

Ghewond's History

Translator's Preface

[i] Almost nothing is known about the life of Ghewond, author of the sole 8th century Armenian history describing the Arab domination. It has been suggested that he was born in the 730s in the village of Gogh'tn, received his clerical education and degree of *vardapet* (doctor of the Church) in the city of Dwin, and died in the latter part of the century. His *History* covers the period from ca. 632 to 788 and includes descriptions of the Arab invasions of Armenia in the mid 7th century, the wars fought by the caliphate against Byzantium and the Khazars, the settlement of Arab tribes in Asia Minor and the Caucasus, and the overthrow of the Umayyads, as well as information on Arab tax policies, the status of the Armenian Church, and the Armenian and Arab nobilities. Ghewond is considered a trustworthy historian. He correctly lists the caliphs and the lengths of their reigns, except for the reigns of the initial three caliphs. He correctly lists the names and reigns of the *ostikans* or Muslim governors of the newly-created administrative unit called Armīniya, which included Armenia, East Iberia/Georgia, and parts of Aghuania (Atrpatakan/Azerbaijan). He was a supporter of the ambitions of the Bagratid family and, according to the colophon at the end of his *History*, wrote under the patronage of Shapuh Bagratuni, son of Smbat *sparapet* (commander-in-chief), whose activities are recorded in the work.

Ghewond's major source for the period of the Arab invasions (640-660s) was the 7th century historian Sebeos [see Sebeos' *History*, [chapters 30-38](#)]. For the first half of the 8th century Ghewond was relying on the accounts of older contemporaries, but for the second half of the century he himself was a bitter eyewitness. He describes the increasing harshness of Arab tax policies and the growing intolerance of individual caliphs and their governors, which triggered two unsuccessful rebellions in Armenia (747-750 and 774-775). Martyrological literature may have been a source for part of chapter 40. That chapter contains the first reference to the Armenian Era (a system of dating with A.D. 551/552 as year one) which later Armenian historians were to adopt. However, the date Ghewond provides for the martyrdom in question is incorrect. Another source which Ghewond claims--"the enemy himself"--is quite suspicious. In that passage (in chapter 34), Arab soldiers--who have just annihilated Armenian rebels--purport to have seen priests with candles, incense, and gospels encouraging their foe. This is a literary device rather than a source. Fellow clergymen, Armenian nobles, and the author's own observations seem to be principal sources for much of the 8th century. The Bible was a clear source of inspiration for Ghewond throughout his life and throughout his *History*. Our author was a fatalist and moralizer who attributed all calamities to God's vengeance. Consequently he had no sympathy for rebels, be they Armenian lords and peasants who challenged the Arab overlords, or the iconoclastic Paulician sectarians (the "sons of sinfulness") who challenged the Armenian Church in this period. In Ghewond's account, the failings of the Christian Armenians were due entirely to their own sins, but so too were the failings of the Muslim Arabs. Ghewond's worldview is consistently negative, probably a reflection of the bleakness of the period he chronicled.

[ii] There is some question whether Ghewond's text has reached us intact. Titles provided by some later medieval historians could imply that the work began with an account of the prophet Muhammad's life, though this is not certain. The late 13th century historian Step'annos O'rbelean, in chapter 7 of his *History of the State of Sisakan*, claimed that Ghewond's *History* contained a *gahnamak* or list of princes, but the extant text of Ghewond does not. The lack of a concluding section also seems peculiar, especially for an author so prone to moralizing. In addition to possibly missing portions, Ghewond's text may have *gained* a section (chapters 13-14), containing the lengthy correspondence between Caliph 'Umar II and Emperor Leo III, which many scholars today regard as a later interpolation. The most detailed study of Ghewond's text remains father Nerse's Akinean's *Ghewond er'ets' patmagir* [*The Historian Ghewond the Priest*] (Vienna, 1930; also in the journal *Hande's amso'reay*, vols. #43-44, 1929-1930). In a deliberately provocative section of his study Akinean suggested that Ghewond and another historian, Movse's Xorenat'si, were one and the same person. However vocabulary, style, and worldview--among other factors--rule this out, and Akinean's proposal has found no support among scholars.

Eight of the surviving fourteen manuscripts of Ghewond's *History* are housed at the Matenadaran in Yerevan, Armenia. The oldest and most complete (*ms.* #1902) dates from the 13th century and seems to have been the source of the other copies, many of which are defective. The first publication of the classical Armenian text was made by K. V. Shahnazarean (Paris, 1857), based on a 17th century manuscript. A better edition was prepared by K. Ezean and issued by S. Malxasean (St. Petersburg, 1887), based on several manuscripts, including the earliest. Translations have been made into French by Shahnazarean/Chahnazarean (Paris, 1856); Russian by K. Patkanean (St. Petersburg, 1862); and modern Armenian by Aram Ter-Ghewondyan (Yerevan, 1982). An English translation and scholarly commentary of chapters 13-14 was issued by A. Jeffery [*Ghewond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III*, *Harvard Theological Review*, 37 (1944) pp. 269-332]. The first complete English translation [*History of Lewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*] was published by father Zaven Arzoumanian (Philadelphia, 1982), and includes an introduction, valuable notes, and a map. Our translation below was made from the classical Armenian text of Ezean/Malxasean (St. Petersburg, 1887, second edition) and excludes chapters 13-14.

For the history of the 7-8th centuries see N. G. Garsoian, "The Arab Invasions and the Rise of the Bagratuni (640-884)", in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. I, R. G. Hovannisian, ed. (N.Y., 1997); and A. Ter-Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia* (Lisbon, 1976), translated by N.G. Garsoian. On the Paulicians see N. G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy* (Paris, 1967); V. Nersessian, *The Tondrakian Movement* (London, 1987), chapter 3; and S. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians* (Leiden, 1997), chapter two. The maps and accompanying text in R. H. Hewsen, *Armenia, A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2000) pp. 104-107 also are valuable. Later epic literature, including the Armenian *David of Sasun* and John Mamikonean's *History of Taron*, and the Byzantine *Digenes Akrites* perhaps contain material reflecting this period.

The transliteration employed here is a modification of the Library of Congress system, substituting **x** for the LOC's **kh**, for the thirteenth character of the Armenian alphabet. Otherwise we follow the new LOC system for Armenian, which eliminates diacritical marks above or below a character and substitutes the single or double quotation mark to the character's right. In the LOC romanization, the seventh character of the alphabet appears as **e'**, the eighth as **e"**, the twenty-eighth as **r'**, and the thirty-eighth, as **o'**.

[A Note on Pagination](#)

The following chronological tables may be useful as accompaniments to the translation. The tables open in separate windows, for persistence. Use ALT-F4 to close, or ALT-TAB to toggle back to this page or to other documents. Additional tables are available on another page of this site: [Chronological Tables](#).

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Ghewond's

History

1.

[1] First [we shall discuss] those called Amir al-Mu'mnin [Commander(s) of the Faithful]. Muhammad (Mahmet) [ca. 570-632] died after exercising power for twenty years. In the eleventh year of the [reign of the] pious, God-pleasing Emperor Heraclius [610-641] of Byzantium, [Muhammad] was succeeded by Abu Bakr [632-634], 'Umar [634-644], and 'Uthman [644-656] [who ruled] for thirty-eight years. As long as the God-crowned Heraclius was living, [the Arabs] did not dare to conduct raids against Judaea, because [Heraclius'] reputation for bravery was widespread, and he terrified them. Thus [Heraclius] held the rule of Judaea and Asorestan until the end of his life.

Once Heraclius' son [Constantine III, 613-641] had come to rule [g3] in his father's stead, the Lord awakened the spirits of malevolent men so that through them the blood of Christians would be shed in vengeance, because we had sinned before the Lord God. [The Arabs] began to form brigades and mass troops against Constantine's realm, against Judaea and Asorestan, having for support the command of their law-giver, that sower of darnel, to "Go against the countries and put them under your rule, for the plenty of the world has been given to us for our enjoyment. Eat the meat of the select ones of the countries, and drink the blood of the mighty." The Jews were their supporters and leaders, having gone to the camp at Madiam and told them: "God promised Abraham that He would deliver up the inhabitants of the world in service [to him]; and we are his heirs and sons of the patriarch. Because of our wickedness, God became disgusted with us and lifted the scepter of kingship from us, subjecting us to the servitude of slavery. But you, too, are children of Abraham and sons of the patriarch. Arise with us and save us from service to the emperor of the Byzantines, and together we shall hold our realm." [The Arabs] were encouraged further hearing this, and went against Judaea.

News reached the emperor of the Byzantines, who wrote [g4] to the general in Judaea, saying: "I have heard that the Saracens have arisen and attacked Judaea and Asorestan. Gather up your troops, go fight against them and block them, so they do not spread their raiding over our country, bringing the sword and death to it. Now put on your armor and organize your troops." [The general], upon receiving the imperial order, wrote to the military commanders who were under his authority, wherever they happened to be, to come to him. Coming quickly, altogether they formed a mighty army which went before the marauder who had grown strong and was coming against them. Now [the two sides] faced each other in the confines [of the place called] the Rock of Arabia. [The Byzantines] saw the boundless host of the Madiam army, as numerous as a swarm of locusts, with [their] incalculable number of camels and horses. Then the Byzantine troops displayed great ignorance, for they put the army's supplies out in the open at a great distance from themselves. And, leaving their horses at the camp, they went forth to make war on foot, armored, against [the Arabs]. Exhausted from the sun's heat, the hot rocks and sand, and from the weight of their weapons, they fell upon the enemy. [g5]

[The Arabs], who had rested themselves, quickly leaped on their mounts and attacked, delivering many blows to the Byzantine troops and putting the rest to flight, pursuing them to the Byzantine camp, and generally killing many of them.

Then the Ishmaelites, having loaded up with looted Byzantine treasures and after robbing those who had fallen to their swords, returned in joy to their own land. Thereafter they ruled over Judaea and Asorestan, putting the land and country of the blessed city of Jerusalem under taxation. Thus, from that time forth, Judaea and Asorik' ceased paying taxes to the emperor of Byzantium, since the army of the Byzantines was unable to resist the Ishmaelites. And so Ishmael came to rule over Judaea.

2.

[2] A year later [the Arabs] became insolent toward the shah of Iran. They assembled a multitude of troops and came against the shah of Iran whose name was Yazdgird (Yazkert) [III, 632-651], the grandson of Xosrov [II, 590, 591-628]. Yazdgird also assembled his troops to battle, [g6] but he was unable to withstand them. [The Arabs] struck the [Iranian] troops, destroying them with the sword, and they struck and killed the shah. With that, the kingdom of the Iranians ended, having lasted 481 years. The Ishmaelites pillaged the country and the royal treasury and took [the spoil] to their own land. A large body of troops separated and started raiding the land of the Armenians from the Iranian side, capturing the districts of Mark' and Goght'n and the village (dastakert) of Naxjawan. Many men were killed by the sword; others, with women and children, were made captives and taken across the Arax (Erax) River at the ford of Jugha. The army then divided into two parts, one part transporting the captives to their own land, and the other brigade raiding through the district of Artaz against the Byzantine general named Procopius, who was encamped in the district of Kogovit, near the borders of Bazudzor and Marduts'ayk'. Prince T'e'odoros of the R'shtunik' clan alerted Procopius that "troops of the marauding Ishmaelites have arisen and are coming against us."

But Procopius, placing his faith in the multitude of his troops and not in God Who determines [the outcome of] the battle, wrote nothing in reply to the prince of the Armenians. [T'e'odoros R'shtunik'], who was embittered by the destruction of the land of the Armenians and by the laziness of the general, [g7] impatiently wrote [to Procopius] two and three times. General [Procopius], getting angry at the prince [who was in his presence], threw the scepter he was holding in his hand at [T'e'odoros]. [T'e'odoros] left him, saddened, and immediately ordered the forces under his authority to "arm and go against the Ishmaelites." The troops mounted their horses and went to a hill named Eghbark' where they held the summits of the gorges, waiting to ambush [the Arabs]. They slew many of them, took booty from the fallen, and went on to the district of Garhni, having separated from the [Byzantine] general. Then Procopius ordered his own troops to go against the enemy. The army of the Ishmaelites rushed against them, destroying most of the Byzantines. The survivors took to flight and [the Arabs] pursued them to their camp and then they themselves returned to their own camp to rest. They say that there were more than 60,000 Byzantine troops [involved there],

while the Ishmaelites had less than 10,000 men. The next day, gathering up the spoil stored in the camp, [the Arab army] turned about and returned to its own land.

This occurred in the twenty-second year of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman and 'Umar, the Ishmaelite caliphs. For the next three years they ceased coming against the land of the Armenians. However, in the twenty-sixth year of their rule, once again they attacked the land of the Armenians with a very large force.[g8]

3.

[3] In the second year of the Byzantine emperor Constantine, who was Heraclius' grandson, news reached Prince T'e'odoros that the marauders had arisen and were coming against the land. He took his troops and wanted to get hold of gorges at the Dzora pass, but was unable to get there in advance [of the Arab army] because the enemy had attacked with the speed of winged snakes. Thus they left Armenian forces behind them and headed to the capital city of Duin. They found the city devoid of fighting men, because all of them had gone along with Prince T'e'odoros. All they encountered there were women, children, and other people who were not soldiers. They came against the city and quickly took the fortress. They killed the men they discovered and took into captivity the women and children, some 35,000 souls.

Tell me, who is capable of lamenting in a worthy fashion the wretchedness of these disasters? For they occurred everywhere. The holy churches, which the pagans were not worthy to enter, were pulled apart, demolished, and trampled under the loathsome feet of the infidels. Priests, deacons, and worshippers were slaughtered [g9] by the insolent and merciless enemy. Delicate women, who had never experienced adversity, were whipped and dragged into the square crying out laments for the fate that awaited them. Similarly, the multitude of captives with their sons and daughters were in the same calamity, groaning and sighing. They did not know who was more worthy of lamentation, those who had been slain by the infidel's sword, or the sons and daughters left alive who were to be seized and taken, to be alienated from the faith of Christ and its spiritual and divine glorification. Though there were many weeping and mourning the pitiful sight of blood-spattered bodies fallen on top of one another, [the survivors] were not in a condition to gather up the bodies and bury them. How very appropriate [to this situation] is the prophet's lament: "O God, the heathen have come into thy inheritance; they have defiled thy holy temple. They have given the bodies of thy servant to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth. And there was none to bury them" [see Psalms 79: 1-3]. All these disastrous horrors, which Judaea had experienced before, were now visited upon us.

