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## **ARMENIA FROM THE FALL OF THE CILICIAN KINGDOM (1375) TO THE FORCED EMIGRATION UNDER SHAH ABBAS (1604)**

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The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are the dark ages of Armenian history. The poverty of historical sources reflects the disastrous decline of society and culture under Turkic oppression. Thus, this period -- from the fall of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia in 1375 to the forced resettlement of eastern Armenians in Safavid Iran in 1604 -- is either ignored in standard histories or relegated to a page or two.

To call both these centuries simply the early Ottoman period would be inaccurate. Armenia -- a precise geographical entity since antiquity, at times misleadingly referred to as eastern Anatolia or eastern Asia Minor -- was only conquered by the Ottomans under Sultan Selim the Grim in the second decade of the sixteenth century. To be sure, Armenians in cities like Kayseri, Trebizond, and Constantinople had lived under Ottoman rule from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and had known the Turks as Seljuks since the eleventh, but it was only in the sixteenth century that the majority of the nation became subject to the sultans.

From shortly after the year 1000 to the second half of the twentieth century, Armenia's fate was inextricably associated with the Turkic invaders from Central Asia, and whether Seljuk, Türkmen, Ottoman, Safavid, or Azeri, all of them belonged to the same Oghuz Turkic linguistic group, one of the four major divisions of the Turkic family

of languages. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represent the midpoint in the millennium span of Armeno-Turkish relations.

Strangely, during these two hundred years Armenia was never at war, yet, it never saw peace. After 1375, Armenia as an autonomous political entity ceased; as a geographical area it remained coveted; as a nation it survived. Rival Islamic dynasties struggled to dominate it and in so doing to exploit its resources. The structure of Armenian life was badly damaged, nearly destroyed, and, finally, was to be changed. Self-rule became a dream to be fulfilled. The core of Armenia's ancient society -- the nakharar system of hereditary land owning nobility -- had collapsed and disappeared. The Armenian church, deprived of its traditional upperclass support and divided by dissension, accommodated itself to Islamic tutelage in order to endure intact beyond this destructive era. The population steadily fled the wars, pillage, famine, and ruin, augmenting already existing Armenian colonies in the Crimea, Central Europe, Constantinople, and the large urban centers of the Ottoman Empire, Syria, and Iran.

Though the population in Armenia declined, it remained sufficiently Armenian to guarantee national continuation. Yet, just as these years witnessed the annihilation of the Armenia of kings, they prepared the way for a cosmopolitan, mercantile nation ready to compete in a modern world dominated by the West.

The fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia was a cruel disappointment to all Armenians, even if the jurisdiction of its rulers never reached north of the mountains into Greater Armenia. Colophons or scribal memorials of the thirteenth and especially of the fourteenth centuries from areas as distant as the Crimea, Ilkhanid Iran, Julfa on the Arax, Ayrarat, Siunik', Tiflis, Erzerum, Erzinjan, Sebastia, Bayburt, and the Lake Van region acknowledged the successive kings of Cilicia. They are the most important sources from a period graced only by a single historian at its beginning, Thomas Metzop'etsi (events from 1388 to 1446), and another at its end, Arak'el Tavrizetsi (d. 1670). Immediately after the destruction of the Cilician kingdom, colophons, in their formular language, stop

citing Armenian kings. Only in Siunik' and Lori are Armenian rulers, local princes and barons like the Orbelians, still mentioned. For the rest of Armenia, the Church remains the only permanent, widespread national institution. Its catholicoses, patriarchs, and bishops are unfailingly referred to in the colophonic formulae. For a generation or two there are still fragmentary references to remnants of the Cilician nobility in strongholds such as Gaban and Korikos, but by the second quarter of the fifteenth century these, too, disappear and the title "King of Armenia" passes into the titulature of the Lusignan house of Cyprus and thence to Venetian and other aristocratic families of Europe.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the Near East had three major powers: the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria, the Ottomans in western Anatolia, and the Timurids in Iran and Central Asia. Armenia and the surrounding areas were ruled by a number of Türkmen dynasties, formed by military adventurers formerly in the employ of Mongol rulers of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The Ottomans themselves started out as one of these. The Byzantine Empire had been reduced to its capital Constantinople and the Crusaders had vanished a century earlier. In Armenia, northern Mesopotamia, and eastern Iran, the most important Türkmen forces were the Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep) and the Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep) dynasties, named after the emblems on their banners.

As the century was ending, between 1387 and 1402, Timur-Leng marched through Armenia three times on campaigns of terror and destruction as he passed from his base in the distant east to the shores of the Aegean. Thomas of Metzop's *History of the Wars of Timur and Shah Rukh* and dozens of contemporary colophons chronicle Timur's devastating progress in gruesome and painful detail. Not a kind word is spoken of him. The scribes, following a centuries-old tradition, attribute these calamities to God's punishment for the wickedness and sins of the Armenians. In 1402 Timur crushed the rising Ottoman power through a humiliating defeat of Sultan Bayazid near Ankara; afterward, he retreated to Central Asia and died. The former Türkmen rulers, like their

Armenian subjects, sighed in relief at the simultaneous disappearance of Timur in the east and the Ottomans to the west.

## **POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY**

### ***The Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep) Dynasty (1410-1467)***

Within two years of Timur's last winter in the Near East (1403-1404), spent in Karabagh/Artsakh, the reigning chief of the Qara Qoyunlu, Qara Yusuf, came forth from his retreat in Egypt. The clan had remained opposed to Timur and his successors, defending the area during the early raids. In 1406, Qara Yusuf took Tabriz, the principal city of western Iran, in 1409, Mardin, and the following year engaged the rival Aq Qoyunlu Türkmens on the plain of Mush, killing their leader Qara Yuluk Osman. Qara Yusuf's authority now extended over most of Armenia. His rise to power was not without severe consequences for the Christians. In 1407, during a raid into Georgia, he killed King Giorgi VII and took 15,000 prisoners, many of whom were Armenian. In 1411, he seized Baghdad from the Jalayirids and, after establishing his son there, returned to his base at Vagharshakert (Alashkert) in Armenia with his Baharlu tribesmen. Despite Qara Qoyunlu incursions during the rest of the decade into areas to the north, there were some years of comparative tranquillity. Thomas of Metzop' emphasizes that though taxes were high, there was peace, robbers were gone, and reconstruction had begun. This is confirmed by a colophon of 1412 that speaks of the rebuilding of Kars.

The Timurids had not renounced claims on the region. From Khorasan, Timur's son, Shah Rukh, led three campaigns in the next fifteen years against the Qara Qoyunlu. These are described in detail in Metzop'etsi's *History*. In 1420, on the way to meet the first attack, Qara Yusuf died. Once again a leaderless Türkmen army turned to looting. Colophons, especially from Akhlat, which had been taken by Shah Rukh, describe the tragedies and anguish Armenia was subjected to during this fourth Timurid scourge.

Iskandar (1420-1437), son of Qara Yusuf, retreated south to Mardin and Mosul only to return when Shah Rukh left the area. According to Armenian witnesses, Iskandar's reign was perceived to be as harsh as any: "He made the Armenian homeland like a desert" (colophon of 1426); "Armenia was subject to devastation and plunder, to slaughter, and captivity" (1425); "Each time, Iskandar plundered and carried off captives from the region of Van and Vostan. He then captured the citadel of Van, and all of us -- bishops and *vardapets*, monks, priests, *tanuters* (heads of families), and ladies -- took to flight and wandered about in foreign lands and became strangers" (Berkri 1426). In 1427, a monk from the Monastery of Metzop' complained that the divine liturgy had not been performed for six years.

Iskandar also attacked many of the Kurdish chiefs around Lake Van and Lake Urmia. In 1426, he put an end to the fiefdom of Artaz in the Maku area, ruled by Armenian Catholic feudal lords, much to the joy of the Orthodox Armenians, who, in one colophon, praise the Muslims for allowing them to make repairs on an Apostolic church, which had been forbidden them by the Catholics.

The second raid of Shah Rukh, resulting in Iskandar's, defeat brought more plunder and destruction. Armenians retreated into the mountains, especially in the Vaspurakan area, because prisoners were being rounded up and deported as slaves to Khorasan. This campaign of 1428 was followed by a severe famine: in 1431, witnesses reported the eating of human flesh and the sale of human fat. In between these raids, Iskandar conducted devastating campaigns to restore his authority in the land and prepare for future incursions. The final attack of the Timurids began in 1434. The sources not only complain of looting, but assert that many Armenians left their mother-herth and emigrated.

Yet, Iskandar sought to cultivate the Armenian population, especially the feudal lords and clergy. To reinforce this policy, he took the title "Shah-i Armen," King of the Armenians. He also had as one of his advisors Rustum, the son of Baron Beshken, the

head of the Armenian nakharar house of Siunik'. Evidence suggests that from 1425 to 1430, Rustum became the governor of the province of Ayrarat with Erevan as its center. His authority seems to have extended as far as Siunik', where his father still kept the title "prince of princes." During the final Timurid assault, Shah Rukh secured the allegiance of Iskandar's younger brother, Jihan Shah, who was appointed governor over Tabriz and Armenia. The latter began persecutions in the Siunik' area, forcing Beshken Orbelian with 6,000 households to emigrate north to Lori, at the time under the control of King Alexander of Georgia, who was married to Beshken's sister. Colophons of the period describe the ravages inflicted on the area, including the sacking of the monastery of Tat'ev. A northern monastery, Sanahin, became the spiritual center of the displaced Armenians, now subjects of the Georgian king. Iskandar was busy further west. During a raid against the rival Aq Qoyunlu clan, he seized Armenians from Sebastia/Sivas, Kharberd, and Tokat and forced them to resettle in the Ayrarat and Siunik' areas. Late in 1437, however, in an attack against his brother Jihan Shah, he was defeated and killed; as a consequence, Rustum lost his authority over the Armenians and joined his father in exile. Thomas of Metzop' comments, nevertheless, that peace was returned to the area.

Jihan Shah (1437-1467), faced by various enemies, also looked toward the Armenians for support. Several feudal chiefs were given control of one or more regions and even allowed to use the title "prince" (*ishkhan*); these included lords of Siunik', Vayots Dzor, Artsakh, and Gugark'. Monasteries recuperated some of their previously sequestered properties. A certain Yakub Beg was appointed in Rustum's place over Ayrarat, with residence at Erevan. More than once during Jihan Shah's rule positive actions toward the Armenians were taken: some Armenian churches were rebuilt; tacit permission was given for the catholicosate to be re-established in Etchmiadzin in 1441 and Catholicos Zakaria of Aght'amar interceded before Jihan Shah concerning the payment of taxes from the Bitlis, Mush, and Akhlat areas in the 1450s. But these positive steps were counterbalanced by continued transgressions. In 1440, the population of

Georgia was victimized. In Tiflis, 8,000 were killed and 9,000 were taken as slaves. Ruthless onslaughts continued into the 1450s targeting Erzincan, Kemakh, Bayburt, and Terjan. Afterward Jihan Shah moved south again toward Bitlis, Mush, and Akhlat, taking 1,500 Armenian prisoners. More ambitious campaigns led him into Mesopotamia, where he conquered Fars and Baghdad in 1455. Two years later, he forced his way into Iran, capturing the Timurid cities of Rayy, Gilan, Qazvin, Khorasan, and in 1458, the capital Herat.

The final decade of Jihan Shah's rule witnessed a continual fight with the Aq Qoyunlu, who had begun moving up from their lands around Mosul. Attacks against the Lake Van area resulted in heavy reprisals by Jihan Shah, who laid waste Taron and Mush in 1467. The end was near, however, for the Qara Qoyunlu dynasty, plagued as it was by internal revolts and confronted by the charismatic leadership of Uzun Hasan, the Aq Qoyunlu leader. The decisive battle occurred in November 1467; Jihan Shah and his most loyal forces were slaughtered. Shortly after, the Aq Qoyunlu became rulers of Armenia. The following four decades of their rule, marked by continual struggles with opposing Turkic dynasties to the east in Iran and the west in Anatolia, were no more peaceful than the previous forty years of Qara Qoyunlu supremacy.

#### *The Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep) Dynasty (1468-1502)*

The Aq Qoyunlu, an Oghuz Türkmen tribe that may have entered the Middle East as early as the Seljuk invasions, chose Diyarbekir as capital. Unlike the Qara Qoyunlu, they did not resist Timur, but joined him and, therefore, were confirmed in their fief of Diyarbekir. In the post-Timurid period, the Aq Qoyunlu were unable to overcome their rivals, nor were they able to profit much from the weakening of the Ottoman state. They had marital ties with the Greek Comnene rulers and allied themselves with the Karamanid dynasty of central Anatolia against the Ottomans. The most outstanding of their rulers was Uzun Hasan (1453-1478), related by marriage to the Greeks of

Trebizond. In consequence, Uzun Hasan tried to intercede with Sultan Mehmed on behalf of the Commene, but to no avail as the Ottomans took Trebizond in 1461. Subsequently, Uzun Hasan, along with the Karamanids, established firm diplomatic contacts with the Venetians in an attempt to trap their common enemy in a pincer action. The policy failed, and at best Uzun Hasan only succeeded in delaying the Ottoman drive eastward.

