Ազգապատում, հ.Ա, էջ 411:

⁵¹ Օրմանեան Մ., op. cit., p. 411.

⁵² Եղիշեի Վարդանանց պատմությունը, էջ 197:

⁵³ Եղիշե, էջ 52 էջատակի 4-րդ տողի ծանոթագրությունը:

sixth month will be December 29th which does not match to the year beginning with Navasard. And it is not a proper solution to count the *sixth* month from April 15th of the year of apostasy or appearing to Hazkert as in this case the *sixth* month would be at the half of October. This problem will be solved with the help of the Persian calendar, in which the New Year is stable: on spring equinox, March 21st⁵⁴. The first month of the Persian religious calendar frawardi started on March 12th, the fourth month-on June 10th and the sixth month (shahrewar) - on August 9th⁵⁵, therefore Hazkert gives a deadline to the mages and the chief mage until the sixth month counted after March, that is to say until Navasard (New Year) for sealing and closing: "The deadline is the sixth month. They were frightened and forced to implement the king's request. "Tell all the high clergymen to close and seal the doors of holy temples until Navasard ⁵⁶ in the power of the great king": unyieldingly orders Hazkert. Therefore, Hazkert sets the deadline of apostatizing Armenia until the sixth month, i. e. until Navasard rigorously demanding to finish the deed until the beginning of the New Year. This appears at the end of the edict where he again reminds of the deadline: "All this that has been said must be implemented until the beginning of the year and everything else must be ready until this time"⁵⁷.

Instead of the above mentioned dense and interrelated chronological data with the help of which Eghishe gives today's historian, geographer and reader much important information about the road from Tizbon to the borough Angl in the Armenian district Tsaghkotn and the deadline of making Armenians worship the fire, Parpetsi implies only one extensive sentence : " And then they forcibly went during the long hours of spring before the beginning of the hot season and when the hot months began a procession started and Armenian people from all the windy places came and reached to the district which was called Tsaghkotn near a firm fortress which was called Angl; they set up camp in that place and they had rest there during the hot hours"⁵⁸. Thus, with a brief revision of Eghishe's about 15 pages, Parpetsi assures our assumption that the caravan passed the road from Tizbon to the borough Angl from the first month of the spring to the hot days of the summer. The borough Angl was not chosen accidentally: it was located in the district Tsaghkotn and the summer court of the former Arshakuni kings was located in the township Shahapivan in the neighboring district Bagrevand. This was the seat of the marzpan Vasak Syuni⁵⁹.

⁵⁴ Օրմանեան Մ., Ազգապատում, հտ.Ա, էջ 411-412:

⁵⁵ Օրմանեան Մ., նույն տեղում, էջ 412: the first six months of the Persian year were Frawartin, Artawahišt, Harot, Tir, Amurt, Šathrewar (Das Zeitrechnungswesen der Völker. S. 314):

⁵⁶ Եղիշէ, էջ 52

⁵⁷ Եղիշէ, էջ 53

⁵⁸ Փարպ., Բ., ԼԱ., էջ 60:

⁵⁹ Շահապիվանի Հայոց արքունիքի մասին տե՛ս Ա. Մուշեղյան, Ուլքե՛ր են Քրիստոսի նախանձահույզ պաշտոնյաները. «Քրիստոնյա Հայաստան», 2013, օգոստոս Ա. Բ. սեպտեմբեր Ա, in present periodical.