When the troops of the Armenians with the lords (naxarars) and Prince [T'e'odoros R'shtuni] saw the ferocity of the marauders who had come against them, their resolve weakened and they were unable to attack the pillaging enemy. Even though they saw their women and children being led away into captivity, [the Armenian troops] were unable to resist, [g10] because they were few in number. Rather, they just sat sobbing, lamenting, and grieving for their women and children. The Hagarenes transported [the captives] to the country of Syria, and then they ceased coming against the land of the Armenians for ten years.

[4] However in the thirty-sixth year of their rule, they assembled a force and again attacked the land of the Armenians. The leaders [of this expedition] were 'Uthman and Oqba. When they reached the borders of Armenia, they divided into three fronts and began their raiding. One front went by way of the land of Vaspurakan, capturing towns and fortresses as far as the city of Naxjawan. Another front went through Taro'n, and the third front reached Kogovit and besieged the fortress of Artsap'. Locating an entrance to the fortress, they went in secretly at night. They found the guards sleeping, and so they took that fortress. They bound the men they encountered there. Then they negligently took their pleasure, having abominably foul intercourse with the women. But all-seeing God took pity on [the Armenians], not ignoring those who believed in His Name. As retribution for the evils [the Arabs had] wrought, He sent Prince T'e'odoros who, roaring like a lion, took six hundred armed men and quickly went against the marauders who had arrived there. Appearing at [the fortress] suddenly, [T'e'odoros and his troops] killed some 3,000 of the enemy, freed the bound [men], pursued the few survivors, and retrieved the captives. [g11] Then, collecting the enemy's loot and booty, they turned back joyfully glorifying God Who demanded vengeance from their enemy. As for that [other front of the] army about which I narrated earlier, it took its spoil and captives and went to the land of Syria. After that they stopped [raiding] for two years.

Having wrought such evil deeds during their day, the princes of the Ishmaelites--Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, and 'Umar--died.

4.

Succeeding them, a certain Mu'awiya held authority for nineteen years and four months, and then died [661-680]. [We shall now describe] Prince Grigor who lived in [Mu'awiya's] time, the events that took place in the land of the Armenians, and the deaths of the princes.

The caliph of the Tachiks [Arabs] began to assemble troops to come against the land of the Armenians in the first year of [Mu'awiya's] reign, which was the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Emperor Constans [II, 641-668], the grandson of Heraclius. News of this reached Emperor Constans who ordered the general in the Cilician area to go against them. [Constans] removed Prince T'e'odoros from his authority because of the treachery he had worked against general Procopius, and put in his stead [g12] a certain Smbat from the Bagratid clan, sending him along with his general. He wrote to T'e'odoros R'shtuni, who previously was the [presiding] prince, saying: "Arise and come with us to battle, bringing along the troops under your control." However [T'e'odoros] did not want to go. [Constans] wrote a second time: "If you do not accompany us to fight the marauder, on our return I shall exterminate your House, [removing it] from the [other] clans of our [empire]." Frightened by these threats, [T'e'odoros] dressed his son, Vard, to go to Prince Smbat, ordering him to deal treacherously with his allies, and to unite with the enemy. [Vard] went to the general of the Byzantines and [together] they set off for Syria, crossing the bridge on the Euphrates. T'e'odoros' son then went to the general and requested that he be appointed as guard over the pontoon bridge. [The general] ordered that [Vard] guard the front of the bridge.

[5] When the two sides clashed in battle and the wounded fell on both sides, again the Tachik fighters became strong, putting the Byzantine troops to flight. This occurred on Holy Saturday, on the eve of Easter. Once T'eodoros' son observed the Ishmaelite victory, gathering his strength he crossed to the other side of the river and severed the bridge's [connecting] ropes, so that the [Byzantine] fugitives would not survive. Getting the Byzantine troops in their midst [the Arabs] hurled some of them into the river, though some of them escaped and fled to Byzantine territory. Thereafter the Byzantine emperor's courage abandoned him [g13], since he realized that the collapse of his authority was the Lord's doing. From that point on he ceased going against the Ishmaelites.

Now the caliph of the Ishmaelites wrote an edict to the land of the Armenians: "If you do not pay taxes to me and come under the yoke of my service, I shall put all of you to the sword." Nerse's, the chief-priest of the Armenians and builder of [the church of] St. Gregory, together with the princes and lords of the land assembled and agreed to become tributary to the tyranny of the Ishmaelites. [The Arabs] requested hostages, and [the assembly] gave [them] two of the Armenian lords, Grigor from the Mamikonean House and Smbat from the Bagratuni House. Mu'awiya, caliph of the Ishmaelites, took them and levied a 500 dahekan annual tax on the land of the Armenians [in exchange for allowing them] to remain without fear in their dwellings.

In the second year of his reign Mu'awiya summoned Grigor and Smbat, who were hostages at the royal court. He gave to Grigor the honor of [the position of presiding] prince of the Armenians [ca. 662-684/85], and sent them back to the land of the Armenians with numerous gifts. There was great peace during the years of his rule.

Mu'awiya's son, Yazid [I, 680-683] succeeded him, living for two years and five months before dying. He had kept taxes over the land of the Armenians at the same rate [as his father].

After [Yazid], 'Abd al-Malik [685-705], son of Marwan [I, 684-685] ruled. He lived for twenty-one years before dying. An account of his deeds follows. [g14]

[Abd al-Malik] was a cruel and warlike man. In the second year of his rule there was a fierce conflict, warfare, and a great bloodletting among the Tachiks which continued for three years, claiming innumerable lives, and which fulfilled the prophecy of David: "Their swords shall enter their own hearts and their bows shall be broken" [Psalm 37:15]. Instead of the shedding of innocent blood and the merciless slaughter which [the Arabs] visited upon the Christian peoples, the blood of the guilty was shed and God demanded vengeance upon those who had insulted His servants, a vengeance visited upon them by their very own hands.

Grigor, [presiding] prince of the Armenians, kept the land of the Armenians in a peaceful state throughout his reign, free from all raids and attacks. For he was a God-fearing man, perfectly pious in the faith, charitable, hospitable, and [a man who] cared about the poor. In the village of Aruch in the district of Aragatsoth he built a wonderfully appointed and adorned house of worship as a memorial to his own name, to glorify the Lord's name.

[6] During the war which broke out among the Tachiks, the Armenians, Georgians, and Aghuanians ceased to pay tribute to them, having been tributary for thirty years. This rebellion lasted for three years. In the fourth year, [g15] a northern people called Khazars (Xazirk') ruled over the land of the Armenians and they killed Prince Grigor and many Georgian and Aghuanian lords and princes in battle. [The Khazars] spread out raiding across the land of the Armenians, seizing numerous districts and villages. Then, collecting their loot and captives, they returned to their own land.

5.

[The following chapter concerns] the reign of Ashot, the conflagration caused by the Romans, and the death of Ashot.

After the death of Grigor, Ashot patrik [the patrician] succeeded him in the authority of [presiding] prince. [Ashot] of the Bagratuni clan was a prominent grandee among the Armenian lords, rich and mighty in authority, virtuous and modest in all worldly matters, more noble and more acquainted than all others with piety toward God. He concerned himself with all manner of benevolent work, was interested in education, and adorned the churches of God with doctoral arts and groups of clerics and splendid [ritual] vessels, all out of his treasury. He built a church [called Amenap'rkich'] at Dariwnk', the seat (ostan) of his realm, and placed in it the icon of the life-giving incarnation of Christ with its miraculous powers, which he had taken from the West, naming the church after it [Amenap'rkich' "Savior of All"]. [g16]

In the first year of his reign, a star of astonishing aspect appeared like a column of light shedding light from its own tail, and they called it a comet. It became a symbol of [the coming of] famine, the sword, and great violence.

In the second year of the reign of Emperor Justinian [II, 685-695, 705-711] and during the reign of Ashot patrik, [Justinian] sent a large force against our land of Armenia. They came and destroyed the land with looting, subjecting numerous beautiful buildings to fire and turning them into ruins. And then [the Byzantine troops] returned to their own land. However the Byzantine grandees became inimical toward Justinian, cut off his nose, and exiled him. In his place they enthroned Leo [Leontius, 695-698], Apsimeros Tiberius [Tiberius III Apsimar, 698-705] and Theodosius [III, 715-717]. Meanwhile Justinian had gone to the land of the Khazars, married the daughter of the Khaqan/Qaghan (Xak'an), the king of the Khazars, and requested auxiliary troops from him. [The Khaqan] provided many troops and sent along with them an extremely mighty man, named True'gh [Terbelis/Tervel, khan of the Bulgars, 700/701-718], Justinian's father-in-law. Arriving in Constantinople, [Justinian] fought and conquered his adversaries and established his reign for a second time. True'gh died in the battle. Then [Justinian] sent the other Khazar troops back to their own land with many gifts and valuable goods.

Ashot held authority for four years. [g17] In the fourth year of his rule a looting brigade of the sons of Ishmael attacked the land of the Armenians. These sons of sin and children of impiety worked their wickedness on the towns of Mark', at Xram, Jughha, and Xoshakunik' for they tortured the men, demanding taxes, and they planned to molest the women with their loathsome and obscene intercourse. News of these crimes reached Prince Ashot who immediately ordered his troops to go against them. [The Armenians] put [almost] all of them to the sword, while the remainder were put to flight. Once the wily son of Satan saw this attack, he became more violent and ordered his troops to spread the [looted] treasures in the field before the Armenian troops. The latter, carelessly turning attention to the booty, slacked off in their pursuit [of the Arabs]. Only Prince Smbat with a few men continued pursuing them. The enemy, growing stronger, turned back on them, wounding the [presiding] prince of the Armenians. However [Smbat's] soldiers gave a shout and [the remaining troops] arrived quickly, striking and killing the enemy. They took the prince, fatally wounded, to Kogovit where he died in his bed, gloriously [689]. He was buried in his [clan's] mausoleum in the village of Dariwnk'. [g18]

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Ghewond's

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6.

[7] [This chapter] concerns the battle which occurred in the swamp.

After the events which we have just narrated, the emperor of the Byzantines, who was called Apsimar and who succeeded Emperor Justinian, again sent a force [to Armenia] with orders to capture Smbat, the son of Varaztirots'. This was in revenge for Smbat's desertion of the Byzantine army on account of his father Varaztirots', whom the Byzantines had slain. They came and fought against him in the swampy plain of Payik. Many of the Armenian troops were killed, since they were few, as were many of the Byzantine troops. Once Smbat realized that he could not withstand the Byzantine army, he escaped by a hairsbreadth with a few men. The Byzantine troops returned to their own land.

7.

Now I shall again discuss the unbelievable disasters which befell us from the Ishmaelites. In the sixteenth year of the reign of 'Abd al-Malik' [685-705], Satan again inflamed his malevolent heart and [the caliph] ordered his troops to come against our land. The military commander was the bloodthirsty [g19] and diabolical Muhammad (Mahmet) [ibn Marwan] who swore a vow to his prince [his brother, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik'] that he would not replace his sword in its scabbard until he had plunged it into our land. Boasting, he went to the district of Jermadzor mercilessly putting to the sword whomever he found, as he had promised. However, since many people had been warned in advance about his coming they had taken precautions and sought refuge in the fortresses. [Muhammad ibn Marwan] also took numerous strongholds through deceit, falsely urging them to make peace. But once they had secured [that peace], they descended into the fortresses and put their swords to work, killing the men, and taking captive the women and children. Such a crisis descended on our land that [the living] envied the dead who had departed this world in peaceful rest, rather than endure a life of such misery.

Two years later his impiety came to a head, and [Muhammad] began to spew forth his deadly poison. He planned death for the monastery of Saint Gregory. For [the Arabs] had seen the wonderful, venerable, and revered [church] vessels which the kings, princes and lords of this land had accumulated there. They saw too the [monastery's] arrangements of the angelic orders of priests, the goodly discipline of vardapets and worshippers, and [they heard] the angelic hymns [sung] across the country. These things wounded their inflamed souls and so they treacherously planned a fatal ruination for them. A brigade of the infidels went to spend the night under their roof. Getting up [g20] in the night, they strangled one of their own servants and threw him into a ditch. When morning had dawned, they arose to leave. Then they sought for the servant whom they themselves had killed, and were unable to find him. They visited many difficulties and dangers upon the monastic community. Then they initiated a search and found [the dead servant's body] in the ditch where they had thrown it. Immediately they began piling up all kinds of falsehoods and then seized everyone from the youngest to the oldest, and put them into prison. They wrote an edict to the bloodthirsty Muhammad explaining what had been done to them and asking what sort of death [the clerics] should be subjected to. When [Muhammad] had heard this, he told them to judge [the clerics] themselves as they wished, and to confiscate the church's belongings as booty. Having received the unjust order, executioners moved to implement that command of their satanic father, who was a murderer from the very start and never knew righteousness, as we learn from the Lord. They removed from prison all the people bound with ropes, cut off their hands and feet, hanged them from trees, and ended their lives.

[8] Who could endure [hearing about] the unbelievable disasters visited upon them without weeping? The blessed church grew dim without the beauty of its altar, and the sound of heavenly glorification [ceased]. Silent were the spiritual, rational orders of the [divine] mass which the blessed [clerics] offered with the purest of thoughts. The glow of the lamps, which illuminated the evening like the day, had been extinguished. Gone was the fragrance [g21] of sweet-smelling incense, and [gone were] the prayers of the priests dedicated to the atonement of the people seeking peace from humane God. One could say that the altar of the Lord had been stripped of all splendor. Oh the suffering of Christ! How did He permit the infidels to slander the people who glorify Him and to give them such bitter deaths? Rather, He wanted to bestow eternal life [on them] through a transitory death, so that by sharing in His torments they would also share in His glory, and so that those who were crucified with Christ would also be crowned along with Him. Those who had died with Him would be reborn with Him and eternally inherit the rest they were promised. Similarly, those who collaborated with Satan will inherit with him the many different bitter torments which have been prepared for him, the fire, darkness, unending lament, tears, and the gnashing of teeth, about which He who has prepared them knows. All these things will befall those who work iniquity.

As regards the aforementioned Muhammad, after accomplishing all these evil deeds, he went to Syria with much spoil. Meanwhile the inhabitants of our land were left like the burned husks of wheat which are thrown at the feet of swine.

8.