Still, with the crushing defeat and death of the Qara Qoyunlu leader Jihan Shah in 1467, and that of his son Ali, the last Black Sheep representative, in the following year, the Aq Qoyunlu became undisputed rulers of Armenia, Northern Mesopotamia, and Shirvan. Though at first Armenian scribes saw the destruction of Qara Qoyunlu power as a deliverance from the oppressive taxation and exactions of the previous half-century, and though Uzun Hasan, in an attempt to rationalize levies, issued a *Kanunname* that published tax rates and the principles governing their collection, Armenians found out that the Aq Qoyunlu were to oppress and tax at least as much as their predecessors. Furthermore, in Uzun Hasan's time restrictions were put on church activities, and Christians were required to wear a blue mark for identification.

Determined to stamp out all semi-independent authority in his lands, Uzun Hasan attacked Bitlis, the decades-old stronghold of Kurdish emirs who controlled that area of Lake Van. Bitlis, Akhlat, and lands to the south and in Jezira were taken. The Aq Qoyunlu leader then turned against his old enemies, the Ottomans, who, in addition to absorbing the Pontic state, the last Greek outpost in Anatolia, defeated the Karamanids, the last independent Muslim principality in Anatolia. In 1472, starting from Taron, Uzun Hasan realized a series of successes at Terjan, Erzinjan, and Tokat; he then marched against Karamaniya. But in a series of battles against the Ottomans, he was defeated and nearly lost his life. It was Ottoman military organization, the well-trained Janissary corps, and the use of artillery that beat Uzun Hasan's forces, essentially structured on

tribal or at least traditional Turkic nomadic lines and unwilling to accept the use of canons.

As compensation, in 1476 and 1477, Uzun Hasan launched a cruel assault against his northern neighbor, Bagrat IV of Georgia, during which many Armenians were killed in Tiflis. Throughout these wars, the money to equip the Aq Qoyunlu army and manage military affairs came from heavy taxation and levies, the brunt of which was borne by the Armenians. The death of Uzun Hasan in 1471 left the Türkmen realm at the mercy of his young sons' generals. In the end, Yakub became the Aq Qoyunlu Padishah (1478-1490). He soon faced a new threat from the east: the Safyan sheikhs of the city of Ardabil in northwestern Iran. Shi'ites by faith, the sheikhs had already begun to exert a strong moral influence over various Türkmen tribes. In 1488, Yakub attacked Ardabil, defeated the Safyan allies known as the Qizl-Bashi or red heads -- after the color of their headdress -- and killed the sheikh, whose young children, it is said, took refuge with Armenian monks in the Aght'amar region. In less than a dozen years, the youngest of these children, Ismail, was to head a Türkmen coalition and to found a new dynasty for Persia -- the Safavids. During Yakub's reign, Armenian sources report that Christians could not use saddles or ring bells, and had to wear a white belt as a mark of identification.

After two years of internecine struggles, Rustum, the grandson of Uzun Hasan, took control of the family for the next five years after which he was killed near Julfa by Aq Qoyunlu rivals. In the following year, 1498, Alwand managed to seize power. But by 1499, the realm was divided in two -- Alwand getting Armenia and Shirvan and his brother Muhammad, northern Mesopotamia and Iraq.

### *The Rise of the Safavids*

By 1500, Ismail the Safavid was gathering under his banner Türkmen tribes, especially the seven that made up the Qizl-Bashi confederation. In that same year, he

attacked southern Georgia and Shirak, then entered Shirvan and took Shamakhi. The following year, Ismail took Tabriz, Alwand's capital. In 1502, he repulsed a counterattack by an Aq Qoyunlu coalition of Alwand and Muhammad and thereby all but put an end to the Black Sheep dynasty.

The fifteenth century in Armenian history ends with the heralding of a new Muslim force. The Safavids were also of Türkmen origin, Ismail himself composing poems in the Oghuz dialect. Unlike their predecessors, the Safavids were, as sheikhs of Ardabil, religious as well as secular rulers. And though Muslim and essentially Oghuz Turkic like their western neighbors, the Ottomans, and their eastern ones, the Uzbek Turks (successors to the Timurids in Central Asia), the Safavids were Shi'i. This religious distinction gave Iran (until then predominantly Sunni) an identity apart from its Islamic Turkic neighbors.

During the sixteenth century Armenia and the Armenians suffered terribly; only later in the mid-seventeenth century were they to experience a revival under these same Ottomans and Safavids. The rise to power of a new Iranian dynasty coupled with the eastern push of the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, brought into being a different kind of foreign overlordship. In a sense the Aq and Qara Qoyunlu acted as intermediate powers in control of Armenia, Shirvan, and the Caspian region and at times Iraq, serving as a buffer zone between the Ottomans in the west, the Timurids in the east, and the Mamluks to the south. That intermediary was now gone. The superpowers -- the Ottomans and the Safavids -- were to confront each other directly in Armenia. However bad the fifteenth century appeared in terms of the socio-economic and cultural history of Armenia, the sixteenth century was to be worse.

### *Armenian-Ottoman Relations*

During the absorption of central Asia Minor by Sultan Bayazid at the end of the fourteenth century, Armenians in larger cities like Amasia and Kayseri had come to know

the Ottoman Turks only indirectly. The destruction of the Ottoman state in Anatolia in 1402 delayed Armenia's contact with them until the second-half of the fifteenth century. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the taking of Trebizond in 1461 and the Crimea in 1475, and the final submission of the Karaman state, brought comparatively large numbers of Armenians in contact with the new empire. Armenians had always been resident in Constantinople and in other cities of the Byzantine Empire, but there is relatively little information on their numbers and activities in such places as Adrianople, Bursa, Kütahya, Ankara, and Karaman. Armenians lived in these and other cities, some of which already supported bishops. For Constantinople the information is better, though at times confused and contradictory. Several standard histories of Armenia (Tchamtchian and Ormanian, for example) assert that after the conquest of the Byzantine capital, Sultan Mehmed established Bishop Gennadius as the Greek Patriarch, with jurisdiction over all Orthodox subjects in the empire, and in the following year, 1454, the sultan established the post of Chief Rabbi over the Jews. Finally, in 1461, according to these and other works, Mehmed brought to Constantinople Bishop Hovakim of Bursa, whom he made patriarch (*patrik*) over all Armenians and non-Orthodox Christians in his territories. Furthermore, these histories declare that Mehmed, wanting a counter-force against the many Greeks in the capital, brought in from newly conquered areas large numbers of Armenians to help in the repopulation of the war-weakened city.

The traditional views concerning Mehmed's resettling of Armenians in Constantinople as a counterforce against the Greeks and even the accepted notion of the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in the Conqueror's time have now been dismissed as "myths" (H. Berbérian). A careful examination of the early post-conquest history of Constantinople, through sources heretofore not used by Armenian scholars, demonstrates there is no evidence showing that Sultan Mehmed tried to balance Armenians against Greeks. As a matter of fact, a quarter of century after Mehmed's conquest, the number of Armenians in Constantinople did not exceed more than 1,000

households -- some five to six thousand souls -- in both the city proper and Galata, the former Italian suburb across the Golden Horn. These figures are based on the 1478 census of the shops in Constantinople and Galata conducted by the mayor (*qadi*) and police chief (*za'im*) of the city. Five or six thousand Armenians was not a great number among a population estimated at 100,000 to 120,000. It was in fact the smallest among the groups listed: 9,500 Muslim households or 57,000 individuals; about 3,750 Greek households or 22,500 Greeks; and approximately 1,650 Jewish households or some 9,900 Jews.

The census figures of 1478 show that the great majority of new settlers, whether forced or voluntary, was in fact Muslim. A quarter of century later, shortly after 1500, Armenian households represented about one-fourth that of the Greeks, hardly enough to suggest a dramatic increase. The situation remained much the same until the end of the sixteenth century when there was a wave of Armenian immigrants fleeing the Ottoman-Persian wars and the Jelali upheavals. There is forced resettlement of Armenians in the fifteenth century, but the sources, when specific, refer to very few individuals, or when discussing larger numbers are vague about the Armenian proportion.

The question of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople is complex. The Greek Patriarchate was not established by Mehmed, simply because it had always existed. The Chief Rabbi, who had been encouraged to migrate to the capital, was appointed in 1454, but only as the spiritual leader of the Jews in Constantinople. As for the Armenian "Patriarch," Bishop Hovakim was merely the prelate of the capital and held no jurisdiction over the Armenians in the rest of the empire nor did he possess the title "Patriarch." The title Patriarch was not used to designate the head of the Armenians in Constantinople until the 1540s during the reign of Süleyman Kanuni (1520-1566, known in western sources as the Magnificent). Other Armenian sources make it clear that the Patriarch of Constantinople did not get jurisdiction over other Armenian prelates of the empire until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then only by a gradual process.

The question of when exactly the title and authority of "patriarch" was awarded and acquired its full jurisdictional meaning may be understood when the Armenian colophons of the sixteenth century are published.

Despite these clarifications, the numbers of Armenians in the Ottoman capital were steadily increasing, continually augmented by newcomers from both the better established Armenian middleclass of the large urban centers of the empire and lowerclass artisans and peasants from the war-torn and famine-stricken, despoiled areas of Armenia. The few accounts of forced immigration of Armenians into Constantinople in the early period make it quite clear that Sultan Mehmed wanted "rich merchants, artisans, and educated persons" to contribute to the reanimation of the city. Some colophons even specify that Armenians were at times forced to move on the threat of death. As at other moments when they were unwillingly compelled to leave Armenia, these refugees lamented their exile while vividly describing their hardships and sufferings. By hard work and outward conformity, they made the best of their situation and slowly acquired important positions in trade and finance in Constantinople and elsewhere.

### *The Ottoman Empire and the Christians*

An examination of state institutions during the centuries of Ottoman ascendancy reveals the astonishing phenomenon of the most powerful Muslim empire being administered and run -- except for the sultans themselves -- by officials and military men born, almost without exception, as Christians. The elite Janissary corps of the conquering sultans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was originally formed of Christian captives from the Balkans. Later, the corps obtained new recruits through the *devshirme* system, the forced, periodic collection of young Christians, for the most part Orthodox, from the European provinces of the empire. They were converted to Islam and taught Turkish while being given an elite education and military training. Most non-religious posts, including that of the governors of provinces and even the grand vizier, were filled from

the corps' ranks. Sons of Janissaries, no matter the rank or distinction of their fathers, were not allowed to join the corps, since they were born Muslims. Thus, the empire was led on the battlefield and in its civil service by individuals who were neither Turks nor Muslims at birth. By the seventeenth century, the system had degenerated. The decision to admit Muslims resulted in a tenfold increase in the size of the corps (comprising only ten to twelve thousand during its glory), leading to a decline in military discipline.

What role did the Armenians play in this system? Simply stated, a very small one. The majority of youths, generally twelve to twenty years old, were taken from the vast Orthodox populations, whether Greek or Slav, of Europe rather than Anatolia or Armenia. That the Armenians were officially excluded from the *devshirme*, as some scholars have suggested, is doubtful. A curious reference to the exclusion of the Armenians is found in the 1582 account of Maffei Venieri. It is paraphrased by von Hammar as follows: "The Armenians are the only ones exempt from the annual recruitment of Christian children destined to be incorporated into the ranks of the Janissaries. They do not become Janissaries until a lapse of twenty-five years." Elsewhere, however, von Hammar affirms that the Janissaries were "recruited by an annual levy of young boys, which after the decree (*kanun*) could take place only in Bosnia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Armenia."

Since the major part of Armenia was not conquered until the first quarter of the sixteenth century and areas like Erzerum, the Ararat valley, and eastern parts of Vaspurakan were not really secure for the Ottomans until the early seventeenth century or at best at the end of the sixteenth century -- prior to which only the main fortresses and cities were in their control -- large rural areas of Armenian population were not available for such recruitment, usually conducted outside urban centers. Yet, as will be seen below, a few Armenians did obtain high office through this channel in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

There were several, presumably large, instances of forced migration (*surgun*) to Constantinople under Mehmed the conqueror from Kaffa in the Crimea and the area of Karaman. But the number of Armenians involved is uncertain and their exact fate unclear except for those from Karaman, who, according to the already cited census of 1478, were designated as "Armenians from Karamaniya." Somewhat later, Selim ordered the transfer of large numbers of Armenians after his eastern campaigns of 1514-1517, but there is no evidence that they entered the Janissary corps or the civil service. The major figures from high Ottoman circles who were of Armenian origin were Sinan, the architect for Sultans Süleyman and Selim II, and Khalil, Grand Vizier for a year, 1616-1617. That many Armenians did not reach high office in the system does not preclude their service in the lower ranks of the Ottoman administration. There has been, however, very little published on which to base a case in this period.