And after twenty five days, on Sunday⁶⁰ the chief mage himself arrived with mages to destroy the doors of the church with great power. Then the pastor Ghevond leading the crowd armed with bludgeons broke the skulls of mages and their chief. The court pastor Eghishe, the future historian was present at the conversations of the Armenian marzpan Vasak and the chief mage at the court, therefore the reproaches of the chief mage survived from the beating with bludgeons addressed to Vasak can be considered absolutely valid. Beginning with the traditional biography, Eghishe was presented as sparapet Vardan's soldier, servant or secretary. But this all is merely a consequence of a credulous insight to the question. Eghishe's connection with the commander Vardan has incomparably deeper ideological basis and it is revealed not only in the history of Vardanants but also in Tovma Artsruni's historical work. Tovma Artsruni does not interpret correctly the following information extracted from a historical source⁶¹ which implies that Vardan Mamikonyan feared from the Persian commander Mshkan and: "escaping went to the environs of Mekk', the canyon of the mountain Taurus, the defile Jermadzor and resided in the fortress which is now called *Zrghayl* /.../ because of its unwieldy rustic firmness⁶²" and then in the same spirit: "Vardan feared from the marzpan Mshkan and in order to live in peace he went to the fortress in Mekk' and stayed there... And invited Ohan bishop of Mekk' and Sahak bishop of Rshtunik' and Shmavon bishop of Andzavatsik' and he fulfilled God's orders at days and nights with unceasing diligence and generous custody for the poor for getting Christ's mercy"⁶³. Maghakia Ormanyan is rightfully discontented with the chronological suspense of the data implied by Tovma. Because of this he connects Vardan's appearing in the fortress Zrayl with the death of his grandfather Catholicos Sahak (439, at the end of Navasard) assuming "that Vardan, Sahak's grandson, becoming a subject of hate, escaped to the district Mekk', to the rocky fortress Zrayl, where he received spiritual consolation with the visits of Hovhan bishop of Zrayl, Sahak bishop of Rshtunik and Shmavon bishop of Andzavatsik". However, as the chronological conditions are indistinct, it is easy to accord that at the time of Sahak's exile Vardan considered right to draw aside; then he came into sight again after Sahak's returning to Bagrevand; and Vardan's wife was with Sahak at the time of his death"⁶⁴. Here M. Ormanyan makes an allusion to Vardan's wife's presence at Sahak the Great's funeral mentioned in Koryun's "Life of Mashtots": "There was a pious wife of a ruler; her name was Duster and she was Vardan's wife"⁶⁵. This way Koryun underlines the ruler (not sparapet) Vardan's absence at the last rites of

⁶⁰ Եղիշէ, էջ 58:

⁶¹ According to Tovma Artsruni, this source is Abraham Khostovanogh's Համառոտագրութիւնը. Scholars express unfounded doubts about its existence, especially at recent times.

⁶² This is the fortress Zrayl or Zrel on the mountain Taurus, mentioned in Tovma Artsruni's history and the history of the Anonymous historian continuing him (p. 86, 89, 307). According to Tovma, the peasants pronounced *Zrghayl* because of its absurd bigness.

⁶³ Թովմա Արծրունի, Ա., ժա., էջ 86:

⁶⁴ Օրմանեան Մ., Ազգապատում, հտ.Ա, էջ 379:

⁶⁵ Կորյուն, Վարք Մաշտոցի, հրատ. Մ. Աբեղյանի, Երևան, 1941, [ԻԴ], էջ 88:

his prominent grandfather (at the last day of the month Navasard, in 438 or 439). Thus, the fact of Vardan's "isolating in the Mokk's surroundings" mentioned by M. Ormanyan can refer neither to Catholicos Sahak's being exiled nor to receiving spiritual consolation on the occasion of his death and this does not disperse the chronological imprecision.

However, in the continuation Tovma brings a later episode from which we would rather guess that at the eve of Avarayr, in 450, Vardan actually had gone to the province Mokk' in order to prevent the threatening impendent disaster of Zoroastrianism. Receiving spiritual consolation for the false apostasy in Tizbon could really serve as a relevant excuse for concealing this. It turns out that he had isolated outside of Mijdashkharh (*Midland of Armenia*) in the fortress Zrayl in Mokk' in order to have a secret council with patriotic nakharars and bishops, hidden from the marzpan Vasak Syuni and other conspirators. And here the immediate engagement of Eghishe from Mokk' in organizing the secret council is revealed. In Mokk' Vardan meets with Hovhan, bishop of Mokk', the famous bishop of Rshtunik Sahak, Father Shmavon from Andzavatsik. The latter is, however, not the bishop of Andzavatsik, as is mistakenly mentioned by Tovma, but nakharar of Andzavatsik Shmavon who is mentioned by Eghishe and Ghazar Parpetsi in the list of participants of the church council of Artashat for several times as well as among the 35 nakharars invited to Tizbon and exiled⁶⁶. The name of the bishop of Andzavatsik participating in the council of Artashat is *Yeghbayr*⁶⁷. The nakharar of Andzavatsik Vakhritch mentioned by Tovma is not mentioned by Eghishe and Parpetsi. Profiting from the fire worship spread in Armenia by the mages, the hidden local heliolaters, pyrolaters and backsliders took actions. It is not accidental, that Shavasp Artsruni dared to cooperate with the mages even at the center of Armenia, in the former capital city Artashat and he founded a temple of fire and blazed Zoroastrian fire right at the doors of the city, in the former sacerdotal pagoda of the art of education devoted to the pagan god Tir that is known to us from Agatangelos's history⁶⁸. Although this fact is not included in the works of Eghishe and Ghazar who used his work, it is still preserved in 9-10th centuries' historian Abraham Khostovanogh's (Confessor) *Համառոտագրություն* (Contraction) the existence of which is skeptically denied by many philologists. The following information implied by Tovma Artsruni about the punitive activity taken against impious Shavasp Artsruni who founded temple of fire worship in the pagoda of Vormizd near the entrance of the city Artashat and was spreading mazdean worship, certifies the crucial steps implemented by that council. Therefore, Vardan Mamikonyan with nakharars Tatchat Rshtuni and Vakhritch