When general Muhammad left for Syria, he left an Ishmaelite prince [Abu Shaykh ibn Abdullah, 701-703] as his replacement in the land of Armenia. The latter hatched an evil plan to eliminate the nobility and their cavalry from Armenia. His treachery was quickly revealed to Smbat

of the Bagratuni House and to other lords and their cavalry. When [Smbat] realized the [truth about the] plot, he summoned to him his clan members from the army of the nobles: Smbat, son of Prince Ashot, Vard, son of Prince T'eodoros, and his brother, Ashot, as well as other lords. He sought to find some way for them to save their lives. The decision adopted was to yield and leave the land, and to go to the Byzantine emperor. Some of the lords of the land of Vaspurakan then separated and departed, going to a plain called Ar'estakoghmn on the Vaspurakan border where a certain monk resided, in order to ask him about these matters. For [the monk] was a blessed and select man, full of spiritual wisdom. He lamented and bemoaned the destruction of the land and the churches and the draining away of the lordly clans, but was unable to suggest anything except that they should be careful and beware [g23] of treachery. Offering prayers for them, [the monk] entrusted them to the grace of God, and sent them away.

[9] They went along the bank of the Arax River and crossed into the borders of Ughaye', reaching the great town of Akor'i. Meanwhile the Ishmaelite troops which were in the city of Naxjawan chased after them and did not let off the pursuit, since there were more than five thousand of them and they wanted to devour [the Armenians] alive. When the Armenian troops learned that the marauders had arisen and were coming upon them, they crossed the Arax River [again] and encamped at the town of Vardanakert. The Tachik [Arab] troops continued to come after them. Then the Armenian forces sent a message to the Tachik troops, saying: "Why are you pursuing us? What wrong have we done you? Behold, our country lies before you, we are giving you our dwelling place, our vineyards, forests, and estates. Why do you also seek our lives? Let us quit our borders." However, the Ishmaelite troops did not want to listen, since their hearts had been hardened by the Lord so that they would be put to the sword. The Armenian troops secured the roads of the town and placed guards over them until dawn. They themselves spent the entire night in prayerful vigils, looking to the mighty right hand of God for aid and a just verdict on themselves and their enemies. As soon as day broke, when morning matins had ended, they celebrated the divine mass and those [g24] worthy of it communed in the Lord's body and blood, regarding it as their last rites. They ate a small meal to strengthen their bodies, and then immediately arose and organized themselves brigade by brigade and front by front, and went into battle. Aid from Almighty God came to the Armenian forces, for although there were less than two thousand troops, nonetheless they slaughtered many [Arabs] with their swords. [At that season] the days were already quite cold and icy, and then the weather turned even more bitterly cold, preventing the Ishmaelite troops from unleashing their might. They had spent the entire night sleeping on the snow. When day broke, they fell to [the Armenians'] swords. Those [Arabs] who escaped the sword fled and went on to the Arax River which had [lightly] frozen over from the cold. With that multitude of troops on the ice, [the ice gave way] and those who had escaped the sword fell through it into the depths to drown. A small number of the fugitives, some three hundred, turned [for aid] to tikin ("Lady") Shushan. But Smbat, Ashot's son, went in pursuit with his troops, wanting to kill them. Tikin Shushan came before him with many entreaties and was able to save those who had come [to her] on foot, naked, barefoot, and wounded. She bandaged their wounds, brought them back to health, and outfitted them with goodly clothing. She also provided pack animals from her own herd [for them] and then sent them to the caliph of the Ishmaelites, [g25] 'Abd al-Malik. As a result she received great thanks from him and also magnificent gifts.

The army troops, engorged with the enemy's spoil, sent glad tidings of their victory to the Byzantine emperor. As gifts from the enemy's loot they also had delivered to him choice Tachik horses and the noses which they had severed from the [Arabs] corpses.

The emperor received that gift greatly offering thanks to the Creator and [expressing] gratitude to Smbat, the lords with him, and their troops. He also bestowed on [Smbat] the dignity of curopalates, in a royal fashion. [Smbat] received this honor from the emperor, took his own troops, and went to the land of Tayk' where he entered the fortress called T'uxark', and took precautions against the sons of Ishmael.

[10] In this period, another marauder came against the troops which were in parts of the land of Vaspurakan. They came against them in the district of R'shtunik' at the village called Gukank', where the two sides faced off. When [the Arabs] saw that [the Armenians] were few in number, they forcefully attacked them. But then again God showed His mercy and came to their aid. [The Armenians] put all [the Arabs] to the sword except for two hundred and eighty men who fled into a church. [The Armenians] were unable to get at them [g26] and so they planned to set the sanctuary on fire. However the prince of the Vaspurakan area, Smbat, son of Ashot, did not allow them to commit this sacrilege, saying: "God forbid that we do such a thing to the dwelling place of the glory of God, Who has given such a victory to us." So they set up guards to stand watch until the sanctuary itself should give them up and expel them. After a while, one of the Ishmaelite troops who was their commander sought reconciliation, in order to save his own life. Then he went to the Armenian troops and said: "We have heard that Christian folk are merciful when they see people in misery, that they feel pity and show mercy. Show mercy to us and grant us our lives as a gift, and take our belongings as booty." General Smbat responded: "We are taught by our Lord that the merciful are the ones worthy of mercy. You, however, are a merciless people, unworthy of mercy, nor shall we show it to you." When the Ishmaelite heard this, he said: "At least grant me my own life and do not kill me, and [in exchange] I will deliver the rest of them into your hands." [The Armenians] agreed not to kill him. He went back into [the church] and said: "We have no hope staying here, since they will not show us mercy. Rather, come on and let us get out of here. Should they kill us we will attain the paradise promised to us by our law-giver, Muhammad. Should they let us survive, we will live." [g27]

Encouraged by these words, they all went outside and were immediately put to the sword. As for the man they had promised not to kill, he was thrown into the depths of the sea alive. Then [the Armenians] collected spoil from the fallen, divided it up amongst themselves, and departed to their own places.

9.

[11] After these events, when the caliph of the Ishmaelites, 'Abd al-Malik, learned about the destruction of his troops, he summoned general Muhammad and his forces and ordered him to take a multitude of soldiers and go against the land of the Armenians, to kill and take captives. [Muhammad] immediately organized troops and forcefully and boastfully threatened to implement the command of their caliph. When the lords of the Armenians learned about the strengthened marauder who was coming against them, they entreated Sahak, kat'oghikos of the Armenians [Sahak Dzorap'orets'i, kat'oghikos 677-703], and some bishops of the land who were with him to go in advance of the Ishmaelite army, to speak words of peace to their general, and to place themselves under the yoke of service to them. As [Sahak] was departing the land, he greeted everyone as they kissed his right hand in peace, blessing his flock and their shepherds who trusted him, and entrusting them to the grace of the Lord. He passed many lodging-places and reached the city of Harran, where sickness [g28] came upon him. He died there, before general Muhammad had reached Harran. But first, he wrote these last words to the Ishmaelite general:

"My people have sent me before you to discuss the counsel adopted by the united lords and common people of Armenia and [the matters] which they request of you. However, the keeper of the grainary of life has suddenly called me to Him, and thus I have not managed to meet and talk with you. Now I swear to you by the living God and the covenant which God made with your father Ishmael to give him the entire world as obedient subjects, that if you make peace with my people, they will service you as tax payers. Stop your sword from shedding their blood and stop your hand from pillaging, and they will obey you wholeheartedly. As for our religion, let us have the authority to hold to what we believe in and confess to. Let none of you torment us to turn us away from our beliefs. If you do as I beseech you, the Lord will advance your rule and implement your will, and subdue everyone under your control. But if you will not heed my words and choose to invade my land, the Lord will shatter your ambitions, and will not guarantee the course of your footsteps, and He will turn around the hearts of your troops so that they will not work your will. He will stir up impediments [g29] to you on all sides and will not allow your rule to last. If you do not ignore my requests, my blessings will come upon you."

As soon as Muhammad arrived at Harran they informed him about the Armenian kat'oghikos and gave him his letter. Having read the letter, [Muhammad] inquired about his demise, and they told him that he had not been buried yet, as he had just died. Once [Muhammad] heard this, he quickly went to the place. Then, standing close to the deceased, he greeted him according to their custom, something we confirmed two or three times from credible men. [Muhammad] took [Sahak's] hand and began speaking with him as though with a living person. He said: "I realized your wisdom by reading your letter. Like a brave shepherd concerned about his flock, you hastened to come before my conquering sword. I agree to check my sword from shedding the blood of innocent people. Instead, I will implement all that you requested from me, to have your pious blessing upon me. Should I deviate by one word from all of your words, may all the curses which I read about in your letter be visited upon me." Having said this, he returned to his lodging-place.

Those who had accompanied kat'oghikos Sargis from Armenia, now took the body of the blessed patriarch and laid it to rest in a grave [g30] in glory. Then, receiving that written pledge from the Ishmaelite general's hand, they departed for the land of the Armenians. When the inhabitants of the land saw the written assurances and pledges, they trusted them and thereafter they served the Ishmaelites through the payment of taxes.

As for general Muhammad, he came a second time to the land of the Armenians with a large force, in the eighteenth year of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, remaining there for three years. He did no evil [to the Armenians], ignoring what had been done to the Tachik troops in the town of Vardanakert. Rather, he steadfastly adhered to the written oath which he had given them, merely scrutinizing [the behavior of] the Armenian lords. Thus, having held his reign with such conduct, 'Abd al-Malik died.

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10.

[12] After [Abd al-Malik], his son, Walid (Vlit') [al-Walid I, 705-715] succeeded him as caliph of the Ishmaelites, ruling for ten years and eight months before dying. Here [is a description of] his deeds.

In the first year of his reign, [al-Walid] resolved to do away with the families of Armenian lords and their cavalry due to a grudge he held against Curopolate Smbat. [al-Walid] claimed that they were an irritant and obstacle to their rule. While [g31] this wickedness was incubating in their hearts, the aforementioned Smbat quickly wrote to the Byzantine emperor requesting his help. Agreeing to this, the emperor sent numerous troops as an auxiliary force under the command of a general. Smbat, uniting [his forces] with the Byzantine general's, came to the village called Drashpet in the district of Vanand, and struck camp there. When Muhammad, the prince of the Ishmaelite troops, heard about this he assembled his forces with great preparation and went against them in battle. When they had reached a certain spot they deployed--front against front and brigade against brigade--and the fight began. Then the wrath of the Lord came upon [the allies], since the Byzantine troops lost their appetite for war and fled, taking refuge in fortresses. The enemy grew stronger and slew many with the sword. They say that more than fifty thousand combatants fell. The few survivors were chased out of the land. Gathering up his forces, [Muhammad] returned to the city of Dwin. When the caliph of the Ishmaelites observed that the Armenian lords had been leading the Byzantine troops, he ordered Muhammad to implement the same wicked plan [he had devised].

Muhammad took the unjust order and commanded a certain Kasim, who was his commander in [g32] the Naxchawan area, to summon to the city the Armenian lords and their cavalry on the pretext of [recording them in] a royal military census, giving them stipends, and dismissing them. [The lords]--with their traditional naivete--believed the treachery of the cunning hunters, and quickly went there. As soon as they had arrived, [the Arabs] ordered that they be divided into two groups: one [half] was gathered into the church of Naxchawan, while the other half was sent to the town of Xram where they were put into the church there. And [the Arabs] put them under guard and pondered how to destroy them. Then all of them assembled, brought out of confinement the men from noble clans, and then set fire to those who remained trapped in the sanctuary. They burned to death before the altar of the Lord. When those who were trapped realized the bitterness of the danger [awaiting them], they one and all took refuge in God, looking solely to Him for help and crying out: "You who are the refuge for the persecuted, the helper of those in danger, comforter of the weary, give aid to us who are persecuted and surrounded by dangers, save us from the bitter death which awaits us. The heat of the flames surrounding us has intensified seven times more than the flames of Babylon. Now, just as You sent [g33] an angel to save the three children from the furnace of Babylon, in Your mercy do not abandon us. For we are Your servants, even though many times, as sinners, we have displeased Your sweet love for humanity. In mercy, remember Your servants. For behold, Your sanctuary and the place where Your name is glorified has become a cemetery for us. Therefore, praising Your blessed and awesome name, we place in Your hands our souls, our breath, and our bodies." Having said this, all of them together sought blessing from On High, and died.

[13] Now [the Arabs] put the noble lords into prison in fetters and subjected them to unendurable torture, demanding much weight in gold and silver. And they told them: "When we receive this amount of silver, we will free you alive. As a result, they even made oaths to convince [the lords] to believe in their false promises. [The lords] because of the danger facing them, gave into their enemies' hands much of their accumulated treasures, both [treasures] which they had placed in hiding under water to keep them from these [Arab] pirates, and [treasures] kept on dry land. This was done so that perhaps they might save their own lives. But once they had been drained of their wealth, the infidels condemned them to death and hanged them. [Among those] seized were Smbat, son of Ashot from the Bagratid clan, Grigor and Koriwn from the Artsrunid clan, Varaz-Shapuh and his brother from [g34] the Amatuni clan, and numerous other Armenian lords whom I am unable to mention one by one. By eliminating all of them [the Arabs] emptied our land of its lordly heirs.

In this period, with the land of the Armenians devoid of its lordly clans, the situation resembled [that of a flock of] sheep surrounded by wolves. The enemies visited every sort of evil [upon us] as they attacked, keeping the inhabitants of the land of the Armenians in perpetual and disastrous crises. Plagued by these constant afflictions, [the people] raised their groans and sobbing cries On High. Meanwhile Curopolate Smbat and the lords with him arose and quit the land, requesting a city to dwell in from the Byzantine emperor and pasturage for their herds. [The emperor] gave them the city named Poti (P'oyt') in the territory of the land of Egeria. And they dwelled there for six years.

When Muhammad had wrought all these evils, the protest which arose in the land reached the ears of the caliph of the Ishmaelites whose name was al-Walid. The latter immediately dispatched an edict summoning [Muhammad] to return to him and sending as his replacement a certain 'Abd al-Aziz, who was hard of hearing. Despite this he was sagacious and full of worldly knowledge, as well as a narrator of legends and fables. Once he had been confirmed in his authority, he wrote an edict to the Armenian lords convincing them to return to [g35] their own land and giving them a written oath in accordance with their custom. When they were certain [of the trustworthiness] of the pledge, they captured the city they were dwelling in and its treasures, ravished the church's ornaments as spoil, and returned to Armenia, detaching themselves from the Byzantine emperor. When the emperor heard about this, he regretted their ingratitude and summoned the leaders of the church--the metropolitan and archbishops--and ordered them to write anathemas in a book. And he ordered that [these anathemas] be read out at the conclusion of the feast of Easter against the perpetrators of such ingratitude, since that act of impiety was carried out on that very feast. They arranged that these same anathemas be read out every year, right up to the present. [Such curses] had an effect on them and became the cause of their ruination.