The forced gathering of Armenian youth is mentioned in colophons and other sources for the following years: 1464, 1480, 1519, 1531, 1622. They affected small numbers of individuals whose exact exploitation by the Ottomans is not made clear. In the case of those Armenians taken from Ankara in 1464, the youths were accompanied by their bishop and later joined by their parents, practices forbidden for normal *devshirme* recruiting. Nevertheless, Western and Turkish sources record the forced gathering of youths in areas clearly inhabited by Armenians, for instance: Sis and Sivas, 1456, 1526, 1574; Batum, 1583; Amasia, Malatia, Tokat, Sivas, Marash, Chemishkezek, Erzerum, Bayburt, Kemakh, 1622-1623. The mere threat of the *devshirme*, arbitrarily and suddenly breaking up a Christian family to serve the Muslim superpower, was one of the important psychological factors that made the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries such a dreaded moment in Armenian history.

### *Armenia in the Sixteenth Century*

The sixteenth century was one of war between the Ottomans and the Safavids fought over Armenia and the Caucasus. Successive campaigns of three to twelve years were usually followed by famine. The depletion of whatever resources may have been available on the Ottoman side of the shifting border led to general anarchy, further ravaging Anatolia and Armenia at the end of the sixteenth and the first decade of the seventeenth century. This resulted in massive Armenian immigration to the cities of Cappadocia and, further west, Constantinople, which, together with the forced transfer of Armenians by Shah Abbas in the first years of the seventeenth century, caused a decline in population in larger areas of the historic homeland as attested to by colophons.

The firm establishment of the new Safavid dynasty in Persia was supported primarily in the early period -- from 1502 to the offensive of Sultan Selim (1512-1520) in 1514 -- by the Qizl-Bashi, as both regular and irregular Safavid troops were known. They laid waste great sections of Armenia while consolidating the Persian position in the Caucasus. According to colophons of 1501 from Erzinjan and 1504 from Mush, Armenians subjected to the pillaging of the Türkmens sought refuge in Georgia. By 1509, the Safavids had captured much of Georgia and Shirvan and seized Derbent in Daghestan. Areas all the way to Sivas, formerly controlled by the Aq Qoyunlu, were now under direct Safavid rule or subject to their raids. Because of Safavid association with the sheikhs of Ardabil, the Türkmens population with Shi'ite tendencies, especially sufi and dervish elements, provided the Qizl-Bashi with sympathizers in the western areas.

Though the Safavids found support from the same Türkmens who had been loyal to the Qara and Aq Qoyunlu dynasties, from the Ottoman viewpoint the new rulers of Persia presented a more complex challenge, because of their Shi'ism, a form of Islam that appeared less rigid to many Muslims. Sultan Selim was determined to neutralize this threat while extending the boundaries of the empire. In 1514, he implemented a course of action that was to serve future sultans well as a normal expedient when confronted

with any group that was deemed undesirable: elimination by massacre. In a matter of weeks, some 40,000 sufis and dervishes of Shi'i leaning were put to death throughout the eastern regions of the country. In the same year, assembling a large army, Selim marched from Amasia to Tokat and Sivas after which "the domains of the Shah" began. He took Erzinjan, Kemakh, and Erzerum, crossed the Arax above Khoy, and engaged Shah Ismail on the plain of Chaldiran, not far from the spot of the fifth century battle of the Avarayr. With superior artillery, the Ottomans defeated the Safavids and advanced to Tabriz, which was held for eight days. On Selim's return to Constantinople, he took control of territories ruled by Kurdish emirs, and lands of the Dhul-Qadir principality in the Taurus and beyond. Large numbers of Armenians from Tabriz, Erzerum, and surrounding areas were taken by the Turks to Constantinople. It was these conquests that brought the central and southern areas of Armenian population into the Ottoman Empire, including the cities of Malatia, Aintab, Mush, Birejik, Diyarbekir, and Antioch.

The Safavids almost immediately struck back, establishing a pattern of attack and counterattack for the entire sixteenth century. In 1516, Ismail invaded Georgia and the Caspian coast of Shirvan. In the next decades, under Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576), the Safavids made raids into Armenia as far as Kars, Erzerum, and Terjan. The first of the three Ottoman campaigns into Armenia and Georgia by Sultan Süleyman against Shah Tahmasp began in 1533 when Ibrahim Pasha, the Grand Vizier, was ordered to seize the fortress of Van. For the next hundred years Van and Erzerum were to be the main staging points for Ottoman thrusts against Persia. In 1534, Süleyman received the obedience of various Georgian princes as well as the Kurdish khan of Bitlis, who ceded his fortresses south of Lake Van. The Kurds, however, were not brought under control completely until the seventeenth century. The outcome of the campaign gave little more to the Ottomans than the area around Van.

The second Ottoman campaign, begun in 1547-1548 with the seizure of the city of Van and attacks against Shirvan, was led this time by Shah Tahmasp's own brother,

Alqaz Mirza, who had defected to the enemy side. The next year, 1549, the Georgian army was destroyed, and the western part of the country, along with Armenia, began to be considered as part of the Ottoman Empire. However, the area, which centuries later was to be called Azerbaijan, with its capital Tabriz, still remained in Persian hands. During the three years that followed, Shah Tahmasp made vicious counter raids against Basen, Bardzrhayk', Vaspurakan, and Turuberan. Süleyman reacted by officially turning Van and Diyarbekir into separate provinces among the twenty-one that constituted his empire. During this phase of the bitter rivalry over Armenia and Georgia, the sources concur that the Christian inhabitants preferred as a group the Persians to the Ottomans. In Armenia proper, the immediate consequence of the war of 1547 to 1552 was a severe famine in the years 1552-1553. The lack of foodstuffs resulted because the peasants were reluctant to go out to distant fields for fear of their lives, and opposing armies and irregular troops requisitioned by force whatever else was available.

In between these eastern wars, Süleyman was waging battle in Europe. The first siege of Vienna was in 1526. Just prior to the third eastern campaign, Tahmasp in 1553 seized the fortresses of Akhlat and Ardjesh and the country around Basen, Bayburt, Erzinjan, Terjan, Erzerum, Khnus, and Mush. Erzerum, Van, and Artzke were laid waste. Shah Tahmasp, having received word that an Ottoman army had reached Sivas, embarked on a deliberate scorched-earth policy in order to retard an army he could not beat on its progress through Armenia.

The Turkish attack of 1553-1555 was one of the most consciously violent recorded in the annals of the Ottoman Empire. In the winter of 1553-1554, Süleyman stayed at Aleppo to be near the front for an early spring offensive. In 1554, Erevan, "the glory of all Persia," as it was described by a contemporary source, was seized and burned. Nakhidjevan was taken, and all provinces between Tabriz and Maragha were totally destroyed. The Karabagh was also seized. Pechevi, the contemporary Ottoman chronicler of these campaigns, described in great detail the willful destruction and

devastation carried out by the Turks. Under the year A.H. 962/1553-1554 A.D. he writes:

...The region had become very prosperous, having many rich villages with cultivated lands. The victorious (Ottoman) army destroyed and ruined those prosperous villages and leveled them to the ground. From there the army ... arrived on the seventeenth day at the city of Erevan, which was the soul of Persia.... Everything was burned to the ground. On the twenty-third day it moved on to the Arpa Chai, and in that area too everything was pillaged and destroyed.... On the twenty-fifth day it entered the land called Karabagh, which, with its mountains and rich orchards, is a very famous region of the Persian lands.... The local population had scattered and disappeared without a trace...yet, the army seized enormous riches and spoils.... On the twenty-seventh day it reached the plain of Nakhidjevan. From dread of the victorious army, the towns and villages, the houses and habitations were so deserted and desolate that the area had become a haven for owls and crows striking terror amongst those who viewed such a sight.... The army, thirsty for booty, again looted and destroyed not leaving one stone upon another. Besides this, for a distance of four to five days' march from the main route, all villages and hamlets, fields and construction were destroyed and ruined to such a degree that not a trace of building or of any life remained.... But in addition to this, uncountable quantities of valuable property and stores were looted and destroyed. And the number of handsome young boys and lovely, gentle young girls who were enslaved were of such a large portion that it is impossible for this writer to describe. In no other campaign did such a quantity of wealth come to the (Ottoman) army. There was not a (soldier's) tent in which the number (of slaves) .... was less than three, and the number of tents with five or more than ten was beyond counting.

On May 29, 1555 at Amasia, this phase of a senseless war was concluded with the first treaty of peace between the Safavids and Ottomans. Süleyman received or kept

Mosul, Marash, Van, Alashkert, Bayazid, and western Georgia. The Shah kept Shirvan and the area to Tabriz. Thus, at mid-century, the Ottomans dominated the Armenians, the Georgians, and the areas inhabited by the Kurds.

Again during this phase of the war, the Armenians suffered the most. Those who could leave, did so, moving toward urban centers farther west in Ottoman lands, or east and south. Most, of course, were unable to escape their lot and the incessant suffering is stressed over and again in contemporary colophons. The Georgians were also victimized, but they still had a kingdom, even if disunited. By real and feigned conversion to Islam and alliances with the Ottomans and Persians, Georgians were sometimes able to play one off against the other. On the other hand, the Kurds, who, though still semi-nomadic, were orthodox Muslims, encouraged the Ottomans to absorb their territories, which provided a Sunni buffer against the Shi'i Türkmens of the shah. It is in this period that large numbers of Kurds were resettled in Artsakh, Siunik', Shirvan, and the Ararat plain.

During the twenty-three-year hiatus before the next eruption of hostilities, the Ottomans used Armenians and Kurds -- according to a colophon of 1566 -- to construct or reconstruct forts in Van and Ardjesh and probably elsewhere. Shortly after, in the area from Van to Khoy, the Ottomans encouraged a Kurdish rebellion against the Safavids, who, after the death of Tahmasp (1576), were in the midst of a struggle for succession. To weaken the Persian state, which was in this period perceived as an important rival for eastern trade, the Ottomans planned to seize all of Armenia and Caucasia at any auspicious moment. Already in the 1560s they had tried to take Astrakhan and the areas north of the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea in order to construct a Don-Volga canal that would have enabled the strong Ottoman fleet to sail from the Black Sea to the Caspian. But the attempt failed even though the Ottomans were helped by the Crimean Tatars who made raids deep into Georgia, Shirvan, and even around Tabriz. The Persian trade with Russia in Shirvan and Derbent was enormous, especially in silk, rice, salt, and petroleum. The annual revenue for the shah was some 25,000,000 aspers from Shirvan alone.

Earlier, Süleyman had banned the trade of silk from Persian. It was just at this troubled moment that much of the silk trade was taken over by Armenian merchants.

In 1578, Mustafa Pasha, the Vizier of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595), at the head of an army of some 200,000, started out from Erzerum on the sixteenth century's fifth campaign in the Perso-Turkish conflict. Though it was to be the longest -- 1578-1590 -- and the last of the century, it was, unfortunately, not the final one of the war. Kars was again fortified, and in August Mustafa moved to Ardahan and Georgia. Tiflis was taken and destroyed. Ganja was sacked by the Crimean Tatars. Shirvan and Derbent were attacked and pillaged. But little was accomplished against the Persians, and the army -- returning to Erzerum -- was disbanded. The Persians asked for peace, but the sultan refused and soon started hostilities again with a new commander. Karabagh, Gegharkuni, and Erevan were re-occupied. Murad decided that no major attack on Persia could be undertaken if the Ottoman border areas were not firmly secured. In 1582, he ordered the repair of the fortresses of Erevan and Kars. By 1584, the Ottomans had stabilized their control over northern Armenia, Georgia, Shirvan, and Daghestan. In 1585, a major thrust south was made and Tabriz fell. But the Persians, led by Prince Mirza, retook the town the next year and defeated the Ottoman army in several battles, forcing them to retreat to Van, after which they took Salmast and attacked the Ottoman pasha of Erevan. In 1588-1589, the Persians seized Ganja, Karabagh, and Nakhidjevan.