⁶⁶ Եղիշէ, էջ 43, 99, 193, Փարսյ., էջ 45, 47, 75, 86:

⁶⁷ Եղիշէ, էջ 28, Փարսյ., էջ 44:

⁶⁸ Ագաթանգեղոյ պատմութիւն Հայոց, քննական բնագիրը Գ. Տեր-Մկրտչյանի և Ս. Կանայանցի, Երևան, 1983, § 778 - "... and the king himself moved from the city Vagharshapat to the city Artashat, destroyed there the altars of the goddess Anahit and the ones that were in the place called Yerazamoyan. First they touched the pagoda devoted to the worship of the dream reader god tir and sacerdotal literature and science. It was called divan of Vormizd's pen, pagoda of art of education".

Andzavatsiq and 1200 soldiers “suddenly reached to Shavasp and the marzpan Vndo with unexpected speed. And as they had encamped at the watercourse of Yeraskh and Metsamor they first came across Shavasp Artsruni with whom the brave Vardan had come to fight as a lion, as a cub of a lion and with power and speed of his hand he cut Shavasp’s body in two pieces. And Tatchat and Vakhritch locked the marzpan and his son Shiro, captivated them and took to *Dvin* and burnt the fire grate of the temple of Vormizd and hung Shiro on a wood over the fire grate, drowned him in the river and killed with swords”⁶⁹. Here instead of the name *Dvin* should have been *Artashat*.

Tovma Artsruni gives basis to insist that the liberation of the prominent Armenian castles from Persian armed garrisons and the destruction of the profane fire temples the day before the battle of Avarayr was planned and lead by the commander Vardan Mamikonyan himself. Liberating those castles before the battle of Avarayr, in fact Vardan secured the Armenian support troops from the threats of the Persian garrisons spread through the whole country and this shows his strategic proficiency.

Eghishe is also well-informed with Persian court ceremonies, state and religious relations. His knowledge of the Persian language is sensational, especially when the official and worship terms are compared with the list of terms of the 3rd century’s Sasanid lithographic inscriptions. Thus, for instance, the Pahlavi word “krpikar” used twice by Eghishe is found twice in the form “krpkry”⁷⁰ in the chief mage Kartir’s (the late 3rd century) inscription Naqsh-e Rostam. The decoder and explicator Martin Sprengling translates this word into English as “well doer” (*բարեգործ* in Armenian)⁷¹ and this corresponds to Eghishe’s and Parpetsi’s testimonies⁷². Before Movses Khorenatsi it is the historian of Vardanants that gives information about ancient Parthian tradition still preserved in the court of Iran in the mid 5th century when except the crown-prince all the other princes were sent away from the court in their childhood in order to escape further

⁶⁹ Թովմա Արծրունի, Բ., ա., էջ 89-90

⁷⁰ Martin Sprengling, third century, Iran, Sapor and Kartir, Chicago, 1953 – Kartir Naqsh-e-Rostam, p.65, ln. 18-19: Here the head mage Kartir who spread fire worship in whole Iran in the 3rd century implies: “There is heaven and there is hell and the one who is a well-doer (krpkry) will go straight to the heaven forever and the one who is a sinner, will deserve the hell”.