[14] 'Abd al-Aziz ruled the land of the Armenians and pacified it [by stopping] all the unjust attacks upon it, severely rebuking and subduing the boastful callousness of the sons of Ishmael. He rebuilt the city of Dwin mightier and larger than before and fortified it with gates and locks, and surrounded it with a moat filled with water to protect the fortress. "For," 'Abd al-Aziz said about himself, "I was the one who destroyed Dwin before, and now I shall rebuild it. I was a twelve-year-old lad [g36] [then] wearing a red apron. When the Tachik troops were battling with the

city, I crawled through a passageway and emerged on top of the wall. In my own language I loudly shouted out to our troops, which resulted in the weakening and flight of the guards who were protecting the wall and the triumph of the Ishmaelites. And we destroyed this city." They say that he recounted this story about himself.

11.

During this period, once again the heart of general Muhammad [ibn Marwan] became inflamed, [this time] against the land of the Chinese (Chenk'). He requested many troops from the prince of the Ishmaelites and promised that he would bring the king of the Chinese into submission and service to him. [The caliph] mustered many troops, as many as 200,000 men, and gave them to him. With this multitude of troops, Muhammad left the area of Damascus and headed to the East, crossing Asorestan, the land of the Persians, and Khurasan, until he reached a part of the land of the Chinese. There he encamped by the banks of a mighty river, called Botis. He wrote an edict to the king of the Chinese, [with this import]: "Why do you alone so stubbornly refuse to submit to our caliph, while all [the other] nations tremble with fear of us? In whom do you take refuge [through your act of] not submitting to us? Do you regard us as your maidens [g37] amongst whom you strut with studied elegance? Now if you do not enter under the yoke of service to us, grasp this: I will turn your country into a desert, [devoid] of inhabitants, and put an end to your kingdom. Do not negligently delay in responding to this letter; rather, do it immediately."

As soon as the king of the Chinese, who was called Chenbakur, read this document he summoned to him all of his p'shtipans and hamaharzes and deliberated as to what response to give. Consulting with one another, they wrote a response of this sort:

"Could it be that you are mightier than any of the kings who have ruled over the world, from the beginning [of time] until now? How is it that the king of Babylon, who ruled the whole world, and the kings of the Macedonians and the Persians were unable to rule over our land? Understand that you are [merely] more impudent than any dog and are tangled up in the leash of lust. Because of it, you expressed your wicked desires about my beautiful virgins, and this has forced you to risk your life and the lives of those soldiers who have come with you. Could it be that there are no cemeteries in Damascus for your bodies? Now understand you, that our land has not been tributary to anyone, nor will I be the one to effect this. However, if you [merely] want a gift from me, after the manner of kings, I will give it to you. Then you can get up and go back to your place in peace."

[15] Muhammad again wrote to Chenbakur: "Give me 30,000 girls and I will leave you in peace, [g38] otherwise I will come against you in battle." So the king of the Chinese agreed to this and sent a messenger to Muhammad, saying: "Stay where you are in your army until I implement your request." Meanwhile he ordered his troops to put curtains around some carts and to conceal in them his heavily armed choice cavalry, in place of the requested girls. In this way he would catch them in his trap. Coming to the banks of the river, they encamped opposite them. Seated [hidden] in the carts were more than 40,000 cavalymen. Chenbakur himself with a few men encamped a short distance from them and then sent [word] to General Muhammad: "Come and take the 30,000 girls which you requested from me and which I selected from throughout my entire kingdom for your notables. Now take from the notables of your army a number corresponding to the number of my girls, cross over to this side of the river, and I will give those arriving my girls by casting lots, so that there will be no squabbling or fighting among your forces." Then [Chenbakur] had boats sent across the river to fetch them. Now [the Arabs] foolishly selected 30,000 renowned men from their troops and sent them across the river. As soon as the crossing was finished, the emperor of the Chinese gave an order to attack the Ishmaelite soldiers. [g39]

Once the two sides had clashed in battle, those [soldiers], who were hidden by the curtains, emerged. [The Chinese] trapped [the Arabs] in their midst and put their swords to work [seeing to it] that no one survived to flee. They also severed the ropes [securing] the ships so that no one could survive. And no one did survive excepting Muhammad and a few men who leaped onto horses and jumped into the river, trusting in the bravery of their horses. Thus in deep shame did they return from the emperor of the Chinese to the country of their habitation. Nor thereafter did they ever go to the country of the Chinese to wage war. [Caliph al-Walid] ruled for 10 years and 8 months before dying.

12.

Sulaiman [715-717] succeeded [al-Walid] as caliph, ruling for two years and eight months and then dying. Here [follows an account of] his deeds.

In the second year of his reign [Sulaiman] assembled numerous troops, entrusted them to General Maslama (Mslim), and sent him to the Caspian Gates. They arrived and fought against the Huns [Khazars] who were in the city of Darband (Derbend), striking and afflicting them. [The Arabs] demolished the walls of the fortress. While pulling down the fortress walls, they uncovered a large stone in the foundation which [g40] bore this inscription: "The autocrat emperor Marcian (Markianos) [450-457] built this city and these towers at great expense [with funds] from his treasury. In later times the sons of Ishmael will demolish it and rebuild it once more [with funds] from their own treasury." As soon as [the Arabs] discovered this inscribed rock, [they] ceased pulling down the wall. Then, after designating overseers, they started to rebuild the demolished wall.

[16] Maslama took a multitude of troops and crossed through the Chora [Darband] Gates, raiding the land of the Huns. He went and pitched camp close to T'argu, a city of the Huns. Now as soon as the inhabitants of the land spotted the [Arab] bandits who had arisen and had come against them, they forthwith notified the king of the Khazars, whom they styled [the] Khaqan/Qaghan (Xak'an). The latter gathered up a host of troops, and all his gigantic and strong-bodied forces--whose renown for bravery was acclaimed among all peoples--and he came and encamped close [to the Arabs]. They did battle with each other for many days, but not [fighting] brigade against brigade. Rather, the combat was wrestling. The Khaqan was delaying entering the fray until the arrival of Alp T'arxan, whom he had called upon for assistance. When Maslama observed the countless multitude of troops [facing him], he began to doubt himself and wondered whether he could find some

means of extricating himself from them. So he ordered his troops to kindle an enormous fire in the camp. Then, leaving behind his army's [g41] equipment, concubines, servants and serving women and all the rest of the camp rabble, [Maslama] cut a path through the Caucasus Mountains, destroying forests as he went. Thus was he able to take to the road and escape from the clutches of the enemy by a hairsbreadth. And thus did he return from the land of the Huns, with his head bowed in disgrace.

After all these events, Sulaiman died.

13.

After [Sulaiman], 'Umar [II] succeeded [as caliph, 717-720], ruling for two years and five months.

They say that ['Umar II] was more noble than all the men of his clan. He effected the release from captivity of those whom Muhammad had led off from the land of the Armenians, after he had immolated the lords of our land. For [Muhammad] had seized numerous fortresses and had enslaved men and women. But once 'Umar's rule was established, he released all the captives to return to their own places and brought peace to the lands under his dominion. This 'Umar wrote a letter to the Byzantine emperor Leo [III, the Isaurian, 717-740] regarding the power of our faith, which was composed in the form of various questions. Below, briefly, we shall summarize it. [g42]

14.

[Translator's note: the letter from 'Umar II to Leo III and its reply (pages 42-98 of the 1887 St. Petersburg edition) is regarded as a later interpolation and is not translated here. For an English translation and scholarly commentary see A. Jeffrey, "Gevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III," [Harvard Theological Review](#) (1944) pp. 269-332.]

15.

Such was the reply written by Emperor Leo and sent by one of his trusted servants to 'Umar, caliph of the Ishmaelites. When the latter read it, he was overcome by shame. As a result of this letter ['Umar] became more kindly and tolerant of Christian peoples and on every occasion demonstrated his benevolence. Indeed, as we narrated earlier, he was the one who released the captives and pardoned everyone's offenses without charge. He demonstrated the same good will toward his own people, more so than any of his predecessors ruling before him. Opening up the treasuries, he gave out stipends to the cavalry officers.

After all these events, he died.

16.

After ['Umar] a certain Yazid (Yazkert) [Yazid II, 720-724] ruled for six years. He was a filthy man who wrought acts of fanatical cruelty toward our Christians. [g99] Motivated by an impure evil spirit, he ordered that the life-giving icon of the true incarnation of our Lord and Savior and his disciples be broken up and destroyed. Similarly he smashed the dominical cross(es) of Christ which had been erected in many places to aid in worshipping the Trinity. This was because the demon of fanaticism forced him to try to budge the rock of faith. As it happened he was unable to move that rock and instead was crushed by it. Having reached the apex of his fanaticism, he ordered the mass slaughter of pigs, which resulted in the obliteration of the bulk of herds of these unclean animals from the country. For once again fanaticism was roused in his mind by the demon. When [Yazid] was approaching his demise and was close to death, the violence of that demon choked him and he perished. And thus did he receive a worthy judgement from the Lord of all, and thus did he perish bitterly.

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17.

[17] [Yazid II] was succeeded by Sham, also known as Hisham (Heshm) [724-743], who ruled for nineteen years. In the first year of his reign, he conceived the disastrous plan of sending a certain general named Hariith (Hert') to conduct a census [g100] throughout the land of the Armenians. This was aimed at making [even] more onerous the oppressive yoke of tax service through diverse evils, and at showing dissatisfaction with the benevolence of [the former caliph] 'Umar, as though he had inappropriately spent the treasures which had been accumulated by the caliphs preceding him. [Yazid II] visited many calamities upon this land of ours, to the point that everyone was groaning from the unrelenting, inescapable, and unendurable oppression. Thereafter his hand was to weigh even more heavily upon the land of the Armenians.

18.

In this period once again there was unrest in the northern areas. For the Khazar king, who was styled the Khaqan, had died. When his mother who was named P'arsbit' saw this, she commanded the general named T'armach' to assemble a large force and to go against the land of the Armenians. In a unified body [the troops] passed through the land of the Huns, through the Chora Pass, through the country of the Mazk'ut', raiding the Paytakaran land, crossing the Arax River into the country of the Iranians, ruining Artawe't and Gandzak shahastan as well as the districts called E't'shibaguan and Spantaran P'eroz and Ormizd P'eroz. [g101] [The Khazars] encountered the Ishmaelite army and its general, who was named Djarrah (Jar'ay) [Djarrah ibn al-Hakami, ruler of Arminiya, 722-725, 729-730]. [The Khazars] killed all of them and spread about raiding in the district of Zarewand, also besieging the fortress called Ampriotik. They left the army equipment and those whom they had enslaved by their swords near the city of Artawe't. But while they were battling against Ampriotik fortress, suddenly a brigade of Ishmaelite troops under their general, named Sa'id al-Harashi (Set'-Harashi)[Sa'id ibn Amru al-Harashi, ruler of Arminiya 730-731], fell upon their camp with a small number of men. [The Arabs] killed many of them and took those they had enslaved. The bad tidings of this event reached the troops who were besieging the fortress of Ampriotik. When [the Khazars] heard about the evils which had befallen them, they left that fortress which they were besieging and went against the brigand who had attacked their camp. When [the Khazars] clashed with the same [Arab] troops, [the Arabs] dealt them many blows, even seizing their [battle] emblem. This was a bronze statue/image which the Harashi brigade have with them to this day as a testament to the bravery of their forbears.

[18] Subsequently the Ishmaelite caliph sent his brother, Maslama (Mslim) [Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik] with a multitude of troops to provide auxiliary assistance to the Harashi brigade. But when Maslama arrived there he found that he had not come in time to participate in the warfare, since Sa'id had already secured the victory. And so, [treacherously] he put some [of al-Harashi's men] to the sword, put some to flight, and expropriated their booty and captives. He insulted, upbraided, and tortured [Sa'id al-Harashi] and even wanted [g102] to kill him. However, he was unable to openly give such an order because [al-Harashi's] clansmen had arisen and were creating an uproar. So he did not dare to work his will. Rather, he silently checked these plans of his and returned to the Ishmaelite caliph.

19.

After this [the caliph] began to threaten the Byzantine emperor. He sent an emissary to Leo [III, the Isaurian, 717-741], emperor of the Byzantines that he submit to him and pay taxes. When Emperor Leo did not acquiesce to the terms laid out in the message, [the caliph], enraged, sent his brother Maslama with a large force against the land of the Byzantines. [Maslama], taking the multitude of troops, crossed through Syrian Cilicia to the land of Mysia, [located in an area] which translates as "between the lands" in [western] Asia Minor. Thence he reached the land of Bithynia and encamped by the banks of a swiftly flowing river called the Sangarius (Sagar'ios). The Byzantine forces also made preparations, moving the residents of the land into fortresses and fortified cities to shield them from the Ishmaelites. Then they encamped opposite them on the other shore of the river, fortifying their encampment with a surrounding ditch. Thus did they remain waiting for some time. Meanwhile, on a daily basis, Emperor Leo kept sending words urging great caution to the Byzantine general so that [his forces] not fall into a treacherous trap. Rather he wanted them merely to remain there and hold them without warfare. [g103]

However, [the Byzantine general] did not take care as the emperor had ordered. For he had heard that the Ishmaelite general had called upon his troops to spread about raiding here and there, to take a lot of booty and captives and return to their own land. When the Byzantine general learned about this, he ordered his troops to arm and attack them. Now when [the Byzantine troops] had arisen and were approaching the Ishmaelite troops, the latter immediately were aware of their pursuit since [the Byzantine army had stirred up and was] accompanied by a great cloud of dust. [The Ishmaelites] separated their equipment and divided their mass into three fronts, setting up ambushes here and there. Maslama himself was at the head of one part of the troops and clashed with [the pursuers]. [The Byzantines] who faced them were unprepared and landed in the midst of their foe together with their gear. Then those hiding in the ambushes sprang out, trapping them and they put to the sword many of the Byzantine troops. After this [the Arabs] spread about raiding the surrounding areas taking the districts and cities of that country. It is said that the number of people taken captive was more than 80,000. Then [the Arabs] joyfully returned to their own land.

[19] When the caliph of the Ishmaelites observed the magnitude of the victory, he and his lords made merry. He gave magnificent gifts to his brother and blessed the triumph which he had achieved. As for the loot including the men and women slaves and equipment, he divided it among his troops. For the rest of that year [the caliph] desisted [from further warfare]. [g104]

20.

Now at the commencement of the next year once more [the caliph] assembled a force--larger than the previous body--entrusted it to general Maslama, and sent it against Byzantium. [The caliph] made his brother swear an oath that he would not return to him until he had implemented his will, for he had vowed that he would destroy that empire and raze to the foundations the city called Constantinople and the numerous institutions of [the cathedral of] St. Sophia, which had been built with heavenly wisdom as a house of God on earth. And [he swore that] he would build there a place of loathsome devil-worship, [a mosque] as a place of worship.