By then, the young Shah Abbas (1588-1629) had succeeded to the throne. He was to face a double threat: the traditional Sunni enemy to the west, and from the east another Turkic and Sunni power, the Uzbeks. In order to gain time to meet the Uzbek menace to Khorasan, Abbas sued for peace, which the Ottomans, who had suffered defeats in Europe, willingly accepted. By the terms of the treaty of 1590, Persia gave up Tabriz, Mukan, Shirvan, and Georgia, while the Ottomans kept Armenia and Iraq. Because the rivals were preoccupied with a menace at the opposite end of their respective empires,

direct hostilities in Armenia and the adjacent areas stopped for more than a decade. Unfortunately, however, there was no peace in Armenia.

### ***The Jelali Movement and Shah Abbas's Deportations***

In the second half of the sixteenth century, due mostly to the introduction of cheap silver from the Americas via Europe, the Ottoman state suffered a serious monetary crisis that resulted in the depreciation of its silver standard currency coupled with an increase in prices. Fixed income groups suffered the most. Among them were the provincial cavalry, the *sipahis*, whose revenue depended on rents (usually fixed) from lands. Those with small holdings were unable to meet the expenses of outfitting the expected number of troops for the unceasing military campaigns and, therefore, had their holdings confiscated. Also affected were irregular soldiers in Anatolia, the *sebkans*, usually landless peasant youths equipped with muskets recruited in time of war as paid soldiers by local governors.

Bands of these individuals were formed; they lived off the people and came to be called *Jelalis*. After the demobilization following the peace of 1590, the Jelalis drew their main strength from the sebkkan companies, but were joined by dissatisfied sipahis, local vigilantes, and by Kurdish and Turkish nomads. When the regular troops withdrew, the countryside was at the mercy of these bandits. From 1590 to 1610, Armenian, Cappadocian, and Anatolian towns and villages were continually set upon by them. Armenian colophons of the first five years of the seventeenth century refer no less than ten times to the exigencies of Qara Yazidji, who, with his 20,000 followers, was the best known of these independent leaders. The central government was unable to suppress the Jelalis, who, it seems, had no fixed objective. They were outlaws living off the peasants and lower classes, taking advantage of the Ottoman Empire's inability to organize and rule its eastern provinces properly.

After crushing the Uzbek threat in the east, Shah Abbas took advantage of the anarchy prevailing in Armenia and Anatolia as a result of the Jelali movement by launching a major campaign. In 1603, he recaptured Tabriz, then Erevan, and in 1605, Baghdad. To meet the expected Ottoman counteroffensive, Shah Abbas imitated the scorched earth policy used by Tahmasp in 1553. Starting in the summer of 1604, Eastern Armenia was systematically laid waste. The Shah issued a proclamation throughout the areas of Ayrarat and the lower Arax valley, ordering all Armenians to gather in designated places for a mass migration. Persian troops then thoroughly burned houses and fields and destroyed everything else that might be used by the advancing Ottoman troops. Armenians from Vayotz Dzor, Sevan, Lori, Aparan, Shirakavan, Kars, and Alashkert were assembled on the Ararat plain. To them were added those from Julfa, Nakhidjevan, and the surrounding area. Arak'el of Tabriz has carefully chronicled the disastrous forced march of hundreds of thousands of Armenians into Persia. Though winter was approaching and though the Armenians as loyal subjects tried to obey to the letter the request of the shah, their petitions to delay the move until the following spring were denied. Almost immediately human caravans extending for miles pushed forward. Thousands died in the crossing of the Arax River because sufficient boats were unavailable. Later, survivors were split up in groups, and during the winter of 1604-1605, they sought shelter wherever possible in northwestern Persia. In the following year, one group finally got to the shah's capital, Isfahan, where the Armenians were given an area south of the Zengi-Rud River to establish their own town, named by them New Julfa in memory of the city from which most of them originated. Other groups were scattered throughout Persia. Coincidentally, at almost the same moment, Grigor Daranaghtsi was leading a group of 7,000 Armenians *away* from Constantinople toward the rapidly depopulating eastern provinces as part of the repatriation plan of Sultan Murad the IV.

The Ottomans had little success against Shah Abbas's newly reorganized army, trained in the European manner by the Shirley brothers, English adventurers who also conducted diplomatic missions with the West. Abbas, having neutralized the Qizil-Bashi by stronger reliance on Georgians, who had converted to Islam and other Caucasian elements, regained most of the lands lost in the war of 1578-1590. He offered peace in 1610, but it was refused by the Ottomans until 1618, when an agreement roughly based on the peace of Amasia of 1555 gave Persia Shirvan, Georgia, and Tabriz. In the 1620s, however, hostilities broke out again and only ended in 1639 when the Treaty of Qasr-i Shirin finally stopped a century and a half of war. The treaty gave the Ottomans Iraq, with Baghdad and Mosul, the Van area, and Armenia up to Kars. Erevan, Shirvan, and Tabriz went to the Safavids.

Armenia had been ruined by more than a hundred years of attacks and counterattacks. Foreign travelers testify that Ararat, Alashkert, Bayazid, and the plain of Nakhidjevan were deserted. Nomadic Kurds and Türkmens moved into many of the destroyed or abandoned areas. The natural economy of the region was destroyed. Artisans and merchants who had managed to escape the forced migrations, either joined their countrymen in Persia at a later date or left for more distant lands.

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF ARMENIA**

With the fall of the Cilician Kingdom in the fourteenth century, how was Armenian life structured? In many respects not much differently from that of previous centuries, at least for the first hundred years. After the disappearance of the Bagratids of Ani and the Ardzrunis of Aght'amar in the eleventh century, life in Greater Armenia had continued without kings or autonomous states of large scope. The early fifteenth century showed that the Armenians had learned well how to continue life under non-Armenian and non-Christian rule. They took advantage of any benevolence offered by charitable

governors, saved or put aside something for worse times, which they knew were sure to come, and always hoped that conditions in Armenia would become better in the future.

There were still autonomous and semi-autonomous Armenian nakharar units of varying size, especially in Siunik' and Karabagh, but they only affected a small portion of the population. Armenians in large numbers opted to move. They had learned centuries before that individual salvation might be gained by emigration to more secure lands. The major centers towards which they went were the Crimea, thence to Poland and central Europe, and to the larger urban centers of western Armenia, Cappadocia, and Anatolia. This trend continued in the fifteenth century, with an additional minor movement toward Christian Georgia. In the sixteenth century Georgia became as unsafe as Armenia, and the flow gradually moved east into Persia and farther west toward Constantinople and centers in the Ottoman Empire with already established Armenian communities.

Yet, surprisingly, despite the devastating invasions, accompanied by pillaging and enslavement, despite taxes on a level never before imposed, despite the recurring famines, occasional plagues, locusts, and the relatively large number of earthquakes reported during the period, Armenians also stayed in Armenia. Colophons and other sources testify that they tried to maintain Armenian life as they understood it, and when possible, even to improve or at least contribute culturally to it. At times the struggle must have seemed insurmountable, the nation condemned. The worst moment, when traditional institutions were in danger of total collapse, was the first-half of the sixteenth century. This will be discussed later.

The main means of livelihood were agriculture, trade, and craftsmanship. During the period, because of wartime conditions, agriculture by necessity became further and further circumscribed. In the fifteenth century, the still partially nomadic Türkmen dynasties and their epigones, mostly Turkic and Kurdish nomads, were quick to turn any abandoned or temporarily untended fields into pasturage for their flocks. Through this process many large holdings were permanently removed from tillage. Mountainous areas

like Siunik' and Karabagh, where terracing was common and water was abundant without the need for irrigation, continued to provide sustenance to a limited population. This pattern of reduction of the agricultural lands continued even after Ottoman absorption of Armenia in the sixteenth century, as evidenced by the very small number and the relatively smaller size of land grants (*timars*) recorded in Ottoman documents of later centuries for Armenia. In addition, the policy of favoring the Kurds, at least during the sixteenth century -- begun by Sultan Selim as an orthodox Sunni Islamic counterforce to the heterodox Shi'i Qizl-Bashis who made up the Safavid ranks -- contributed further to the reduction of agricultural lands while increasing the Kurdish population in Armenia. Also underscoring the decline in agricultural production were various plagues vividly recorded by Armenian colophons.

Trade traditionally produced revenue for Armenia in two ways: through the direct selling of goods and by transit fees. Since Armenia was at the juncture of the principal natural highways from east to west and north to south, it benefited by making those segments under its control function efficiently. On the other hand, over the centuries Armenia often suffered by being geographically "in the way." The Mediterranean route from Persia through Armenia to Cilicia, which had in part been responsible for the wealth and prosperity of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in Cilicia and Armenia proper, became virtually inoperative from the Armenian point of view after the fall of the Cilician Kingdom. The traditional route through Tabriz and Erzerum to Trebizond on the Black Sea, also was destroyed as well after the fall of Trebizond to the Turks. It was replaced by another passing from Persia through Shirvan and Derbent into Russia. Persian silk normally traded by Persian, Turkish, and Armenian merchants had become more and more exploited by Armenians in the sixteenth century (both in the Ottoman controlled areas and Persia) well before Shah Abbas gave the Armenians a virtual monopoly over the trade in the early seventeenth century. Benefiting by commercial contacts in Europe with the diasporan communities of the Crimea, Poland, and Italy,

many Armenians in the western cities like Erzinjan, Sivas, Kayseri, and cities around Lake Van like Bitlis, and farther to the east, Julfa and Nakhidjevan, took advantage of moments of peace under Black and White Sheep dynasties to engage in trade. By the mid-fifteenth century, sources speak regularly of provincial *khojas* who had become sufficiently wealthy, mostly through trade, to endow -- at times very modestly -- churches and monasteries. They had become the dominant class in Armenian society. By the sixteenth century, these *khojas* and their somewhat later city brothers, often called *chelebis*, had established themselves east in India, south in Aleppo, north in Russia, and west in Constantinople, the Balkans, Italy, the Baltic Sea, and elsewhere. This process continued in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, when the *chelebis* gave way to the equivalent of the great financial and industrial magnates of the west, the Armenian *amiras*.

Artisans and craftsmen were active throughout the land. The crafts most often mentioned in the manuscript sources are naturally enough associated with book production -- scores of scribes, miniaturists, illuminators, and binders. There are more than a hundred references to traders or merchants -- *khojas*. An extremely large number of crafts and professions are cited. The most common in order of their frequency are goldsmiths, weavers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, doctors, shoemakers, farriers, millers, and tailors. In addition, over one hundred individuals are known as *varpet*, that is master craftsman. The eventual publication of the sixteenth century colophons will allow us to complete the picture of the period. For the first decades of the seventeenth century, in addition to scribes, painters, binders, *khojas*, and *chelebis* -- the latter almost all from Constantinople or its environs -- there are frequent references to goldsmiths, blacksmiths, silversmiths, tailors, farriers, and a variety of other crafts.

Medieval Armenian brotherhoods, which functioned to bring together and protect (when necessary) merchants and craftsmen, were established perhaps as early as the eleventh century in Ani, and certainly by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; among

other evidence are the rules and regulations of the Brotherhood of Erzinjan, written in 1280 by Hovhannes of Erzinjan. These brotherhoods were spread throughout the Armenian diaspora: in the Crimea, Poland, Constantinople, Aleppo, and Vaspurakan. No doubt they were precursors of the Armenian *esnafs* or guilds of nineteenth-century Constantinople.

### *Urban Centers, Migrations, and Population in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*

Just as the Seljuk and Mongol invasions caused a dramatic movement, even a shift, of population, which sustained the rise of the Kingdom of Cilicia, so too the Timurid invasions, the Türkmen wars of the fifteenth century, the Ottoman-Persian wars of the sixteenth century, and the forced migrations instigated by the Ottomans and Shah Abbas had their effects on the demography of Armenia. The fall of the Lusignans in Cilicia resulted in a rapid decline in Armenian activity along the coastal cities. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, except for Sis -- graced by its catholicosate -- little was heard of the many Cilician centers active earlier. In the north, Ani, Kars, and Shirak in general, continued to decline in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, though Ilkhanid coins were still struck in Ani until 1350; and Jalayirid (Mongol) issues from the Ani mint are recorded for the years 1356-1357, 1375-1376, and 1376-1377. A Bishop Hovhannes is mentioned at Ani in 1426; the city was still in existence, probably as a village, in the early seventeenth century as shown by two colophons. Kars, however, was virtually dormant in the fifteenth century and presumably in the sixteenth, too, until its fortress was rebuilt by the Ottomans in 1584, after which it again became an important Armenian center. Siunik', Lori, and the area up to and including Tiflis were active during the early fifteenth century, with Tat'ev in Siunik' still the leading monastic institution of the area in the first quarter of the century. Haghbat and Sahanin were also very prosperous, and, unlike Tatev in the south, were able to sustain themselves as dynamic centers into the seventeenth century and beyond. But after mid-century, Tiflis and

Georgia in general became less important for Armenian life. Etchmiadzin was virtually inactive until the recreation of the catholicosate in 1441, but even then, travelers' accounts of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries describe it as nearly abandoned. Vagharshapat maintained itself reasonably well, and Erevan began its steady rise in the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century Nakhidjevan and Julfa on the Arax were little heard of. Julfa became more important in the second half of the sixteenth century, only to be destroyed at the end of the century by Shah Abbas. The English traveler, John Cartwright, in the late sixteenth century, reports 2,000 stone-built houses in Julfa with 10,000 Armenian inhabitants. Arak'el of Tabriz says, however, that in 1604-1605, 20,000 Armenians from Julfa were deported to Persia -- with one-fifth surviving to settle in New Julfa. This suggests that the surrounding villages were included. Major urban centers to the east -- Tabriz, Maku, Khoy, Maragha, Salmast -- had Armenian communities, though that of Tabriz was incontestably the most active.