⁷¹ See Sprengling p. 67, ln. 18-19

⁷² “Being not a welldoer (krpikar) you strengthen the enemy” (Եղիշէ, էջ 46). “As he (Vasak) governed the province Syunik not by order but by killing his uncle Vaghinak with fraud and collusion and took the government as if being a welldoer of the court” (Եղիշէ, էջ 137). In the last testimony Eghishe refers the word “krpikar” to Vasak Syuni ironically when the evil-doing of killing his uncle Vaghinak for taking possession of the province Syunik is revealed in the justice court in Tizbon. This exactly corresponds to Arshak Kamsarakan’s ironic characterization of Vasak Syuni as a “welldoer” in the same justice court included in Parpetsi’s history: “And then glorified like a welldoer he was sitting there among you in mitigation” (Փարպ. Բ, խ. էջ 8). It is clear that Eghishe’s “krpikar” was translated from Persian into Armenian just like our contemporary Iranologist Sprengling interprets into English the head mage Kartir’s krpkry as “welldoer”. But the meaning of welldoer does not correspond at all to Efišē’s first testimony: Hazkert’s speech. Instead of the word “krpikar” (krtikar) Eghishe’s manuscript Andzavatik has the short form “krtar” which has to be corrected as krpak, Pahlavi krpkry (Sprengling, 65, ln. 20), which Sprengling interprets as *welldoing*.

courtier troubles and they received heritage in certain districts⁷³. Eghishe shows this by the example of the king of proper Aghuank Vache⁷⁴ who has rebelled against the Persian king of kings Peroz. And the historian of Vardanants translates that heritage of childhood from Pahlavi as “property of childhood”⁷⁵.

The information implied by Eghishe about the officials with the highest positions in the Persian court is unexpectedly affirmed in Persian sources, such as “Matakdan i hazar datastan”⁷⁶ (the Sassanid Codex)⁷⁷ (composed under the reign of Khosrov Parvez). In this codex there are collected legal cases resolved by Persian kings and judges during the previous centuries. Their precedents served as basis for defining punishments of similar crimes in the future.

Thus, according to Eghishe the great chiliarch Mihrnerseh “the upset old man” also received verdict for the various harms he had caused. We find clear information about this punishment in the Sassanid Codex: by command of the king of kings Peroz following Hazkert II and in consent of the head mage of chief mages, Mihrnerseh, the next most influential person after the king of kings Hazkert is convicted to *slavery* (*pat bandakih*) and is given to the fire temple Vormizd Peroz as a slave (*bandak*). Mihrnerseh *found harmful many of his deeds*, he himself confessed that he had destroyed Armenia for which he was sent home with great dishonor but he never wished to slander about the captivated (nakharars) till the end of his life”⁷⁸. “He found harmful many of his deeds” is wordily taken from the king of kings Peroz’s verdict: “ut nam i vinaskarih” (a. 39, 14)⁷⁹. Apparently, Eghishe saw Peroz’s command at the newly appointed marzpan of Armenia Atrormizd.

H. Gatrtchyan refers to Eghishe the interpretations of “Isaiah and book of judges” of the Old Testament as well as that: “It seems that Eghishe himself has retold the allocution of metamorphosis, has been in Palestine and visited the monks on the mountain Tabor”⁸⁰. The academician Levon Khachikyan, restored the lost original of

⁷³ Մուշեղյան Ա., Մովսես Խորենացու դարը, Երևան, 2007, էջ 256-291:

⁷⁴ The name “Vache” is not included in Eghishe’s work; we restore it according to Kaghankatvatsi: “About Vache king of Aghuank that denied pagan delusions and believed in living God and after the war against Persians turned monk in desert doing holy acts” Կաղանկատուացի, ա., ժ., էջ 15-17:

⁷⁵ Եղիշէ, էջ 199. N. Adonts was completely right to notice that the Armenian historian of the 8th century Movses Kaghankatvatsi extracted the whole episode of rebellion of the king of Aghuank from Efišē (Կաղանկատուացի, ա. ժ. էջ 15-17). “Chapter 18 in the book I is extracted from Eghishe but our historiographer (Կաղանկատուացին - ա. մ.) has added Vache’s name who is unfamiliar to Eghishe and Ghazar” Ն. Ադոնց, Երկեր, հտ. ք., Երևան, 2006, էջ 38: Let us mention that, however, the king of Aghuank Vache’s name became familiar from the paper of the bishop Gyt (patriarch after 461) which is completely cited again by Kaghankatvatsi (տես ծան. 3):

⁷⁶ The anuscript of thousand judgments.