With all these [promises] as his firm intent, [Maslama] advanced with the multitude of his troops to the land of the Byzantines. He pitched camp by the shores of the Pontic [Sea] with all his materiel. As if to demonstrate his surliness toward Emperor Leo, [Maslama] dispatched an emissary to him with a letter full of contempt and ridicule, with the following import:

"Why this stubbornness, and why have you not come forth to us as a tax payer? For all nations quake in fear of us. Whom are you relying on to help you that you reject us? Could it be that you have not heard about the evils we visited upon all those kingdoms which turned against our sovereignty [g105], kingdoms which we have smashed and pulverized like clay pots? All the world's wealth has become ours because the Lord's command and the promise [made] to our father Ishmael has been fulfilled. And indeed, we have conquered every kingdom. Or perhaps you have not observed how many calamities have been visited upon your country during your reign. With my own hand I have ruined many of your cities, and with my own sword I have slain multitudes of your troops. Know this: if you do not become tributary I have sworn an oath that I will not return to the land of my birth until I have eliminated your kingdom and wrecked the fortifications of that city whose walls you rely on. And as for that place of your worship which you named [Haghia] Sophia, I will turn it into a bath house for my soldiers and the wood of the cross that you revere I will smash over your head, for the glory of our faith is great before the Lord and He will aid us."

[Maslama] wrote these and worse insults to Emperor Leo. [Leo], as soon as he had read the mocking letter ordered the patriarch [Germanus, 715-730], the senate, and the entire multitude of the city to ceaselessly glorify [God] for three days at [the cathedral of] St. Sophia. By the emperor's command the entire city was aroused [to go] to the place of worship. Then the emperor himself arose and went [g106] to the blessed sanctuary holding out the letter of insults in his hand, like Hezekiah invoking the indulgent forgiveness of our Savior who from the start had reserved mercy for those dear to him. Tearfully did [Leo] beseech the God of all to give aid [to the Byzantines] and to exact vengeance on the malevolent enemy. He also mentioned the condemnation of the reproacher, reciting the Davidic psalm which says: "How the enemy have corrupted Your holy place and Your enemies have boasted of their wealth. They set themselves their own victory and did not recognize the visitation from Heaven." [Psalms 73, 3-4]

[20] This verse and many others like it did he pour forth before the Lord in confession, prolonging his prayers with fasting for three days. After this he wrote a letter to General Maslama with the following import:

"Why do you take pride in your wickedness, chief of the infidels? Why do you sharpen your treachery like a razor? Why do you brazenly boast before the Almighty? You insolently envision our Savior and His throne. For these reasons we hope that His mercy which you insult will repay you for your wickedness and that He will silence that abominable mouth of yours which you opened against the King of Kings and His city, and this temple to the glory of His name, and against me, the protector of the throne of Christ. [May God punish you] in accordance with the curses of the prophet David, who said that those mouths [g107] which speak iniquity will be silenced. As for us, we do not boast of our bows nor do we live by our swords. Rather, it is the right hand of the Lord and His arm and the protecting power of the light of His face which can destroy those who boast in their impudence, the way you do. It has never entered your mind that blood will be demanded from you for those you slaughtered with your sword and those you led into slavery from my country. That is because it was not due to the righteousness of your deeds but because of our own impiety that [God] permitted the rod of sinners to be visited upon the righteous, so that we take measure of our weakness and be counseled to behave according to whatsoever pleases the Creator. You are testing the Lord our God. But He can sink you and all your multitude in the depths of the sea by agitating the waves, precisely the way the hard-hearted Pharaoh was consigned to the depths of the Red Sea. It was the wand of Moses which turned the waters upon the Egyptian troops and destroyed them by drowning. That wand was the model of the all powerful Cross of Christ which today you have insulted.

"But now, if you turn around and distance yourself from me you will choose what is good for yourself and for your troops. Otherwise quickly do whatever is obsessing you. And let the Lord determine what is good and pleasing in His presence, and let Him pronounce the verdict. Let Him save His people and deliver us those who have troubled us, with their heads bowed down in disgrace." [g108]

As soon as the Ishmaelite general read this letter he became even more furious and rose up like a wild beast to do battle against the solidity of a rock, so that he be caught in his own trap, as was fitting. For it was the Lord Who hardened his heart. Then he ordered his soldiers to prepare the boats and they implemented this command at once, since the ships had been in readiness for many days. [General Maslama] took ship right away with all his gear, and approached the city [of Constantinople]. When Emperor Leo saw the multitude of troops--like a forest on the sea--he ordered the iron fence for the wall to be secured, and closed the doors of the fortress with a chain, and did not allow anyone to fight the enemy. For he remained awaiting a visitation from On High and [was waiting to see] vengeance meted out [to Maslama] in accordance with his deeds. [Leo] immediately ordered the patriarch, the senate, and the entire multitude of the city to take the invincible and glorious sign of Christ's Cross with them in steadfast faith. The emperor himself went through the midst of the crowd carrying that undefeatable triumph [the Cross] on his shoulders, while the people glorified Heaven with fragrant incense and glowing candles and torches before and behind the victorious and venerable Cross to pay honor to it. Then the entire multitude opened the city gates and emerged, raising up the Cross over the waters and crying out: "Help us, Christ [g109], son of God, saviour of the world." Having broadcast these words to the heavens above three times, [the emperor] struck the waters of the sea with the symbol of the Cross, imprinting the outline of the Lord's Cross upon it.

[21] At once, through the power of the holy Cross, the depths of the sea churned and violently pounding waves rose up causing a massive destruction of ships, and a great drowning of the Ishmaelite troops--to the point that most of the troops drowned in the waters of the sea just as Pharaoh's troops had borne [divine] wrath from the punishing sea. A portion of the troops, clinging to planks, was carried to the far coast of the sea, to the land of Thrace, while other [survivors] were washed up onto distant islands. For the multitude of troops exceeded 500,000 men. As for those who had escaped the disaster and were on dry land, [the emperor] did not permit them to be mercilessly slain. Rather he commanded that they be kept besieged there as there was no means of their getting food. Great hunger descended upon those troops which had already devoured their own horses and mules and now turned to slaughtering their concubines and servants to eat and satiate their hunger. Then did they direct many entreaties to Emperor Leo to have mercy on them and give them provisions. For out of many, only a few survived.

Emperor Leo, considering that the Lord had exacted revenge upon the enemy, showed great mercy on them. He summoned [Maslama] to him and greatly upbraided him, recalling [g110] his shameless impudence. "Why," [Leo asked] "did you want to attack our country, mercilessly put my troops to the sword and lead the inhabitants of my cities into slavery? Our Lord [represents] life, while you are the son of death and unworthy of life. Indeed, the Lord has judged my case and turned your impiety back upon your own heads and demanded from you the blood of the innocent [which you shed]. So I shall not put forth my hand against you and not judge you as is fitting. For behold, you are in my hands. I am sovereign over you, to kill or spare [you as I choose]. But you will not be killed; rather, go and narrate [to others] the powers of God which you have witnessed."

Then Maslama responded to the emperor: "What shall I say before you about these things, for truly I am unworthy of life. The crimes which I have committed against your country are not few in number. You have displayed great mercy to me by allowing me to live, for I testify to my own errors. Since it has entered your heart to have mercy on me, release me to go home and I will vow that I will no longer wage war against you." [Emperor Leo] so ordered. Maslama readied himself and boarded a vessel, cautiously traversing the Mediterranean and returning to his own country in great disgrace. As he went from city to city, he was greeted with sighs and sobs, the beating of foreheads and the pouring of ashes over them. And he, with his head bowed in great shame [g111], encountered great insults from them, but could only make this response: "I was unable to fight against God." Thereafter he went home and, to the day of his death, did not gird a sword to his waist.

21.

In that period Hisham, caliph of the Ishmaelites, sent Marwan (Mrwan) [Marwan ibn Muhammad, ruler of Arminiya, 732-744], Muhammad's son [to rule] over the Armenian people in place of Sa'id, whom they called al-Harashi. When Marwan had reached the city of Dwin, the lords of Armenia came out to meet him. [Marwan] spoke words of peace with them and summoned Ashot, Vasak's son, from the Bagratid House. [Marwan] gave him the authority of patrician over the land of the Armenians, by order of Hisham, and exalted him with many honors. However when Smbat's sons learned about the honor given to Ashot, who had been exalted by Hisham and by General Marwan, they were furiously angry. Word of their discontent reached the ears of Muhammad's son who immediately ordered that they be arrested. [Marwan] sent Grigor and Dawit' of the Mamikonean clan to the Ishmaelite caliph, and he wrote an accusation against them [g112] stating that they were agitators opposed to Ashot's authority. [Caliph Hisham] ordered that they be taken to the desert called Yemen (Eman) and placed in confinement in prison for the rest of their lives.

Once the authority of the patrician Ashot had been established [Ashot III Bagratuni, presiding prince 732-748], he went to the caliph of the Ishmaelites regarding the tyranny [imposed upon] our land. This was due to the fact that for more than three years the stipend [which should have been paid] to the Armenian lords and to their cavalry had been withheld. [Ashot] faced Hisham and spoke words of truth and wisdom in his presence. And [the caliph] exalted him worthily and acceded to his request. He ordered that [the sum of] 100,000 [pieces of silver] for the [past] three years be weighed out for him. Thereafter throughout his tenure the same level [or payment] in silver for the cavalry was received without obstruction.

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22.

[22] Subsequently Marwan, son of Muhammad, assembled many troops including Prince Ashot with the lords and their cavalry, and went off with them to raid the land of the Huns [Khazars]. They battled against the city [of Varach'an/Balanjar], beating its defenders and capturing the city. When the inhabitants of the city saw that the brigands had overpowered them [g113] and taken the city, many of the citizens hurled their belongings into the sea, some also drowned themselves by jumping into the water. Now the Ishmaelite troops gathered up the [remaining] multitude and the booty and, together with Prince Ashot, Marwan returned from the Hun areas with great triumph and much spoil. When he reached the Barda'a (Partaw) shahastan he set aside a fifth portion of the captives and loot and sent it to their caliph Hisham, relating the circumstances of their triumph.

[Hisham] accepted the spoil, extending great thanks to Marwan and his troops, and deprecating his brother Maslama by citing Marwan's brave victory as an example. However [Maslama] responded: "I was waging war not against men, but against God, while [Marwan] was fighting against irrational beasts." Marwan divided up the remaining loot and captives amongst his troops, giving a portion to Ashot and to the other respected lords, [giving them] servants and serving maids. [Marwan] himself ruled over our land, ending all violent attacks and iniquitous deeds. He amputated the hands and feet of robbers, thieves, and enemies of order, and then put them to death [by hanging them] on trees.

After [reigning for] 19 years, Hisham died. [g114]

23.

[Hisham] was succeeded by al-Walid (Vliit) [al-Walid II, 743-744] who ruled for one and a half years. He was a powerfully built strongman who enjoyed single-combat wrestling. Whenever he heard about some [other] combatant, he had him fetched so that he might test his own prowess. Furthermore, he occupied himself with drunkenness and unbridled, lecherous sex. When the lords of his clan observed the deeds of their prince who was steeped in such senseless and loathsome obscenity, they consulted reliable [wise men] of their faith, whom they styled kura, asking what they thought of him. They responded: "Because he has insulted the honor of our caliphate and deviated from the precepts of our law-giver [Muhammad] and deports himself with disgraceful behavior, he is worthy of death and should be killed." So [the clan members], accepting the command of the kura, entered the royal palace, found [al-Walid] in a drunken stupor, and slew him with a sword. In his stead they elevated [to the caliphate] a certain Sulaiman from the same branch of the royal clan. [g115]

24.

[23] When Marwan learned about the death of their caliph al-Walid, he forthwith assembled his troops. He left [as ruler] over the land of the Armenians Ishak (Isahak), son of Muslim (Mslim) [Ishak ibn Muslim al-Ukaili, governor of Arminiya 744-749/750]. Then he took the entire multitude of his forces and went off to make war against his clan, as an avenger of the death of al-Walid and his son. Finding some [men] from the clan of the slain [caliph], [Marwan] united them and all the men of his clan with his own forces. Many other sons of Ishmael adhered to him, forming a large army, which then crossed the great Euphrates River. The two [opposing armies] faced off near the confines of Damascus [at a place] called Rusafa (R'usp'a). They warred against each other for many days, causing numerous casualties on both sides. Every day toward evening, close to the time of the final prayer, they stopped fighting and sat and mourned their fallen, prepared the corpses and took them to the cemetery, saying: "We are one people [speaking] one language, [having] one principality. We are brothers, so why are we plunging swords into each other?" [Despite having said this], the next day they resumed the fight and prolonged it. But then Marwan beat the opposing side, slaying Sulaiman, and he himself held authority for 6 years [Marwan II, 744-750]. [g116]

During that period of their reign [internecine] warfare never ceased among the sons of Ishmael. For Marwan besieged the city of Damascus, then started to fight and destroyed [the city's] iron gates. The inhabitants of the city, those sons of Ishmael who had been steadfastly resisting, were [captured and] tied to four posts and had their faces scraped off with serrated knives and thus died bitter deaths. Pregnant women were cut in two. Lads were shoved into spaces between the rocks and cruelly crushed to death. Girls who were virgins were led into captivity along with a motley multitude. For this was the Lord's revenge upon the city because of its accumulated sins.

It was here that the prophecy of Amos was fulfilled [which says]: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. So I will send a fire upon the house of Haz'ael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Benhadad. I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Aven, and I shall destroy all the inhabitants of Harran and the people of Syria shall go into exile. Thus says the Lord." [Amos I: 3-6, with slight variation.]

It is certainly worth pondering why the prophet [g117] put all sorts of iniquities into three [categories] yet regarded the actual source of the Lord's anger to be [merely] the fourth [category]. It seems to me that this city of sinners was full of many types of evil, since [the residents]

were sick mentally, sick in their senses and sick in their hearts and [these sicknesses] fostered the tendencies to kill, ravish the properties [of others] as well as [arousing] their lecherous desires. Their fourth [iniquity] was that not only did they not fear a visitation from God, but they actually blamed [God] for the evil they worked, [God] Who is the source of all good things. It was this that irrevocably transformed God's forgiving mildness into rage toward the sinners.

25.