Karabagh/Artsakh, Gandzasar, Artaz, Gegharkuni, and the cities of Shirvan were also animated centers, but it was in mountainous Karabagh that autonomous Armenian rule seems to have survived best during the dark days of the sixteenth century.

At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, Isfahan (with New Julfa), Tabriz, Amid, and Diyarbekir were all important Armenian centers. In Syria, Aleppo, which had a small colony in the fifteenth century, grew in the sixteenth to become one of the major communities in the following century, benefiting by the settlement of important merchants from cities like Julfa on the Arax. Throughout the period the Armenians in Jerusalem, with their own quarter and the monastery of St. James, kept active and visible.

The most thriving center of Armenian culture in the fifteenth century, and perhaps in the sixteenth, too, was around Lake Van. The cities and monasteries along and nearby its shores were both individually and as a group the most dynamic of any in Armenia. The region had its own catholicos, established at Aght'amar in 1113. An anonymous

Venetian merchant in the first quarter of the sixteenth century reported that the island contained a town of 600 houses called Armenik. Cities like Baghesh (Bitlis), Hizan (Khizan), Van, Ardjesh, Varag, Artzke, Klat (Akhlata), and Berkri were even more active with large monastic institutions such as Metzop', near Ardjesh, and Kadjberuni and Moks in surrounding areas. Mush with its monasteries, especially St. Karapet and Sasun, was also flourishing. Baghesh was protected in the early sixteenth century by the Kurds, who at least in Bitlis, are praised by the local Armenians as being benevolent. Unfortunately, this was not the case everywhere.

In the west, Constantinople slowly became an important center of Armenian life, but a real increase of population started only after the conquest of Greater Armenia by Sultan Selim. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Polish-Armenian cleric Simeon Lehatsi, resident in Constantinople for several years, reported 80 Armenian houses proper in 1604, but adds there were 40,000 Armenian emigrant foyers. Authorities interpret this latter count to mean individuals -- which puts the Armenian population at the turn of the seventeenth century at about 50,000, including Galata, Üsküdar, and the nearby suburbs. There is little doubt that from the seventeenth century on -- at least according to population -- Constantinople became the most important Armenian city in the world, with some 200,000 Armenians by the late nineteenth century. However, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the largest and most active diaspora communities were in the Crimea and Poland. The large medieval colony in Egypt had become considerably diminished and impoverished during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries according to Simeon Lehatsi, who visited Cairo in 1615-1616.

Unfortunately, we have very few population statistics for the period. The only figures close to our period are those of the generally reliable Simeon, who passed through Anatolia in 1612-1613 and 1617 on his way to and from Egypt and Jerusalem. In his travel account, he often gives the population figures for larger cities not only at the moment of his passage, but also for a generation earlier, prior to the devastation and

depopulation caused by the Jelali movement. For instance, Sivas had 600 Armenian houses in 1612 but 2,000 before; Tokat 500, but 1,000 before; and of Zeitun's 800 Armenian houses, only 30 remained in his time. From a much earlier period, Ibn Battuta, the Arab traveler, reported that in the 1330s, when he passed through Erzinjan, the majority of the inhabitants were Armenian; but for the fifteenth century figures for this and other towns remain obscure.

For certain cities of Anatolia and Cappadocia, through the publication of Ottoman *defters* (fiscal and population registers), much raw data with precise population counts on Armenians for the sixteenth century is now available. The fiscal registers of 1520-1530 show that Sivas had a large Christian majority: 750 Christian versus 261 Muslim households; and Tokat was about equally divided: 701 Christian and 818 Muslim households. Because this information is so new and interesting and because Ottoman cities were not included in the survey given above, an analysis of some of these documents follows.

Ottoman fiscal registers are particularly a phenomenon of the sixteenth century. From those already published, useful and new information is available on the Armenian inhabitants of Bayburt, Trebizond, Amasia, Karaman, Kayseri, and Erzerum. The registers enumerate the districts of each city, listing the number of adult males (*nefer*) and households (*hane*), the names of individuals, their marital status, often their trade, and property they owned. A 1976 study (Jennings) of Ottoman *defters* of five cities -- Karaman, Trebizond, Amasia, Kayseri, Erzerum -- from the period 1500 to 1591, shows a population rise of about 100 per cent during this period in line with the general increase of population throughout the Mediterranean world. But each city had varying increases depending on individual history and demography.

From 1523 to 1587 Karaman showed a 195 per cent increase, with 2,048 adult males in the latter year. But just two per cent of the population was Christian and, therefore, useful only as a negative statistic. In part this is explained by the forced

deportation from Karaman to Constantinople of Armenian and Greek inhabitants at the end of the fifteenth century. Amasia increased in population by 69 per cent from 1523 to reach 3,326 adult males in 1576; of these 77 per cent were Muslim and the rest Jews, Greeks, and Armenians. Of all the cities, Amasia was the one longest under Ottoman protection; yet the Jelali troubles of the end of the sixteenth century and the general disorder in the early seventeenth century caused its population to fall by half, to 1,736 adult males, according to a rare seventeenth century defter of 1642. The actual number of people is usually determined by a multiple of five, sometimes six. Thus the Armenian population of Amasia in the sixteenth century was small. This is borne out by Armenian sources which indicate little activity there. Its rival in trade, Tokat, was a much more important Armenian (and Ottoman) city. In 1612 Simeon of Poland reports 200 Armenian houses in Amasia and 500 in Tokat.

Trebizond, which had been conquered by the Turks with little destruction in 1461-3, maintained its predominantly Christian population -- 85 per cent in the defter of 1523, with about 15 per cent of the population Armenian: 197 adult males out of a total of 1,473. By 1583 the general population had risen by 44 per cent, but the Armenian population had dropped by almost 50 per cent, because the Armenians moved, willingly and by force, especially to Constantinople.

For Erzerum, the register of 1523 reports that the city was empty and destroyed. Though there were twelve quarters (*mahalle*), they were empty. This official Ottoman source is a graphic testimony of the havoc caused by the successive wars of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The defter of 1540 reports 21 quarters, but only about 100 adult males, mostly associated with the Ottoman army, for Erzerum was the main staging-point for attacks against the Safavids. The scribe records that because Erzerum was on the frontier, the population had been scattered by the Qizl-Bashi and the Georgians: "The city stands empty and in ruins...*raya* (Christians) come to settle." After the Ottoman-Persian peace of 1590, a register of 1591 reports a total adult male

population of 548, 60 per cent of which is Armenian, the rest Muslim. There are three quarters for trades and crafts -- tanning, dyeing, and storing of grains -- in the city. These are composed exclusively of Armenians. This rapid rise of Armenians in Erzerum at the end of the sixteenth and especially the early seventeenth century is also confirmed by Armenian sources. When the Ottoman traveler Evliya Chelebi passed through the city in 1645, he commented on the remarkable economic and urban activity of the Armenian city. Erzerum quickly gained third place, after Constantinople and Izmir, among the most important customs posts in the entire empire.

In many respects the information for Kayseri (Caesaria, Gesaria) is the most interesting because of the detailed picture it offers of Armenian life in that Cappadocian capital during the sixteenth century. In 1500, there were 2,287 adult males, of which 86 per cent were Muslim, 12 per cent Armenian (266 adult males or about 1,300 souls) and two per cent Greek. The registers of 1523, 1550, and 1583 show that the city, securely placed far from the Ottoman-Persian front, had a steady and dramatic rise in population of nearly 400 per cent to 8,251 adult males or about 41,000 people. Of all groups, however, the Armenian population increase of 506 per cent was the most rapid, despite the movement of "native" Armenian inhabitants of the city (those of 1500) to the west, especially Constantinople, during the same period. Interestingly, the registers of 1523, 1550, and 1583 divided the Armenian population by communities (*cemaat*) into three distinct quarters: Kayseriyan (natives of Kayseri), Sisiyan (natives from Cilicia and its environs), and Sharkiyan (those from the east). The Sisiyan may have had allegiance to the catholicosate in Cilicia and the Sharkiyan to Etchmiadzin. The fact that these Armenians chose to segregate themselves in Kayseri, once again underlines the enormous cultural diversity within the Armenian nation, so clear in our own time, with various Armenian immigrants producing separate enclaves within communities according to geographical origin, dialect, and allegiance to one or the other catholicosate.

The raw data of these Ottoman fiscal registers can be interpreted in many ways. It is important that Armenian specialists reexamine them carefully before too easily accepting the conclusions of those who have already studied them. The defters of Kayseri provide an important case in point. In 1500, though the Armenians represented only 12 per cent of the entire population, we know from the register that they had the largest single quarter, with no close second, and that the Armenian quarter was within the city walls, whereas the largest Muslim quarters, presumably of new settlers, were outside the walls. Thus, according to the published figures, within the inner city -- the real metropolitan Caesaria -- Armenians represented twenty-four per cent of the population and the Christians as a group, thirty per cent. By 1583, though Armenians are still a minority, they are powerful in the inner walled city, representing 47 per cent of the population. Therefore, a more critical interpretation of the data affords a totally different "impression" about the importance of the Armenian population in Kayseri and other Anatolian cities in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries.

***Remnants of Self-Rule and the Quest for Liberation.***

Reference has already been made to the semi-autonomous feudal lords or nakharars in Siunik' and Karabagh, the latter surviving to become the meliks so important in eighteenth and nineteenth century movements of liberation. In the mid-fifteenth century, the Orbelian house with the cooperation of the Qara Qoyunlu overlords continued to carry on a feeble existence. Though Beshken Orbelian's son Rustam became governor of Ayrarat for a time, by the sixteenth century Armenian nobility (except in the remote areas of Karabagh) had all but vanished. There were a few centers of autonomy in the fifteenth century: at Hamshen west of the Chorokh River between the Black Sea and the city of Sper -- especially in the first twenty-five years of the century, and at Maku, where the last of the Armenian princes of Artaz held out until the fortress was taken by Iskandar the Qara Qoyunlu in 1426. Aght'amar was also the theater of an

attempt to reestablish the Artzruni kingdom by Catholicos Zakaria III (1434-1464), who claimed himself to be descendant from the kings and who inspired the movement, actually carried out by his nephew and successor Step'anos IV (1464-1489). In 1465, Step'anos consecrated his brother Smbat "King of Armenia." Though Smbat had the acquiescence of Jihanshah, his rule was strictly local and lasted only until 1471. There are also the princes of Armenia invoked by Don Juan of Persia (a late sixteenth-century court official who renounced Islam while in Europe) and western sources of the same century, when Adal ad-Dawlet, emir of the Dhul-Qadir state, refused passage through the Taurus mountains to Sultan Selim on his way to fight Shah Ismail in 1514. Since there are no other details, the account may be an anachronistic reference to earlier nobles of Cilicia, unless they are to be associated with the later Lent'oul Degh, mentioned in 1571 by Vincenzo d'Alesandri, who claimed to have had 10,000 followers in the Taurus, or the Lawand mentioned under 1601 by Arak'el of Tabriz, operating in the same area. These were thought by some authorities (A. Alpojadjian and H. Hakobyan) to be Muslim converts of Armenian or Georgian origin referred to as Liwon/Levon Oghlu, sons or descendants of Levon, the Cilician king.

The twilight of the Armenian nobility in the fifteenth century produced a transformation in the functioning of the nakharar houses, especially in Siunik'. The feudal title *tanuter* (head of the house), eventually gave way to the title *paron-ter*, from the secular title *paron* (baron), and *ter*, lord, used principally for upper-ranking clergy. Fearing sequestration of their lands under Muslim regimes, the feudal houses found a way compatible with Islamic usage of protecting their property and domains from heavy taxation and alienation. They deeded them to a monastery as an inalienable pious foundation functioning like the Muslim *waqf*. Naturally, the nakharars did not do this before making sure that a member of the family was either a prominent bishop or even abbot of the establishment, in order to keep an eye on family possessions, and hence, the title *paron-ter*. Through this method, hereditary lands and property were safeguarded for

a while longer during the century. Later, little is heard of the old feudal lords and their patrimony, though the title *paron-ter*, somewhat banalized, was in common use at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries by prelates throughout Armenia and Anatolia.