⁷⁷ Периханян А. Г., Сасанидский Судебник, “Книга тысячи судебных решений”, Ереван, 1973, էջ 424:

⁷⁸ Եղիշէ, էջ 195.

⁷⁹ Периханян А. Г., Сасанидский Судебник, с. 424.

⁸⁰ Գաթրճեան Հ., Հինգերորդ դարու չորս հայ պատմագրութեանց ժամանակը, Հանդէս Ամսօրյա, Վիեննա, 1887, ք. 1, էջ 9-12:

Eghishe's «Արարածոց մեկնություն» (Interpretation of Genesis)⁸¹. At the time of relative peace impended after the disaster destined to Armenia, Eghishe decided to devote himself to religious life, that is to say, to endeavoring behavior and made a trip to Palestine, he was on the mountain Tabor where, according to Evangeline, Christ's prominent transfiguration or metamorphosis took place. He composed the allocutions "On the mountain Tabor" and "About monks"⁸² concerning this festival and the conduct of the monks endeavoring on the mountain Tabor. Returning from Palestine, according to traditional biography, wishing to be unknown, Eghishe secretly endeavored in the province Mekk', in a cave that was called "Saint Eghishe's cave" but after being discovered and proclaimed by shepherds he moved to Rshtunik and lived for several years near the beach of Van in a cave that also was called "Saint Eghishe's cave". And, according to traditional biography, here he deceased after a few years, presumably after 470. Finding him dead, they buried him near the same cave. Gh. Alishan gives information about the last terminus of Eghishe's relics: "Eghishe's relics were displaced to today's monastery of Chaghar (Charahan) Mother of God in the foot of the high and flowery mountain Artos that is surrounded by the river Khoshap in south and the sea Van in south-east and is connected with the dale of Vostan."⁸³

Eghishe's history of Vardanants must have been finished at the 5th year of the Persian king of kings' Peroz's reign, in 462 as in that year Peroz promises to allow nakharars return to Armenia during the coming 6th year. Giving this information, the historian promises to refer to that question again: "But I have to come back to this place"⁸⁴; instead of this question the book is finished with the most magnificent praise devoted to the delicate ladies of Armenia that has ever been written about feminine chastity: "The delicately bred ladies of Armenia, who had been cared for and pampered..., regularly attended the houses of worship without shoes and on foot, offering up ceaseless prayers that they might be able to endure their great suffering..."⁸⁵

The information given by Eghishe about Vardanants, numerical data about armies and victims and various other details, his awareness of occurrences in adjacent and distant places actually make the history a valid work created by a well-informed and witnessed author and his poetically powerful, eloquent speech and hot-spirited imagination raise the work to the level of a national epic.

⁸¹ Խաչիկյան Լ., Եղիշեի «Արարածոց մեկնությունը», Երևան, 1992:

⁸² «Սրբոյ Հօրն մերոյ Եղիշէի վարդապետի Մատենագրութիւնք», Վենետիկ, 1859 - «Ի Թաթոր լերին. Յայտնութիւն Տեառն առ Պետրոսեանց», էջ 213-239. «Բան խրատու. Յաղագս միանձանց», էջ 159-161:

⁸³ Although according to Y. Ter-Minasyan "There is no evidence of Eghishe's relics displacing, however, Gh. Alishan informs about the facts of his era" (Տեր-Մինասյան Ե., Պատմա-բանասիրական հետազոտություններ, Երևան, 1971, էջ 123):

⁸⁴ Եղիշե, էջ 199:

⁸⁵ See: Agop J. Hacikyan (coordinating editor), Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzounian, The Heritage of Armenian Literature, Vol. I., From the Oral Tradition to the Golden Age. Detroit, 2000, p. 265.