[24] While the din of the mob fighting this unbelievers' war grew louder among the sons of Ishmael, the sons of Smbat were freed from their confinement as hostages. They were released by the order of al-Walid. However before they reached Syria, al-Walid was slain and they were detained there, since no one dared to release them. But when warfare resumed among [the Arabs], [the former hostages] slipped away and came back to the Armenians. When they reached [g118] the land of the Armenians after a short while they went to the Vaspurakan area where they created hardship and great anguish in the country. They subjected [the people] to violent and forcible revenue collection until the lands' protests reached the commander Muslim's son, Isahak, who forbade them from such banditry.

Subsequently when they saw how the battle was going with this rabble, over time, once again, [Ashot's opponents] began to oppose Ashot's authority and were attempting to set traps for him everywhere. They attacked him at night while he was sleeping and his forces were dispersed throughout the district. They wanted to kill him. But the prince's guards alerted him about the brigands coming against him and he escaped their clutches by flight. [His opponents] loaded up with much booty from Prince Ashot's treasures and returned home. [Ashot], realizing their treachery--since during [these] days of peace [his enemies] tried to exact wicked vengeance on him--protected himself from them for some days. He gathered the folk of his House into his fortress of Dariwnk', his wife and entire family, and left guards to protect the stronghold. He himself went to the land of Syria, to Marwan the Ishmaelite caliph and informed him about the source of the disturbance between himself and his lords. When the Patrician [Ashot] and his troops arrived [g119] at the site of the battle, Marwan's forces enjoyed numerous successes and destroyed his foes for they had heard the news of his arrival, that the Patrician of the Armenians had come to [the caliph's] assistance with his 15,000 select cavalymen. Thus when Marwan's opponents learned about this, they abandoned the fight and sustained some very serious losses on that day. And so, after defeat on the battlefield they stopped fighting for a while.

Now it happened that at the very time when Prince Ashot was in the land of Syria, Muslim's son [Ishak] designated Grigor of the Mamikonean House [as commander] over the Armenian troops in place of Ashot. Marwan, being informed about the revolt of Smbat's sons and what Grigor's brother Dawit' had done to him, sent an emissary to Muslim's son Ishak--who was commander of the land of the Armenians--ordering that Dawit' be arrested and given over to a certain Oqba (Ok'ba) to be tried and judged as the latter saw fit. As soon as [Oqba] received this order, he was unable to retrain himself; rather, he called at once for him to be treacherously taken and placed in the hands of the merciless executioner. [The executioner] took and bound him with wicked restraints and put him into confinement in jail for a few days. Then he wrote to Marwan inquiring what he [would] order. And he ordered that his hands and feet be cut off and then that he be tied to a stake until he died. Thus [Dawit'] died a pitiful and ignoble death. As is said of behavior displeasing [g120] to God and of the hatred which they showed to each other, truly bad fruit grows from bad seed. That is how it was in this case.

[25] When these wicked deeds had been done, Marwan once more established the rule of Ashot and sent him to the country of the Armenians with very splendid honors. Thereafter Grigor did not cease displaying his animosity or vengefulness over the killing of his brother, though out of fear of the tyrants he demonstrated peace toward Ashot, but in words only. In his heart he did not recognize his authority. For he was waiting for an opportune moment to carry out his plan.

26.

While warfare among [the Arabs] continued, all the [Armenian] lords of the land thought to drop their yoke of obedience and to rebel from the Ishmaelites. Grigor from the Mamikonean clan suggested this plan and he did this with the malicious intent of removing Ashot from power. Meanwhile all the lords of the Armenians went to Prince Ashot to convince him to participate in their fruitless scheme. [g121]

When the prince saw the unanimity of the lords and their cavalry--since one and all were enthused by this hopeless idea--he had his doubts. He summoned his lords one by one and beseeched them with much conversation not to participate in such an iniquitous undertaking, saying: "Oh brothers, I see no prudence in your foolish scheme. Quite the contrary, it is a devious plan and a disastrous proposition. Clearly our forces are few when compared with the brutality of the Ishmaelites, we cannot withstand their troops, and we will be unable to dislodge our country from the mouth of the dragon. It will bring only trouble and danger to our aim. If you prefer, accept my counsel and let us not do it. Instead let us pay taxes to them as we are currently doing and let us keep our property, our vineyards, forests, and farms." But the lords of the Armenians did not want to adopt this wise advice. Resisting him, they retorted: "If you do not join our alliance, none of your troops will stay with you. We cannot tolerate the crisis that our country of Armenia is experiencing. Therefore Prince Ashot unwillingly united with Grigor and the other lords and made a vow on the holy cross to firmly adhere to their alliance.

Once they had ratified this agreement, they withdrew from the commander of our land and went and took refuge [g122] in the fortresses of Tayk' with all their families and belongings. They were particularly relying on the troops of the Byzantine emperor which were located in the Pontus area, for there was an oath of peace between them by order of Emperor Constantine [V, Copronymous, 740-775]. Now it happened that all the sons of sinfulness [the Paulician heretics] went and mingled with the rebels' brigade. They had neither fear of God nor of princes nor [did they respect] the dignity of elders. Rather, like strangers and foreigners, they spread around capturing brothers and their kinfolk and, taking much booty, they inflicted torments and beatings upon their brothers.

[26] As a result, God withdrew his forgiveness and shattered their unity. Indeed their iniquitous activities did not last even for a full year. Prince

Ashot broke with them and went to the village of Hazr in the district of Bagrewand. Some of the lords accompanied him and wanted to unite with the sons of Ishmael. However [some of] the lords who were with him went and informed that malicious Grigor about the details of this strategy. [Grigor] had for some time wanted to implement his treachery, so he quickly assembled his troops and pursued [Ashot] over the mountains like a crow. [Grigor] caught up with him at night and besieged the place where he was resting. [Grigor] knew about the vacillation of [Ashot's] troops, for they did not come out to help him. Seizing [Ashot], he gave him to one of the servants of Dawit' [Mamikonean], ordering him to [g123] blind his eyes. [And by this deed] he reduced the glory of our entire land, consigning it to a shadowy darkness and plunging into deep sorrow not only his own person but all the lords of his own clan. Subsequently they realized [what they had wrought] but were unable to do anything that helped. Rather all they could do was sit and lament, moan and cry. For the splendid crown had fallen from their heads and was ruined. And thereafter the glory of the Armenian people vanished.

As for that oath-breaking Grigor, he went off to the city of Karin [Erzerum]--as though returning from some feat of valor--and broadcast the tidings of his victory. But after some time the judgement of God was visited upon him, a punishment commensurate with his actions. For his stomach became frightfully and dangerously swollen and he grew feverish. And thus did he quit this life, unremembered. Afterwards his brother Mushegh became prince for a short time [c. 750].

Ashot, who had held authority for 17 years with honor more glorious than all the previous princes, experienced this traitorous treachery. Afterwards he lived for 13 years, dying in deep old age. He was entombed with glory in his [clan's] mausoleum in the village of Dariwnk'. [g124]

27.

[27] Let us return to the previous strand of our historical narration. Now it happened that while Marwan still held the caliphate and was fighting with his own clan members, once again the fanatical flame of that fire [of rebellion] blazed out in the eastern areas, in the land of Khurasan. When all the lords of the sons of Ishmael observed the unbearable danger which had increased amongst them, they tried to save their own lives. Thus, some of those who were of the clan of their lawgiver [Muhammad] separated from the rest and went as fugitives to the land of Khurasan and concealed themselves there for a while. Subsequently they unified the Khurasanian troops, placing as general over themselves Kahat'ba and a certain Abu Muslim who was artful in the heresy of astrology. They united and slew the leader of the land and attracted their troops to their own side as well as many from the rabble who were suffering from unbelievably stringent tax demands. Then they began to attack from the side of Syria. When Marwan's forces went against them, they were unable to prevail against that mob. For the destruction of his power derived from the Lord. They struck and killed many of them [g125] while others fled. The troops of Abdullah [were the attackers] and they were called the sons of Hashim. Continuing to advance, they crossed the Tigris River, conquering and subduing many cities. Meanwhile all the troops that Marwan sent against them were decisively crushed, and [the Abbasid rebels] subdued everyone as far as the great Tachik military camp of al-Kufa (Akogha). As for the residents of al-Kufa and Basra, when they saw the [army's] brutal power, they cooperated and added to their forces. When Marwan realized what was unfolding, he was plunged into a great panic, opened the royal treasury, and distributed it to his troops. Surrounding himself with soldiers, he arose against [the Abbasids]. The two sides drew near to each other and deployed brigade against brigade. When they clashed in battle many were wounded on both sides and innumerable corpses fell on the field of battle. There was protracted warfare between the two sides until the next year. At the end of the sixth year of Marwan's reign, God's retribution was visited upon him as his own blood was demanded for the blood of the kinsfolk he had shed.

Now the troops of Abdullah grew [even] stronger and attacked with bestial ferocity, reaching Marwan's camp. They slaughtered them so severely that it was said that some [g126] 300,000 cavalry were killed and that their blood flowed in streams which evaporated into a dark fog. The remnants of his troops were forced back and trapped in Marwan's camp. [The Abbasids] then advanced to the fortress-like base and the very tent of Marwan where [Marwan] himself was seized and killed. All these evil [events]--the disruptions of war, the capture of cities, and the shedding of blood--transpired during the 6 years of [Marwan's] reign, after which he died.

28.

[28] Then in place [of Marwan] Abdullah [Abu-l-Abbas al-Saffah, 750-754] ruled. He sent his brother, another Abdullah [Abu Jafar al-Mansur] to circulate throughout all the lands of his realm. First he came to the land of the Armenians, reducing everyone to bankruptcy with many afflictions and torments, to the point that he was demanding taxes from the dead. He made many orphans and widows suffer greatly and tortured priests and servants of the churches mockingly, beating them with sticks so that they reveal the names of the dead and their families. He viciously tormented the inhabitants of our land with bitter tax demands, imposing a tax of many silver zuze's per capita and placing a lead seal around their necks. [g127]

Now the lords of the clans voluntarily and involuntarily gave gifts of horses and mules, precious clothing and other gold and silver goods, to fill the mouth of that dragon which had attacked to wreck the country. When they had satisfied his wicked appetite, he passed on to the area of the Iranians and Medes as far as the land of Khurasan, thence to Egypt and the land of Pentapolis as far as Africa. Wherever he went, through his rapacious, greedy behavior, he entrapped people like someone casting a net, to the point that his own family styled him the "father of a coin." For in truth he revered the coin more than he revered God. When he was leaving our land he placed Yazid (Ezit) [Yezid ibn Usaid al-Sulami, ruler of Armyniya 752-754, 759-770, 775-780], son of Usaid, in charge of making judgements and collecting taxes in the land of the Armenians.

As prince of the Armenian lords, Yazid established Sahak [Sahak VII Bagratuni, presiding prince 755-761], son of Bagarat, who was from the same House as Prince Ashot, and the son of his father's brother. He was a tall, attractive man with a noble disposition, who knew the fear of God. Wherever they sent him he led his troops, although they were toiling through the battles unwillingly. This was because at that point the Armenian troops' annual stipend of silver, which until then had come from the [caliph's] court, had been terminated. Moreover [the Arabs]

demanded that expenses for the cavalry be provided from taxes levied on the princely Houses [g128], that is all the expenses for clothing and feeding these brigades.

Abdullah [Abu-l-Abbas al-Saffah] died after three years of rule. His brother, the other Abdullah [Abu Jafar al-Mansur] took over his authority, ruling for 22 years [as caliph, 754-775].

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29.

[29] During his reign the Byzantine emperor [Constantine V, Copronymous, 740-775] left his imperial seat and came to the Karin area, to the city called T'e'odupolis [Erzerum], with an enormous heavily armed mass [of soldiers]. Upon arrival they destroyed the walls of the citadel and Emperor Constantine, son of Leo, opened the treasury and withdrew a large amount of gold and silver. He also found in that treasury a fragment of the Lord's Cross, which he removed and took with him. He also took to Byzantine territory the city's troops and Saracen population with their families. Many residents of the district beseeched the emperor to remove their yoke of servitude to the Ishmaelites. And they too departed along with him.

Receiving [the emperor's] permission they quickly prepared their belongings, taking strength from the power of the Lord's Cross and the emperor's glory. They left their birthplace and, separating [from their own people], joined the pious emperor's side. But the next [g129] year Yazid assembled the troops under him and went to that city of Karin and imposed the poll tax on the land. Assembling an innumerable host, he designated officials over the work which included swiftly rebuilding the city's demolished walls. He led the sons of Ishmael and their families there and settled them to hold and protect the city from [their] foes. And he stipulated that the provisions for their food should come from the land of the Armenians.

30.

In this period the din of the mob of brigands of the impious nation continued unabated in our land. For the sons of Belial practised their natural evil everywhere and did not desist. Now there was a certain snake-like individual named Sulaiman. [Allied] with him were the sons of sinfulness [Paulicians] in the Iranian areas who commenced making attacks on the Vaspurakan area, [people] with unworthy behavior, fruit of wicked seed. Sahak and Hamazasp, lords of the Artsruni House, applied themselves [to the problem] with only a few men and fell in among the enemy. When [the enemy] saw that [their attackers] were few in number, they surrounded them and wanted to slay them. And when Sahak and Hamazasp saw the brigands rising up against them and that there was nowhere to flee to, they put their swords to work [g130], killed a host of enemies, and tried to cut their way through the mob to escape.

It was there that Hamazasp was fatally stabbed, fell from his horse and was surrounded by the enemy, who killed him. When Sahak saw the death of the brother he so deeply loved, he [resolved to] sacrifice his own life. He dismounted and hamstringed his horse, and then commenced furious single combat. He covered the ground with numerous corpses, seeking revenge for his brother's blood. But then he gave his life, defeated in battle. Thus did these two select lords, sons of Vahan Artsruni, pass away.

[30] Subsequently their brother Gagik and the lords with them learned [what had happened]. They went to the site of that battle lamenting and crying. However, they were unable to catch up with the enemy. So they turned back to bury the dead, sighing and lamenting. As for the enemy, they returned by the same route [they had come by]. Afterwards some of [the enemy] fell into Gagik Artsruni's hands. And he killed Sulaiman and many with him.

31.