Already by the mid-fifteenth century, the Armenian Church and its higher clergy were responsible, willy-nilly, for the ordered protection of the nation, its traditions, and its destiny. Indeed, the earliest steps toward freeing Armenia from the malevolent conditions of abusive Islamic rule were taken by the *catholicos*. This was only natural, for no other individual or group could claim to speak for the entire nation. In 1547, Step'anos *Catholicos Salmastetsi* (1544-1567) called a secret meeting of clergy and select laymen at Etchmiadzin, then under Safavid suzerainty, to discuss steps which might be taken to help the Armenians. It was decided to send the *catholicos* himself on a mission to Europe. Passing through Venice, Step'anos must have received the advice of the important Armenian trading colony there before he met with Pope Julius III in Rome in 1550. Purportedly on the authority of twenty-seven Armenian bishops, Step'anos accepted union with the Catholic Church as the precondition for the papacy to take action on Armenia's behalf. His petition to the Pope, which survives only in an Italian version, is signed by the "Lords of Armenia," presumably prominent personalities wishing to convince the Pope that the *catholicos* was delegated by representatives of the nation. From Rome, *Catholicos* Step'anos went to Vienna for an interview with the German Emperor Charles II and then to Lvov to visit the Polish King Sigismund II. Unfortunately, nothing came of the mission except a clear understanding that church union was a precondition to any western involvement in Armenian affairs.

A second secret meeting was held by *Catholicos* Mik'ael of Sebastia (1566-1577), already co-adjutor at the time of the first meeting of 1547, this time in his native city of Sivas well inside Ottoman territory. During the meeting of 1562, though composed mainly of bishops, Abgar Dpir of Tokat, a layman, was chosen as its representative.

Despite the failure of the first mission, it was decided to appeal once again to the Pope for help in freeing Armenia from both Ottoman Turkish and Persian yokes. Abgar, accompanied by his son Sultanshah and a priest, again passed by Venice, arriving in Rome in 1564, where he communicated to Pope Pius IV the request of the Armenian catholicos for help. Unfortunately, nothing was forthcoming from this second encounter, except that Abgar, who had claimed to be descended from the Armenian nobility, asserted that the Pope was ready to designate him "King of Armenia." Though his son was to stay on in Rome, Abgar returned to Venice where he devoted himself to the printing of Armenian books; especially important was the first Armenian Psalter issued under his care in 1565.

Later, when Abgar was forced to stop publishing in Venice, he moved to Constantinople. In the expanding diaspora of the Ottoman capital, he established the first Armenian press in the Middle East, publishing six titles from 1567 to 1569. (The Turks did not start printing until 1717, with the help of the Hungarian renegade Ibrahim Müteferrika.) In 1569, Abgar visited Catholicos Mik'ael. But this effort to get help for the nation also failed and Armenian suffering increased during the depredations of the Turkish-Persian wars.

There are several interesting facets to these endeavors for liberation. In the first place they were led by successive catholicoses of Etchmiadzin, with the cooperation of the higher and lower clergy and upperclass or "establishment" laymen. Furthermore, they were supported by Armenians both in eastern (Persian) and western (Turkish) Armenia. Contrary to the great resistance offered by the northern bishops against union with the Catholic Church negotiated by Armenian kings and catholicoses of Cilicia, the bishops in the north had no problem two hundred years later with exchanging church union for western help. The final chapter of this sixteenth century struggle for liberation was the relationship between Catholicos Azaria (1584-1601) of Cilicia and Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585). In a letter sent to the Pope and preserved in Rome, the Catholicos, after the

visit of a papal delegation to Sis, expressed his and several of his bishops' willingness to enter into union. At the same time he beseeched the Pope's protection for the Armenian 'sheep' menaced by foreign 'wolves.'

## **THE CHURCH AND THE NATION**

The most important result of the Turkish Islamic conquest and continued occupation of Armenia, was the elimination of Armenian self-government. By the fifteenth century, there was no Armenian secular authority for writers of colophons to invoke, only foreign rulers, catholicoses, and local bishops. The Armenian Church was left weakened by the loss of royal and princely patronage, yet alive, sheltered usually behind the walls of remote monasteries. With the removal of the political forces that shaped and nurtured Armenian society, the continuity and direction of the nation henceforth resided in the Armenian Church almost exclusively. How did it act in serving as a unifying and guiding institution?

In part, the question has already been answered by showing that at the end of the sixteenth century the catholicoses, especially of Etchmiadzin, made the only initiatives toward the liberation of Armenia, speaking, they claimed, for the entire nation. In later centuries the power of the church increased dramatically. Though ultimately controlled by the rising Armenian bourgeoisie, the church was the unrivaled instrument of leadership until the development of the Armenian revolutionary movement in the latter nineteenth century.

### ***The Background***

The catholicos had been settled in the Taurus mountains and Cilicia since the time of Grigor II Vcakaser (1065-1105) in the late eleventh century. In 1147, the patriarchal seat was moved from Tzovk' to Hromkla, and from there to the royal capital of the Rupenid dynasty, Sis, in 1293 after the brutal sack of Hromkla by the Mamluks of Egypt.

Once again, if only for less than a century, the spiritual head of the nation had his seat in the royal capital, as in the time of the Bagratids of Ani and much earlier the Arsacids of the fourth and fifth centuries. The Armenian Church, however, was far from unified. Though the kings of Cilician Armenia styled themselves and, indeed, thought of themselves as leaders of the entire nation, their political authority did not extend beyond Cilicia. In fact, besides the unusual visit (1253-1256) of King Het'um II to Greater Armenia on his way to the Mongol capital of Qara Qorum in deepest central Asia and King Oshin's journey to Bitlis in the early fourteenth century to convince the northern bishops of his unionist policies the kings seldom came into contact with the population of Armenia proper. So, too, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, the catholicoses and major bishops stayed in Cilician territory. Many of the prominent clergy -- as in centuries past -- were of the nobility and associated closely with the court.

The Armenian Church already was decentralized with an independent catholicos established on the Island of Aght'amar since 1113, a patriarchate at Jerusalem after 1311, and powerful clergy led by the abbots of the principal monasteries in Greater Armenia, sometimes called as a group the northern bishops, who doctrinally opposed attempts at church union. In the north, there were also the United Brethren (Frater Unitores), Catholics under the Dominican order, who settled in the Nakhidjevan area in the early fourteenth century and at one time had 700 clergy and more than thirty establishments. Both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were to see dramatic changes in the structure and administration of the church. By the end of the period, the main lines of Armenian Church authority were set in place not to change until the present.

The history of the Armenian Church in Cilicia has been characterized by attempts at reconciliation with the universal Christian Church: at times with the Byzantine Church, at times the Catholic Church. Spearheaded by catholicoses and kings, often for ulterior motives, union was actually consummated several times, even though it had little effect on the beliefs and practices of the Armenian church, which remained autocephalous. In

the mid-fourteenth century a western or westernized royalty, fearing the gradual encroachment of the Mamluk sultans, hoped -- as the Byzantine emperors were to hope a century later -- to acquire European military aid through union with Rome.

Clearly the kings were right in believing that without military support from the west, the kingdom of Armenia would be destroyed, but wrong, as the Byzantine emperors were wrong, in believing that union would actually produce any concrete assistance from the Pope or European kings. The westernizing inclination of Kings Levon V and VI only alienated the Cilician clergy who were not at that period any more willing than the northern bishops to support a foreign policy of reconciliation based on doctrinal changes. Thus, while King Levon VI was desperately fighting a losing battle in his citadel in Sis, the Catholicos and Armenians loyal to the church, in the city below, had already sworn allegiance to the emir of Aleppo, commander of the Mamluk army. The subsequent capture and captivity of Levon VI in Cairo, his ultimate ransom by the King of Castille, his decade of activity in Paris and London trying to create enthusiasm for a crusade against the Mamluks for Armenia's sake, and his death and burial with the kings of France in 1393, are well known.

Though the Armenian kingdom had ceased to exist by the end of the fourteenth century, the title King of Armenia was passed on through the court of Cyprus to European nobility for the next two centuries. Nevertheless, the disappearance of the kings was not coterminous with the disappearance of their subjects. A large Armenian population existed in Cilicia until the "Final Solution" of the Turks in 1915-1922. The Catholicos also survived, maintaining his residence at Sis until 1915. Lacking the financial and sovereign support of Armenian rulers, the prestige of the Cilician Catholicosate declined and the caliber of the leading clergy ostensibly was diminished.

### *The Catholicosate of Aght'amar*

During this period, the Catholicos of Aght'amar (reconciled earlier with the Catholicos of All Armenians at Etchmiadzin), benefited by his geographical position in the center of Armenia. Closer than Sis to the Armenian population and the remaining semi-autonomous centers in the north of the country, he took advantage of the sporadic protection of Kurdish emirs and the Qara Qoyunlu rulers by asserting an authority on the Armenian Church and nation beyond the immediate confines of the Van region. From the 1420s to 1464, Catholicos Zakaria, through his ceaseless activity, was to exert a major force in national affairs. As a leader in the events surrounding the re-establishment of the catholicosate in the north in 1441, he was later, with the support of Jihanshah, able to assume the office of Catholicos of All Armenians and was even resident in Vagharshapat for a time, as was his successor Ter Step'anos. But these were for short periods and against the wishes of most of the northern clergy. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Aght'amar's authority began to shrink, becoming once again a strictly regional patriarchate with the title catholicos.

*The Assembly of 1441 and the Establishment of the Catholicosate at Vagharshapat/Etchmiadzin*

The Armenian catholicosate had moved to Sis seeking the security and protection of Armenian rulers. Now, though there was no kingdom left in the north, Greater Armenia could claim a higher population density and a larger number of surviving nakharar houses. However, the late 1430s or early 1440s did not show Vagharshapat and the suburban Etchmiadzin to be in any better position than Sis, for there was just as much or as little benevolence on the part of the Mamluk rulers of Egypt as that of Qara Qoyunlu rulers in the north. The major factor in the desire to have the catholicosate back in the Ararat valley was the clergy itself, the leading bishops of the northern monasteries. In the fourteenth century these monasteries were Glatzor, Tat'ev, Hermoni, as well as Haghbat, Sanahin and Ayrivank'/Geghart, which eclipsed by far Sis and the once great,

but now fading, Cilician centers such as Hromkla, Skevra, Drazark, and Akner. The only monastic rivals to the northern establishments were those of the Van region, which were to become powerful in the fifteenth century, and Upper Armenia (Bardzr Hayk'), especially the Avaz and Kapos Vanks in the Erzinjan area. Indeed, the leaders of the move back to Vagharshapat-Etchmiadzin were T'omas Metzop'etsi, the abbot of the declining Tat'ev Vank', and Hovhannes Kolotik, abbot of St. Hermoni Vank'. Prior to the reestablishment of a catholicosate in the north, T'omas had actually moved from Tat'ev, which had become unsafe during the long period of wars between the Timurids and the Black Sheep dynasty, to Metzop' Vank' near Bitlis. He was in close contact with Catholicos Zakaria of Aght'amar and no doubt convinced the latter to acquiescence in re-installing a catholicosate in the north. It is reasonable to assume that Aght'amar itself might have become the original location contemplated by T'omas. In 1431, Rustam, the son of Prince Beshken Orbelian, and for a time probably governor of Ayrarat province, gave seven villages to Etchmiadzin in order, it is thought, to supply the ancient center with the resources to support a pontiff. Rustam and Beshken were close associates of T'omas Metzop'etsi and the hereditary Orbelian-Berthlian feudal lords of Siunik'.

Other reasons for the move were called forth by contemporaries. Since the fall of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, many of the catholicoses had obtained their offices by bribes and even assassination. Not only had learning declined at Sis, but the Cilician bishops were on close terms with the Franciscans who had become powerful under the last Armenian kings. Furthermore, Catholicos Constantine VI (1430-1439) seems to have supported the movement toward union initiated at the Council of Florence-Ferrara in 1438-1439, where the Armenian representatives from Aleppo and the Crimea, though arriving after the council had adjourned, nevertheless accepted a union with the Catholic Church and signed an agreement with the Pope. They returned, however, to Kaffa perhaps because Constantine VI had died, and the agreement was never ratified. The northern clergy felt that moving the catholicosate deep into Armenia would take it away

from Roman influence, especially after the Armenian lords of Artaz, themselves converts to Catholicism, had been destroyed by Iskandar at Maku in 1426. It also seems that Armenian desires coincided with a policy of Jihanshah to cultivate the Muslim and Christian clergy. That the Qara Qoyunlu were conscious of the need for the cooperation of the Armenian feudal lords and church leaders, while at the same time exploiting and periodically plundering the country, seems clear from the occasional good relations between Armenians and both Jihanshah and his brother Iskander, as witnessed by the title of Shah-i Armen that the latter took. In any case, when it was finally decided to call a national assembly or a meeting of Armenian clergy and grandees, Jihanshah seems to have given his approval. His emir at Erevan, Yaqub, not only agreed that the meeting take place in his domain at Vagharshapat and the adjoining Etchmiadzin, but also threw a grand reception for those participating in the two-day affair -- all of which is elaborately described by T'omas of Metzop'.

T'omas was not only one of the major organizers of the move to choose a catholicos for Etchmiadzin, but also is the principal source for the proceedings. Most of the facts about the assembly of 1441 comes from the often cryptic remarks found in the colophon he attached to his *History*. He reports that 300 bishops, clerics, and dignitaries from various parts of Armenia came to Vagharshapat. (Another colophon reports 700, but T'omas's number seems more reasonable.) The major candidates were Grigor Djalalians, who already held a major office in Vagharshapat and was formerly bishop of Artaz, Zakaria, abbot of Havuts T'ar monastery, and Catholicos Zakaria of Aght'amar. The catholicos, and probably T'omas himself, thought that the election of Grigor, already a proven leader, would place a respected and qualified person in the position and at the same time put an end to the existence of two catholicosates. Grigor IX Musabekians, the reigning catholicos at Sis, did not attend the meeting, and his role in the entire proceedings is unclear.

Internal power struggles among the candidates and their supporters produced a deadlock. A compromise was chosen in the figure of an ascetic vardapet, Kirakos Virapatsi, who had little previous administrative experience. His pontificate lasted only two years (though colophons continue to mention him as catholicos until 1447), when he either resigned -- in disgust, some say -- or was removed by more powerful forces. Grigor Djalalians was elected catholicos in 1443. Zakaria of Aght'amar, who was of course against Grigor and the northern clique, continued his independent catholicosate, and even succeeded with the help of Jihanshah in having himself declared Catholicos of All Armenians, sojourning in Vagharshapat/Etchmiadzin for some time in 1461.

The sources of the period, almost exclusively colophons, present an unclear picture of the position of the catholicos in Vagharshapat. Most references to either catholicos (Sis or Etchmiadzin) are as *hayrapet* (patriarch) rather than the less frequently used *katoghikos* (catholicos); furthermore, the catholicos was resident in Vagharshapat, and most colophons refer to that city, rather than Etchmiadzin on its outskirts. Etchmiadzin had become an antiquity, a museum -- frequented only occasionally by pilgrims and travelers -- without regular services and with no great monastic complex around it. It was to remain so until the early seventeenth century, when a revival and expansion of the site takes place. According to travelers, it was often closed during this period, with the keys in the hands of lay doorkeepers, at times even Persians. The colophons make it clear, however, that for most Armenians, certainly those in the north, there had been a restoration of the catholicosate to the Ararat valley in 1441.

Nonetheless, the sources do not speak of a "transfer" of the catholicosate from Sis. After his election and consecration, Kirakos sent his respects to the catholicos in Cilicia, the elderly Grigor IX. It is unclear how Grigor reacted. That he did not himself move his residence is an historical fact; yet, there seems to be no firm evidence that he protested the elections carried out at Vagharshapat either. Seemingly, he continued to live as catholicos until 1445 as attested by two colophons of 1444 and one of 1445.

Starting in the following year, Karapet (1446-1477) is regularly mentioned as catholicos at Sis in colophons not only from Cilicia proper but also from Bitlis and Arabkir.

The Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, as it became to be called in time, continues to this day. On occasion it has claimed that since there was no transfer, formal or informal, of the office to Vagharshapat, the legal succession of the head of the Armenian Church continued and continues through the Cilician catholicoses.

Etchmiadzin maintains that the assembly and election of 1441 was clearly recognized by most bishops and the people as a return and, in fact, a transfer, to the original Holy Etchmiadzin. The sources support both positions, even though a colophon of 1446 from Arabkir suggested that a purely "Cilician Catholicosate" came into being with the consecration of Karapet, which coincided with the finding of the previously lost relic of the right hand of St. Gregory.

No matter how the legalistic interpretations are argued, the de facto relationship of the two catholicosates remains quite clear for the coming centuries. There was a reconciliation between them, including also the Catholicos of Aght'amar, marred only twice when violent disputes reappeared between Sis and Etchmiadzin in the mid-seventeenth century and at the end of the nineteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century, the two centers fell into disagreement after the election of Zareh Catholicos in Antelias, Lebanon in February, 1956. But these quarrels are not to be seen as a division in the Armenian Church, since none of them involved doctrinal questions, but rather disagreements over diocesan jurisdiction. Today, the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin is recognized by everyone, even by the Catholicos of Cilicia, as the Mother See, although in terms of ecclesiastic rank and absolute and unique control over their respective orders, they are equal.

The Catholicosate of Aght'amar continued into the twentieth century (though with a locum tenens from 1895 to 1915) until it, too, became a victim of the Armenian genocide. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and until 1815, there was also

a catholicos of Caucasian Albania, resident at Gandzasar in Karabagh; it became and remained an hereditary pontificate in the Armenian Hasan-Djalaliants feudal family maintaining the ancient title "catholicos," but administering to local needs only.

From the fourteenth century, there was an Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem, which had its origins when Bishop Sargis, refusing to accept the union concluded with the Roman church by the Council of Sis in 1307, declared independence from Cilicia. In 1311, he prevailed on Sultan Malik Nasr of Egypt to confirm him as *patrik* or patriarch. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, the patriarchate maintained very close ties with the catholicos in Sis and did not come under the jurisdiction of Etchmiadzin until the nineteenth century, and then only with the agreement of the Cilician catholicos. Its major administrative function was to attend to the Holy Places under Armenian control, the local community in Palestine, and the continual flow of Armenian pilgrims.

As Ottoman power increased and the Armenian prelate of Constantinople gradually became the Patriarch of all Armenians in the empire, when Cilicia with its catholicosial see was incorporated by Sultan Selim in 1517, and later when Erevan and Vagharshapat came under Ottoman rule for long periods, the jurisdictional question in the Armenian Church became confused and disputed. During the second-half of the fifteenth and much of the sixteenth century, the catholicos at Sis had the strongest say in the succession of prelates/patriarchs and the affairs of the church in Constantinople. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, however, as large numbers of Armenian refugees emigrated to the Ottoman capital, the shift toward Etchmiadzin became clear, since most newcomers originated, as discussed above, from areas directly under Etchmiadzin's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the Patriarch of Constantinople to enjoy an overwhelming dominance in church affairs.

Corruption and laxity were evident among some of the clergy in all of the ecclesiastical centers of the Armenian Church during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Considering the terror and destruction of the period, church leaders found it necessary

once and for all to adjust themselves to dependency on non-Christian rulers. Furthermore, despite the immense disruption in authority and revenue, and the decreasing numbers of faithful caused by constant emigration and assimilation to Islam, the Church and its leaders reached a *modus vivendi* on jurisdictional questions and somehow survived along with the nation. As already mentioned, the upper clergy were even able to initiate attempts toward the liberation of Armenia. As a national institution, the church, at least as it was represented by some of its more able catholicoses and bishops, recognized its responsibility to assume secular as well as spiritual leadership when Armenian authority had disappeared.

## **ART AND CULTURE**

Constant warfare, destruction, and the loss of royal patrons had their predictable effect on all intellectual and cultural activities in Armenia. The result was general and felt systematically during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of the two centuries, the sixteenth, especially its first three-quarters, was far worse than the fifteenth. Surviving artifacts were produced almost exclusively by the clergy, mostly monks, working in Armenian monasteries. Among exceptions are ceramics of the sixteenth century (and later) from Kütahya.

The influence of the Armenian Church on intellectual and artistic life cannot be overstated. Secular works are nearly as rare in these centuries as they were in the previous ones. Virtually all surviving architecture up to 1600 is religious, fortresses being the main exception. Nearly all painting is devoted to themes from Christian iconography. Only in literature were secular themes more actively employed in the form of ballads and poems, histories, scientific and medical treatises, and a few philosophical works.

### *The Monasteries and Their Schools*

The sponsors or the continuators of Armenian art were the large monastic complexes, the only institutions which had the means to carry out even the relatively reduced quantity of material culture that has survived from these centuries. Colophons and inscriptions of donation record numerous examples of how churches and monasteries began to be enriched. Already in the fifteenth century it became common for surviving noble families, especially in Siunik' and the northern regions, to give property -- villages, orchards, fields -- to monasteries to avoid having them pass to Muslim civil authorities. In the Van area at the Theotokos Monastery at Bitlis and at Aght'amar itself, the practice is also regularly recorded.

The church was sometimes able to buy outright large properties and entire villages as attested by colophons of Aght'amar during the life of Catholicos Zakaria III in the mid-fifteenth century. For a time the church replaced the feudal lords as the largest landowner, and like the feudal lords, collected various taxes from its lands for the operation of its establishments, including monasteries and the schools or universities attached to them.

The famous monastic universities of the late fourteenth century associated with Hovhannes Orotnetsi, Grigor Tat'evatsi, and others continued a precarious existence in the north in the first decades of the fifteenth century, to fall into eclipse in the latter part of the fifteenth and the entire sixteenth century. Those which played the most active role in the earlier period were Tat'ev and Hermon in Siunik', and Metzop' in the Van area. The focus of activity had by then shifted to the more stable Van area. The monasteries of K'adjberuni, Khizan, Bitlis, Aght'amar, and Ardjesh flourished during the early part of the century, while later, those in the Erzinjan area -- the Avag and Kapos Vanks on Mt. Sebul -- showed a moment of comparative splendor, especially under Bishop Hovhannes, when students from the Crimea, Greater Armenia, and Cappadocia studied there. Throughout the sixteenth century, however, these institutions struggled simply to

survive. In the first-half of the seventeenth century, a perceptible resurgence of monastic institutions, concomitant with the general flourishing of Armenian life, took place.

### *Architecture*

The great building activity in northern Armenia of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries came to a rude stop in the latter part of the fourteenth century. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, churches and monasteries in Siunik', Karabagh/Artsakh, and Ayrarat struggled to preserve existing structures in the face of continued pillaging and intentional destruction during the Timurid and Türkmen periods. During two and a quarter centuries, from 1375 to 1604, only three or four churches were constructed in the north, mostly in Siunik' during the better moments of the first-half of the fifteenth century. The collected inscriptions from Tat'ev, Haghpat, and Sanahin lack references to construction or reconstruction. Most are either short memorials on small khatchkars or inscriptions on tombstones. The situation had so deteriorated that when a new church was built at the monastery of Metzop' in the fifteenth century, a Greek architect was brought in to do the work.

In the central areas around Lake Van and the city of Diyarbekir/Amid, the situation was somewhat better, thanks especially to the efforts of a certain Step'anos of P'ir, a vardapet from the Rshtunik' area, who, in that area of Lake Van, "constructed more than ten domed and lime-plastered churches" and repaired many others, according to a colophon written at Aght'amar in 1445. Also active in this early and mid-fifteenth century was the architect Nek'amat who, under the prelacy of Mkrtych Naghash, poet and painter, built the wondrous domed church of St. Theodorus in Amid. Because it was more splendid and higher than the mosques and minarets of the city, it was torn down, to be rebuilt after the intercession of the Islamic officials in 1447, as recorded in a detailed colophon of 1449. As for the sixteenth century, no construction is recorded except for a domed chapel in 1555 and a few minor restorations made at the end of the century at St.

Karapet in Mush. In no other century had the art of construction in Armenia been so severely affected by the conditions of the time as in the sixteenth. On the other hand, throughout this period, Armenian architects were active in diasporan colonies, building churches in Constantinople, Lvov, the Crimea, Moldavia, and Russia.