While Yazid [ibn Usaid] was still ruling, he sent an emissary to the king of the north [g131], who was called the Khaqan, seeking to establish marriage relations with his [House]. By this, [Yazid] sought to achieve a peace treaty between the Khazars' forces and himself. Agreeing to this, the king of the Khazars gave [Yazid] as a wife his sister, named Khatun. [The Khaqan] sent along with her many hand maidens, ladies in waiting, and servants. But Khatun lived for only a short while and then died. Moreover that peace treaty between them was dissolved because [the Khazars] suspected that her death was the result of some treachery. [The Khaqan] assembled an enormous force and entrusted it to one of his generals, named R'azht'arxan, of the Xat'irliit'ber brigade. He sent [this army] to our land, which was under Yazid's control. They spread around raiding north of the very mighty Kura River and seizing numerous districts of the land of the Aghuanians: Hejar, K'agha, Ostani, Marzpanean, Haband, Geghawu, Shak'e', Bex, Xeni, Kambexchan, and Xoghmaz. They also took the desirable plain of Baghasakan where there were countless flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, which [the Khazars] took as spoil. From lands under the sway of the Iberians/Georgians they took seven districts: Shuch'k', K'ue'shkap'or, Dzelt'd, Tsuk'e't', Ve'lists'xe', T'iane't', and Erk. Gathering up a multitude of [g132] captives and a great deal of booty, they returned to their dwelling places. As for that gouty braggart [Yazid], who held sway over the land of the Armenians, he could not even lift his head [from shame]; rather, he just sat there like an irrational animal and the ruination of the land was as nothing to him.

But it happened that after a short while the shadow [of the Khazars] which had darkened the country of the Aghuanians dispelled and [the Khazar leader himself] united with the caliph and [even] sent his son as a hostage to the land of the Syrians. He himself soon died by the sword, close to the Aghuan Gates.

32.

[31] Now let me discourse about that rebel called Saleh [al-Kindi] whom Abdullah had initially sent to the land of the Armenians. He was an impious and bloodthirsty creature against whom many took precautions, since they could not endure such tribulations any longer. There were some among the Armenian lords who gave up and abandoned their legacies, fleeing to Byzantine territory and seeking refuge near Emperor Constantine. Now as for Gagik, lord of the Artsrunik' House, he was unable to find any [foreign] place to flee to. And so he migrated to the fortress of Nkan, gathering there all the lords of the land with their cavalry. Then he arose and commenced raiding [g133] in the land of Atrpatakan, in the districts of Zarewand, Butak, Zidr'o', Tasuk, Gaznak, Ormi, Surenapat and other neighboring districts where [Gagik's forces] worked deeds displeasing to God, similar to the infidels, and unbefitting Christians. They demanded taxes from the land, using numerous wicked tortures [to get them]. Then [Gagik] arrived in the district of Her. A certain Ishmaelite general [named] R'uh also arrived [in Her], wounding many Armenian troops and putting the rest to flight to Nkan fortress. [R'uh] himself circulated around in the Vaspurakan district to try to catch [Gagik] in his net. However, when the lord of the Artsrunik' saw the destruction of his forces, [he realized] that he would be unable to resume his impious deeds, and retreated into the fortress where he desisted for a while. Subsequently another force came against him. Its chief was Muse', who besieged that fortress for a year. When he was unable to capture it, he treacherously summoned [Gagik] to [discuss] peace. [Muse'] arrested [Gagik] and turned him over to the caliph who put him in shackles and threw him into a prison of unbearable narrowness and demanded from him the silver he had demanded as tax from the country of the Persians.

[Gagik] withheld none of the treasure which was in his hands, just to save his life. But it did no good, for he died there in [g134] tribulation, like a worthless man. [Gagik's] sons, Hamazasp and Sahak, were kept in bondage for a long time. However, since they resisted the will of the evil executioner, [the caliph eventually] became reconciled with them and ordered that they be sent [home] with honor to the country of the Armenians.

33.

[32] In this period, during the overseership of Yazid and during the caliphate of the other Abdullah [Caliph al-Mansur, 754-775], the unbearable level of taxation greatly increased over the land of the Armenians. For the insatiable greed of this hellish enemy was not satisfied by eating the flesh of Christ's chosen flock or by scornfully drinking their blood as though it were water. The entire country of the Armenians was thrown into unendurable distress, as the discovery of [new sources of] silver ceased. Everyone gave up their belongings just to save their lives, but [what they gave] still was not enough. They were wickedly tortured, put into fetters, beaten, or hanged. Many fled to the caves and crevices of the country and hid there; while others, unable to find what was demanded of them, died in the snow or drowned in rivers. Taxes were demanded of them in silver and per capita as a result [g135] of which they were deprived of everything they possessed. They tied our country of Armenia with the bonds of bankruptcy. The lords and grandees, one and all, ate from a furnace of poverty. Despite the fact that Prince Sahak and the patriarch, Lord Trdat from the House of the lords of Vanand district, protested many times, Yazid, who was in charge of tax collection in our land, did not heed their complaints. The clamor of their protests reached Abdullah [Caliph al-Mansur] who angrily summoned Yazid and, as his replacement, sent Muslim's son, Bakkar (Bagar) [Bakkar ibn Muslim al-Ukaili, 769-770]. After not too long a period--not even one full year--Bakkar was summoned back for no cause and Hasan [ibn Kahtaba al-Tai'i, 754-759] was sent as his replacement. This was because with deceitful machinations he was furthering the descent into torments of the country of the Armenians. And yet, [the prime mover in this] was not he; instead, he was implementing the will [of God], the corrector of princes. He was [but] a witness to the anger from On High: hosts of locusts, hail, and absence of rainfall. Such were the examples of [divine] wrath visited upon us.

Now when Hasan ibn Kahtaba arrived to be the overseer of the country of the Armenians, along with him came many brigades from the clans of the land of Khurasan. Even more bitterly and more frequently did they work their abominable acts, increasing the disasters and worsening the plight of our land. For as we noted earlier, it was the Lord [g136] who hardened their hearts to vengeance for our sins. Indeed famine, the sword, and slaughter increased during his clan's tenure. Beyond this there was the insulting of patriarchs, ridiculing of bishops, beating and torture of priests, as well as persecution and dispersal of the lords. The military commanders of our land were unable to endure this. They groaned and heaved, reeling from the unendurable calamities. Furthermore the mass of the common folk (r'amik) were afflicted by diverse evils: some were beaten severely because of their inability to pay taxes, some were bound in chains, some were hanged. Others were stripped naked and thrown into a lake in the most bitter cold of wintertime and then guards were stationed around to torture them. And thus did they die cruel and painful deaths. We are unable to narrate more about these disasters.

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34.

[33] Now I shall describe how the savage insanity of the nation of the Ishmaelites came to a head. For when the lords of the Armenians saw [the extent of] the calamity they were ensnared in, they put their lives into their own hands [and decided to act]. However [g137] they were unable to realize [their goal] because they were few in number. Nonetheless they considered it better to die bravely than to live in danger, and so they opted for rebellion--to withdraw from obedience to the Ishmaelites. This [rebellion] was initiated by Artawazd of the Mamikonean House. When he went to the capital Dwin, he greatly organized his troops. There he received weapons and [other] war materiel. [Although] he himself took up shield, helmet, and all the armaments [of war], he made himself appear to be an intimate [supporter] of the Ishmaelite forces, someone who wanted to fight against their enemies. When he [finally] resolved to distance himself [from the Arabs] he went to the city of Kumayri in the Shirak district, where he killed the tax collector and seized whatever he found there. He took his own [Mamikonean] House and went to the land of the Iberians/Georgians, taking along all the lords of the land. News reached Dwin that the sons of Hmayeak had worked these criminal acts. Hasan [ibn Kahtaba al-Tai'i] swiftly assembled many troops, including Ashot's son Smbat, the sparapet [commander-in-chief], and other lords and pursued [Artawazd's forces] to the district called Samts'xe' in the land of Iberia/Georgia. He captured gorges, seized part of the booty, and sent them fleeing to the land of the Armenians.

So [the Armenian rebels] went and secured themselves in the land of the Egerians and [Artawazd] personally took over the reigns of power [g138] over the Egerians and over the Ve'r'i, who are the Virk' [Iberians/Georgians]. These events further enraged Governor Hasan, who immediately sent [word] to all parts of his realm that taxes be gathered with added force and violence. Thus there was additional grief from taxes in our land, since the discovery of silver had completely ended in the land of the Armenians. This inflamed the heart of one of the lords, named Mushegh, who was the son of Count Hrahat from the Mamikonean House. He united some of the Armenian lords with him and withdrew from submission to the Ishmaelites. He found some of the sons of Ishmael in his own district and [even] in his own home. They had come to demand from him the blood[price] for those clanmates who had been killed. [Mushegh] put them to the sword. Then he migrated to Artagers fortress with his House.

[34] Reaching the district of Bagrewand with 260 men, he seized the tax collector named Abu Mjur (Apumchur) and those with him and put them to his sword. Thus, in that country, demands for taxes were silenced. After this, all those [folk] who were grieving physically and spiritually flocked to him. Then enemies from all quarters arose and came against him. But before this, some 200 heavily armed sons of Ishmael had arrived from the city of Karin [g139]. In the nighttime [Mushegh] went against them with a few men, to the village of Xars where [the Arabs] had encamped their forces in the vineyards. [The Musheghians], surrounding them, demolished the vineyards' weak walls, which were constructed with stones, without mortar. The horses were trapped under the strong explosion of falling rocks and many of the horsemen were trampled and died. [As for Mushegh], he gathered up the weapons, booty and horses of the fallen and gave them to his own troops. Then he himself went toward his fortress.

When news of this disaster reached the city of Dwin, the Muslim general Muhammad began receiving frenzied complaints from all sides. So he gathered up his troops and those from the city of Dwin, entrusting [the force] to a military commander named Abu Njib (Apunchip) to go and avenge the blood of the fallen. The general took approximately 4,000 choice cavalymen and cautiously passed along the royal highway, reaching the village of Bagawan in the district of Bagrewand. Here Mushegh and some 200 of his men pounced on them. [g140] As they fought each other, the Lord's speedy assistance came to Mushegh's brigade. Delivering many blows, they slaughtered the Ishmaelite troops. The survivors took to flight, but [Mushegh's forces] pursued as far as Aruch village, seizing many of them including the general himself. And they wiped them out. In great triumph [the Musheghians] turned back, heavily laden with the enemy's spoils.

Of the many [Muslims] who fled, only a few reached the city of Dwin. All the men and women of [the governor's] people came before him, shrieking and wailing and casting dirt over their heads and striking their foreheads, tearing their collars and filling all the city's broad streets with sobbing and lamentation. Great dread descended on the Saracens' brigade, and it did not dare sally forth from the city. Rather, they took refuge in the city's fortifications.

When the Armenian lords saw the [positive] outcome of these developments, all of them became certain of [its eventual] success, and pursued the foolish plan. For they thought that the rule of the Ishmaelites was ending. They were even more deceived by the opinions of a monk who, filled with the spirit of fanaticism, began prophesizing [the following] vain and futile words: "Lo, the time of your salvation has arrived, for soon the royal scepter of authority will once again return to the House of T'orgom [the Armenians], and by means of you vengeance will be exacted from the race of Ishmael. Do not fret that your numbers are fewer than theirs. For just one of you can conquer a thousand of them, while two [of you can conquer] tens of thousands. This is because the Lord is fighting your war. Arm yourselves and fear not." Thus did [the monk] on a daily basis narrate such false and delusional visions, and everyone believed him [g141] and called him a seer. Tricked by such words they also gradually deceived the great sparapet Smbat, Ashot's son, into believing it.

[35] All the lords of the Armenians came together in some spot and swore an oath to die together [rebellingly]. Consequently they united, some 5,000 men, since many of the common folk allied with their brigades. They arose from there and went to the city of T'e'odupolis which is [also] called Karin [Erzerum]. They besieged it with walls and throughout the entire winter they battled against it. They erected towers and punched holes in the city's outer walls. But they were unable to accomplish anything except to kill some people with rock-hurling machines.

Ashot of the Bagratuni House, the son of Prince Sahak, did not associate himself with this harmful and disastrous affair, since he was a

prudent and brilliant man. Rather, he continued to advise them to distance themselves from the monk's fanatical and damaging counsel. He said: "You are too young, and I know that you cannot resist the power of that [g142] multi-headed dragon; and furthermore [their leader] has a limitless host at his disposal and his treasury can supply them with unlimited materiel. All the kingdoms which reject their authority they smash like earthenware pots. Indeed the Byzantine [emperor] cannot lift a hand [against them]. He quakes with fear at the sight of them and does not dare go against the divine command. You are unfamiliar with all the power of the Byzantine emperor, his personal bravery, [and the qualities of] his forces and materiel. He never once thought to capture the land of the Armenians [from the Arabs]. [Emperor] Constantine, son of Leo, in one day of single combat against ferocious wild beasts, slaughtered a lion as though it were a goat's kid. Yet now [even he] who possessed such strength drew back in fear from that very evil wild beast which now pollutes our country. On whom will you rely [for help]? Whose power, whose strength [will help you] against the invincible [Arab commander's] authority? If it pleases you, accept my advice. For my concerns are for your safety, and for the needs and peace of our land. The matter will resolve itself in [one of these] three ways. Either you will return and then submit to them, and your country will remain in peace. Or you will reject [submission], take to flight with all your comrades and their families, abandon the inheritance of your fathers and their dwellings, forests, [g143] fields, even your fathers' graves--and go into exile to the Byzantine emperor. Or else you will fall into their hands in a single day and die a disagreeable death. For I know things about the godless caliph, [and I know that] he will not stop until he succeeds."

But [the rebels] did not accept the advice that they heard. Quite the contrary, they regarded it as treasonous since they were so [completely] under the sway of that delusional man. [The monk] continually exhorted them to stand firm in the undertaking before them, and not to entertain doubts. But the effects of his devious, destructive advice were revealed shortly, for they broke away from each other and became disunited. The lords of the Artsrunik' House, Hamazasp and his brothers, stayed where they were in the land of Vaspurakan; Vasak, Ashot's son, and those of the Amatunik' and Trunik' Houses, remained where they were, some in the secure fortress in the village of Dariwnk' and in the hideouts of Maku, some holed up in the valleys of Arageght. They circulated around the districts looking for food, took it, and returned to their keeps.

Now the Tachiks who were in the city of Dwin came and began raiding here and there in the districts around them. They looted and shed blood in the village of Ptghunk', in T'alın, and in Koghb [g144] causing great bloodshed and killing many people.

When spring arrived, the caliph organized brigades [to go] against the country of the Armenians. He assembled some 30,000 select, heavily armed cavalymen mounted on choice horses, from the clan of the Khurasan brigade, and entrusted them to a general named Amir (Amr) [ibn Isma'il]. He sent them off from the expansive, renowned city which Abdullah [Caliph al-Mansur] himself had built, that city, securely fortified with impregnable defending walls, which was named Baghdad.

[36] Then general [Amir], with great caution and extensive preparation, went to the city of Xlat' in the land of the Armenians, reaching it via the Syrian areas. When he entered the city, he was informed by the citizens there about the caliber of the Armenian forces, their numbers, whether they were [merely] youths, who were the military commanders, whether they were closely united, how brave, whether [inexperienced lads] without moustaches or seasoned fighters. Having been informed about all this, he prepared his own military commanders accordingly.