### *Manuscript Production and Miniature Painting*

Just as the lack of construction reinforces the notion of the decline in the arts, so, too, does the scarcity of manuscripts. For the first time since the ninth century there was a decline in the number of manuscripts produced from one century to the next: perceptibly fewer sixteenth century manuscripts exist than fifteenth-century ones. A survey using catalogues of some 18,000 of the estimated 30,000 surviving Armenian manuscripts and using only dated examples, revealed the following results. Manuscript production clearly begins to decline after 1350, and continues to fall until the Timurid campaigns end at the turn of the fourteenth century, when there is a rapid rise in production up to 1420. This is followed by a sharp drop, coinciding with the death of Qara Yusuf, and until about 1440, when another steady rise in production peaks out at 1460, followed by another steep decline up to 1500. The most dramatic plunge in production, occurs during the years of Sultan Selim's eastern campaigns up to the early 1520s, and again during the wars of Süleyman in the late 1530s and early 1540s. In both of these periods almost no manuscripts were copied. The half-century from 1500 to 1550 was definitely the lowest point in the activities of Armenian scriptoria from the ninth century until printing definitively replaced manuscript copying in the nineteenth century. Afterward, from about 1545 and continuing to the seventeenth century, there was a steady rise in the copying of manuscripts, surpassing, by the turn of the eighteenth century, every previous period of production, even though graphically vivid declines marked the beginning years of the last Ottoman Turkish campaign of the century, around 1575-1580, and again just after the forced immigration of Shah Abbas of 1604-1605.

This statistical analysis, thus far only partially published, confirms what was already apparent from research based on historical sources. If one were to remove from the statistical base manuscripts executed in the Crimea and cities of western and central Anatolia in the second-half of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the picture would appear even darker. The most active centers of manuscript production were almost entirely in the Lake Van area, and in the later period, Jerusalem and Aleppo. The second half of the sixteenth century, however, also shows the Van region in decline, giving way to Constantinople and eventually to New Julfa.

Miniature painting, which had undergone a period of continuous activity in the fourteenth century, both in the north at the schools of Glatzor and Tat'ev and in the newly flourishing centers in Vaspurakan, also showed a decline. A few manuscripts of the first-half of the fifteenth century from the north monasteries, especially Tat'ev, are illuminated. But the major workshops are in the central areas, both at Khizan to the southwest of the lake, and Van and Aght'amar to the southeast. The Khizan artists showed a certain innovation and excitement in their iconography and in the agitated style they employed. The outstanding artist of that school in the fifteenth century was Khachadur of Khizan, flourishing in the 1450s. Miniatures executed at Van, Aght'amar, Artzke, and other monasteries in the mid and latter part of the century present a much more conservative, static approach, somewhat dull in their attitude toward the subjects. Outside these areas, Kapos Monastery near Erzinjan produced a few illustrated manuscripts, as did the scriptoria of Crimea and Jerusalem. The end of the century and the first-half of the sixteenth century are characterized by a dearth of illuminations paralleling the sharp drop in manuscript production. By the final quarter of the sixteenth century, however, the Khizan school is once again active through artists like Sargis, Martiros, and Khachadur. They skillfully decorated a series of interesting manuscripts dating from the 1570s to the early seventeenth century, spreading the influence of the Khizan style to other centers where they worked, especially Constantinople and New

Julfa. The most outstanding artist of this period is Hakob of Julfa, who executed a series of richly decorated and colorful works from the 1580s to the 1620s. During this revival, artists such as Khachadur of Khizan consciously turned to older Cilician Gospels of the thirteenth century, and copied both their style and iconography. The abundance of European printed Bibles, replete with engravings of Old and New Testament scenes, provided Armenian artists with convenient model books.

Only a few examples of art in other media from these centuries have survived: they include the famous carved doors of 1486 from the monastery of Lake Sevan showing a monumental Pentecost; the embroidered processional banner of 1441, perhaps used during the assembly of that year at Vagharshapat, shows St. Gregory, Trdat, and St. Hripsime on one side, and Christ in glory with the symbols of the Evangelists on the other. Some silver bindings of the late sixteenth century are known, two of which are similar enough to each other to suggest that a workshop in the Lake Van area produced prefabricated plaques. Tooled and stamped leather bindings and woven and printed doublures of manuscripts and altar curtains also affirm that leather crafting and the textile industry were operative in the period. After a long decline, *khachkar* production also resumed, especially in old Julfa, where the masters Hayrapet and Grigor were active from 1550 to 1605, and Noraduz near Lake Sevan. The distinguished sixteenth century ceramics produced by Armenians in the western Anatolian town of Kütahya are also to be noted.

It is perhaps not coincidental that the Armenian venture into printing in 1511-1513 coincided with the absolute low point of manuscript production. Hakob Meghpart was able to publish, with the help of Venetian printers, five titles in those years, just six decades after printing was invented. Of the many thousands of languages in which books have been printed since the fifteenth century, Armenian was the tenth. That in itself demonstrates the wide familiarity Armenians had with new discoveries and their desire, individually and collectively, to exploit innovation. In the later sixteenth century, Abgar

Dpir produced books in Venice and Constantinople; afterward his son, Sultanshah, along with Hovhannes Terjantsi issued Armenian books in Rome (1584) and Venice (1587). This was only a modest beginning which did little to assuage the need of the clergy for liturgical works, as is clear by the letter of 1585 addressed to Pope Gregory XIII by Catholicos Zakaria of Sis, asking the Pope to use the resources at his disposal to print the Bible in Armenian, because the cost of copying locally was so high the Bible had become rare.

Printing was to spread rapidly to nearly every center of Armenian life in the next two centuries. The tradition established by Hakob and Abgar in the sixteenth century is carried forward today wherever Armenians have settled.

### *Literature*

Though several important church leaders were also poets, literature of the time, written almost exclusively in the monasteries, was philosophical, scientific, or historical.

Belles lettres was confined exclusively to poetry, ballads, or troubadour songs. A popular genre was the elegy or lamentation. Two of the most famous, by Arak'el of Bitlis and Abraham of Ankara, were on the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453.

Another elegy by T'adeos of Sebastia described the *devshirme* of 1531. The famous poets of the period were Arak'el of Siunik' (ca. 1350-1425), Grigor of Akhlat (Tzerents, 1350-1400), Arak'el of Bitlis (ca. 1380-1450), Mkrtich Naghash, the poet, painter, and Catholicos of Sis of the fifteenth century, Hovhannes T'lkurantsi (1489-1529), Nahapet K'uchag and Hovasap' of Sebastia (1510s-1560s), and a group of centagenarian poets from Tokat -- Minas, Khatchadur, Step'an, and Hakob -- of the sixteenth century. Philosophical and scientific writers tended to be the heads of the great monasteries or their universities as in the fourteenth century.

Grigor Tat'evatsi (d. 1410) and T'omas Metzop'etsi (1378-1446) were the leading teachers of the late fourteenth and first decades of the fifteenth century. Though they had

to move their schools from monastery to monastery, they still attracted more than a hundred students at a time. Tat'evatsi was a scientist and philosopher who left a large legacy of written works; so, too, Mat'eos Djughayetsi and Arak'el Siunetsi. Active in both science and medical writing was the famous doctor Amirdovlat' of Amasia (d. 1496) working in Constantinople, and the already-mentioned poet Hovasap'.

Armenian historiography suffered seriously during the period, producing only a single, important work, the *History* of T'omas of Metzop' to which is added the famous colophon about the assembly of 1441. It covers in great detail the devastating raids of Timur, starting in 1386, and those of the Qara Qoyunlu rulers Qara Yusuf, Iskandar, and Jihanshah. There is also a long colophon of Tzerents on the years 1386 to 1422, but nothing else for two centuries except terse, minor chronicles and the abundant, but often cryptic, colophons. Only with late sixteenth-early seventeenth century works of Grigor Daranaghtsi (Kemakhtsi, 1576-1643) and especially the valuable *History* of Arak'el of Tabriz (end of the sixteenth century to 1670), does the long and consistent Armenian historical tradition revive.

## CONCLUSION

The sixteenth century ends in Armenia with one of the severest famines of a century of famines. Two hundred years earlier a kingless, geographically divided Armenia, under foreign Islamic domination for the greater part of three centuries, suffered the third, the Timurid, wave of central Asiatic Turkic hordes in as many centuries. Between the dread and terror of these terminal points, there was mostly war, hunger, and oppression. Many Armenians chose to escape through migration. Some assimilated to the religion of the conqueror. Colophons of 1366 and 1422 and other sources allude to Islamic conversion by Armenians, though there does not seem to have been the kind of massive conversion that went on among Greek communities of western Anatolia during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. In order to maintain their power and

influence under the changed regime, Armenian nobles in the north -- though not to the degree of their Georgian cousins -- converted to Islam. But on the whole Armenian Christians seemed to have been as fiercely against conversion to Islam as they were to accepting Catholicism. It is certain that especially in the sixteenth century, some Armenian youth became Muslim through the process of the *devshirme*. It is no coincidence that Armenian figures like the architect Sinan was of the mid-sixteenth century and the Grand Vizier, Khalil of Kayseri, was of the very early seventeenth century. After 1593 the majority of Janissaries were Muslim-born. In the subsequent century the problem was not a lack of manpower for the corps, but an untenable surplus.

Arak'el of Tabriz, in discussing the depredations and suffering caused to the Armenians by Shah Abbas, was so affected that he could go no further. The Mekhitarist father, Ghevond Alishan, in the middle of the nineteenth century, while discussing the work of Abgar Dpir, laments that the sixteenth century was surely culturally worse than the fifteenth, for he can barely find any material in the vast manuscript collection at his disposal about activities in Armenia proper. Alishan also complains that the language has been debased, and that few scribes can write the classical *grabar* properly. The early twentieth-century historian Leo, in recalling Alishan's words, points out that the brighter side of this process is the firm strides made toward a more facile and popular language, the *ashgrabar*. He says, perhaps ironically, that never had there been so much singing in Armenia as in the sixteenth century, referring to the extraordinary number of bards and minstrels who were actively composing poetry and songs. But here Leo exaggerates a bit, not taking into consideration what he knew too well, namely, that so many of the poems and ballads were lamentations, nostalgic yearnings for the homeland, for a secure haven, for the arrival of a new spring in Armenia, songs for the exiled refugee or sedentary sufferers.

And yet the nation survived. Armenian continued as the language of the Armenians. Manuscripts were produced and beautifully decorated, even in the homeland,

which foreign travelers described as having become a desert through the destruction and pillaging of successive wars. In the next century, the seventeenth, with the help of diasporan communities in Constantinople, western Asia Minor, New Julfa, and Europe more Armenian manuscripts were produced than at any other time. And the language flourished. In the second hundred years of the history of Armenian printing, some 150 entirely Armenian titles were published almost exclusively outside Armenia proper, compared to the dozen or so of the sixteenth century.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these twenty or so decades of Armenian survival, saw, in addition to the far-reaching geographical shift of Armenian population, a major change in social and political institutions. Not only had government by Armenians disappeared with the destruction of the Cilician Kingdom, but regional Armenian sovereignty also dissolved as the nakharar families gradually lost their lands, the traditional source of their power and regional hegemony. Only in the most remote areas were these chieftains able to hold onto their titles and estates; a group of them was even to re-emerge actively a century later in the Karabagh. The Armenian feudal class had been destroyed or had faded away. From the point of view of class structure, the nation had entered the modern period, one dominated by a bourgeoisie of urban merchants, financiers, and clergy. Privilege by noble birth was essentially eliminated.

By in the fifteenth century in northern and central Armenia, reinforced and strengthened in Constantinople in the sixteenth century, new power was given to the Armenian church. Within traditional Islamic legal practice, Christians and Jews constituted protected, though clearly inferior, communities with separate status on the basis of their religion. The Ottoman state machinery exaggerated this process through its *millet* system. Already in fifteenth century Armenia, the heads of leading monasteries, often scions of still powerful feudal families, decided matters relating to marriage and divorce, inheritance, and criminal disputes between Armenians. As the decades passed and the church continued to remain the spokesman of the nation before Islamic rulers, its

authority increased. This power was strengthened in Constantinople especially in later centuries, when the Armenian Patriarch was to accumulate near absolute authority over his countrymen, and, in addition, became the person directly responsible for the nation before the sultan and the Ottoman administration.

Though the drama of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries brought Armenia and the Armenians into the modern era, the future did not provide peace or privilege for all of them. The church, which continued to accumulate power and wealth, did not receive its authority or mandate from the people, but rather acquired it from the sultan or the shah, as the case might be. It was from foreign Islamic rulers that the heads of the Armenian Church were to derive so much of their power. Unfortunately, peasants and villagers continued to live an insecure life, slaves of the taxes imposed by local governors and the state. Armenian city dwellers, even the minority which enjoyed considerable privilege in the system, were always conscious of their legalized second-class status. Yet, travelers alluded to the industriousness and seriousness of purpose of Armenians, elaborating further that these traits have distinguished them from other peoples of the area and have been the major cause of their material success. Perhaps through this work-ethic and the Christian belief in a more hopeful future, the Armenian, individually and collectively, was able to compensate for the psychological trauma the nation had suffered, and, unknowingly, had already prepared for continued and even more intense future suffering.