Now Sahak's son Ashot was in that city at the time and notified the Armenian lords about the enemy's arrival, and instructing them to assemble in one place, wherever they happened to be, to live or die as one. But they considered the information in this document unreliable, [g145] as though he deceitfully wanted to save the city from besiegement and thereby show himself as loyal to the Ishmaelites. Therefore, with this in mind, they ignored his words and persisted in carrying forward their earlier scheme. After this the lords of the Artsrunik' clan assembled troops in the land of Vaspurakan [including] Hamazasp and his brothers and those from the Amatunik' clan together with their troops. As auxiliaries they called upon Ashot's son Vasak, the brother of Smbat sparapet from the Bagratunik' clan with his forces, and they advanced upon the village of Arch'e'sh to destroy it to its foundations and to kill the soldiers in it.

They reached the village of Berkri in the district of Ar'beran and waited for the others to assemble. Many of the common folk were attracted to them as foot soldiers for the battle. One and all wanted to do this, but then, suddenly, [bad] news reached them. Someone arrived and informed them that a large force of the sons of Ishmael had arrived and were awaiting them. But Hamazasp, lord of the Artsrunik', did not believe [the messenger] and beat and tortured him as a liar. [Hamazasp] himself boastfully proceeded against the village of Arche'sh with his troops. As they neared the town, the residents informed the commander Amir in the city of Xlat' [g146] about the arrival of the Armenian lords. [Amir left Xlat'] with a multitudinous host and lay in ambush near the village of Arche'sh. Thus, while the Armenian brigade was battling against the fortress, [the Arabs] suddenly emerged from the ambush where they were concealed and pounced on the Armenian troops. [The attackers] put them to flight, killing the majority of the infantry brigade which consisted of local residents--since they were naked, weaponless, and unskilled in warfare. [The Arabs] mercilessly slaughtered those they encountered in the bitter light of that day, while others [of the fugitives], in their panic, fell into the river and drowned. Four men from noble clans also perished, three from the Trunik' House and one from the village of Urts'. Moreover some 1,500 of the common folk fell. As for those who turned to flight, almost none of them was able to save his own life. This terrible disaster occurred on Saturday, the fourth day of the month of Hrotits' (December). The enemy pursued and struck the Armenian troops as far as the place known as Tay village. Then [the Arabs] turned back and their army greatly rejoiced.

As a result [of this defeat], despair increased in our land of Armenia, while the infidel enemy was delighted and overjoyed. After catching their breath, [the Arabs] resumed their assaults, travelling by the royal [g147] highway through the district of Apahunik'. They reached the village of Artsni in the district of Bagrewand, where they encamped by the banks of the river which flows through it. With them were all the craftsmen and creators of armaments who prepare weapons and war materiel.

[37] Meanwhile those [Armenian] troops who were besieging the city of Karin had brought it close to the breaking point. Famine had become very severe there and, unwillingly, [the Arabs] wanted to give it into their hands. But as soon as the news about the defeat of the [Armenian] brigade reached the city of Karin, the Armenian fighting force lost heart and lifted the siege of the city. They could have left for Byzantine parts and saved themselves from the iniquitous, malicious slanderers, but instead they thought it better to die than to witness the destruction of our land and the desecration of Christ's churches. Having so resolved, despite the fact that their numbers were fewer than the enemy's, they voluntarily turned to this peril. They assembled a force of some 5,000 men, quit the city of Karin, and crossed through the confines of Basen into the district of Bagrewand. Next they crossed the Arsaniyas River and courageously attacked the enemy, [after first] leaving their equipment and horses two stadia distant. They went on foot, ferociously prepared to battle the enemy. Enemy brigades also arose against them with great preparation. [g148]

At daybreak [the two sides] were in battle array. When they clashed with each other, initially the Armenian brigade was dominant, delivering many blows, putting the enemy to flight, and killing many of them. But then [the Arabs] regained strength, turned from their flight, and resisted [the Armenians] with a wild rage, inflicting wounds on most of the common soldiers. Some of the lords then fled with their cavalry and the commoners who were with them. For many of them had fallen [and their corpses] covered the plain.

[38] Yet these valiant martyrs ignored the bitter deaths awaiting them, even though they were vastly outnumbered by their wicked hunters. Until their final breaths they vied with each other, saying: "Let us bravely die for our land and our people. Let our eyes not witness our sanctuaries and the sites of the glorification of our God trampled by these loathsome men. Before that happens, let our enemy's sword confront us and have their way with us. Let us trade our persons for the truth of our faith and not for earthly concerns. For this death is temporary whereas life is eternal." This is the encouragement they gave each other, fixing their gazes On High for assistance, saying: "God, help and accompany us quickly. Pity the great shame we are found in. [g149] In our peril we call upon Your name, Oh Lord, and glorify You in the dangers surrounding us. For countless evils surround us and hold us and the hour of our death has arrived."

[The Armenians] offered these and even more fervent pleas [to God]. Then fortified anew with aid from On High, nothing could shake their earlier determination, despite the fact that they were not even 1,000 [soldiers] facing 30,000 [Arab troops]. As we learned directly from the enemy, a multitude of angels was fighting on their side and appeared to the enemy in human form. They also confirmed that they had seen clerics and priests with gospels, candles, and incense at the front encouraging them. Then [the Armenians] mercilessly began to take vengeance on their foe until their hands weakened from the weight of their weapons. Some, devoid of weapons, fell at once, exchanging this transitory sinful life for the venerable hope of eternal life, and thus they became valiant martyrs. The names of the military commanders were as follows: Sparapet [commander-in-chief] Smbat and his ally and comrade Sahak from the Bagratuni House; General Mushegh and Samuel, lord of the Mamikonean [g150] House, a vibrant and handsome young man who was the son-in-law of the sparapet; from the Gnunik' House, Vahan dashnak [the dagger], and many lords and commoners who cannot be named one by one. Close to 3,000 men fell [in that battle], but [they lay there] in a pitiful and dishonored state, since their bodies found no graves. Rather, the corpses of these war dead remained out in the open, exposed to the sun, dust, rain, and tempests.

Then again lamentations and wailing greatly increased in our land of Armenia. For great leaders and respectable military commanders were snuffed out in one moment. And thus the country was plunged into deep despair and the deepest sorrow over the loss of these brave and preeminent warriors. For [the country] was bereft of their help and was betrayed into the hands of the bestial and crazed enemy. Yet they recalled the mercy of God's visitation, [God] Who showered His mercy on humanity from the start, especially on those who glorified His name. They called upon God's loving mercy and sought His assistance for the hopeless and those living in doubt on earth. For this [latest disaster] followed on the heels of the [earlier] destruction in the town of Arche'sh, [and occurred] on a Monday in the same month, on the 14th day of [the month of] Hrotits' (December). Yet this tribulation was even more severe, since there was no way to [g151] grieve for and mourn the dead openly and to have funeral meals in their homes. Neither could they even bury the dead.

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35.

[39] Then the enemy extended their raiding in the district of Bagrewand and adjacent areas, causing great crises among the inhabitants of the country. They stubbornly resolved to wreck and ruin the [Christian] temples of prayer and to pollute the churches of Christ's holiness. They wrecked the glorious symbol of Christ's Cross which had been erected at the entrances and exits as [a source of] refuge and protection for those who had come to worship the consubstantial Trinity, burning and eliminating them. They treated with fanatical spite the priests, monks, and their servitors--as though they were the leaders of those who had died in the battle. From various places they ravished Church vessels and relics of God's saints and carried them off as booty. Once the infidel troops had loaded up with this spoil from the land of the Armenians they turned again to the fortresses and conquered the strongholds where people had taken refuge, summoning them to peace, giving them written oaths and bringing them down from the fortresses.

Then [General Amir ibn Isma'il] left the land of the Armenians as though he had enjoyed some wonderful and valiant triumph and [g152] went through the land of the Persians. He wanted to stand before the caliph and receive a reward from him for his labors. But at that very moment the verdict of righteous God was delivered upon him and he perished in the country of the Persians. He died suffering from horrible pains, a worthy recompense for the blood of innocents shed by his hands. He was killed not by the sword of man, but by an invisible sword wielded from On High, [a sword] more forceful than any double-edged [earthly] sword which severed his spirit, breath, sinews, and mind. That sword [of God] sought vengeance for the blood of [His] sons and repayment for those who hated Him. [God] cleansed and preserved the country of His [believing] people, and drew back the scepter [used for punishing] them. And once again [people] were secure in their dwellings.

36.

[40] Once more the caliph sent Yazid [ibn Usaid] to Armenia as commander/governor as a replacement for Hasan [ibn Kahtaba]. [Caliph] Abdullah [Abu Jafar al-Manur], having worked all the malice his heart desired, crushing his own soul with the sickness of greed for money--his clan's particular greed--cursed by the prophet [g153], hopelessly died that same year.

[God] revealed the full recompense of the judgement to be meted out to him in the next life by means of one of His worthy servants, a certain priest. For [this priest] had a vision a few days before [the caliph's] death in which he saw the place of his torments, a deep prison sealed off with an iron door. [The caliph] was brought to the mouth of the abyss by two soldiers who opened the door. And he saw flames shooting up to the sky. [The soldiers] took and hurled this malefactor down the stairs of the pit where he was trapped and received the punishment that he merited. Such was the revelation of that vision about the fate which awaited him, judicious punishment for his wicked deeds by the righteous judge.

37.

Now after this [al-Mansur's] son, Muhammad al-Mahdi succeeded him [775-785]. He was much more noble than his father and of much better disposition. He opened all the treasuries which the impious al-Mansur had kept closed, and distributed gifts to his troops. He also opened the border gates, allowing merchants [g154] to trade and to satisfy the requirements of those in need. And then there was plenty in the country, and the discovery of [new sources of] silver expanded, and the inhabitants of the country were at peace from the coercive extraction of taxes. Although [al-Mahdi] tightened the yoke of taxation, the country rested somewhat from the cruel and calamitous tribulations because of the discovery of silver. This was due to the additional discovery of silver in the mountains in the land of the Armenians. During his reign pure silver ore was extracted [which satisfied] the needs of the population [for taxes].

Then [Caliph] al-Mahdi began to attack the authority of the Byzantines. He assembled a force which he entrusted to one of his generals, his own brother who was named 'Abas [al-'Abas ibn Muhammad], and sent it to Byzantine territory. For in the same year that Abdullah [al-Mansur] had perished, Emperor Constantine [V] also died, and his son, Leo [IV, 775-780] occupied his father's throne. While [al-Mahdi] was planning to begin raiding Byzantine territory with his troops, the emperor quickly sent a large force against Basanastan, which is called Bishan [Commagene]. [This army] was commanded by three generals, two of whom were Armenian lords, Tachat from the Andzewats'i House, and Artawazd from the Mamikonean House, plus a third who was from the Byzantine army. Advancing with many troops, they reached the areas of Cilicia and Bishan where they raided throughout the land capturing numerous cities, districts [g155] and villages. Those resisting them in battle were crushed, ground to dust. As booty they also took into captivity a multitude of common folk. They say that their number exceeded 150,000 men. These [captives] were taken to Byzantine territory. Then they went and presented their booty to the Byzantine emperor. Emperor Leo received his troops with great adulation and gave very magnificent gifts to his generals. Then they rested for [the remainder of] that year.

[41] The next year the Caliph sent emissaries [to Constantinople], puffing greatly and hoping thereby to terrify [the Byzantines]. We learned that along with his message, [the caliph] sent two sacks of mustard seed to the Byzantine emperor and wrote: "I shall soon send an enormous number of my troops against your land, as many [soldiers] as the mustard seeds which you see. Will your country be large enough to hold my countless troops? If you have some strength in your hands, get ready to fight me." The emperor read this document but did not get upset. Instead, he calmly wrote a reply: "Man does not [g156] secure victory by himself. Rather [the victory] goes to whomever God grants it. God might give your troops to my troops as food, like the mustard seeds you have sent. Do what you have promised to do, but whatever is the will and pleasure of God, that is what will be done."

Simultaneously the emperor issued an order to relocate the inhabitants of the countryside to the cities, strongholds, and secure fortresses. And the caliph, having assembled countless troops, entrusted them to the same general whom we mentioned earlier, and sent them against the country of the Byzantines. This multitude [of troops] arrived in the Galatia country and besieged the expansive city called Amorium. Though the city was invested by this host of soldiers and besieged for some three months, nonetheless [the Arabs] were unable to capture it, because it was [well] protected by its walls and the surrounding areas had been carefully attended to. For the sources of the Sagaris River are near the city and form swamps all around it. Thus [the Arabs] were unable to inflict damage, but could only sit and maintain the siege. Yazid [ibn Usaid], the governor of Armenia, had also assembled his forces and came to the aid of General 'Abbas. He went to the areas of Pontus, to the fortress-cities of Koloneia, Govat'a, Kastighon and the district of Marit'ene's and fought them. But [g157] none [of these battles] bore any fruit, and [Yazid] returned in great humiliation to the land of the Armenians. Furthermore the Ishmaelite army gave up on its siege of the city of Amorium and returned to the land of its residence.

[42] It remains for us to describe the events which followed. In the seventh year of Muhammad [al-Mahdi's reign], Emperor Leo, Constantine's son, died and his son Constantine [VI] succeeded him, an extremely young boy. When Caliph al-Mahdi learned about the death of the Byzantine emperor, he assembled many troops, appointed his son Harun (Aharon) as general, and sent [the army] against the land of Byzantium. Just as the Ishmaelite army reached Byzantine territory, the Byzantine army came against them. [The Byzantines] had already blocked the roads, so [the two armies] sat there, facing each other. The Ishmaelite troops were unable to arise to get food, and thus there was severe famine among the Ishmaelite forces.

Now Tachat, son of Grigor from the Andzewats'ik' House, whom we mentioned earlier, had previously come as a fugitive to the Emperor Constantine [V] from the caliph. [The emperor] received him with great ceremony and delight, and honored him because of his personal bravery, since he had earlier learned about [g158] his courageousness. [Tachat] had demonstrated his bravery to the emperor previously in the territories of the Sarmatians who are called Bulgars, whence he returned with great victory. When the emperor observed his brave heart, he appointed him general over 60,000 men; and he remained obedient to the emperor of Byzantium for 22 years. But after the death of Constantine and his son Leo, and the accession of Constantine [VI, 776-780], Emperor Constantine's mother the queen treated [Tachat] with great rancor. For that reason [Tachat] turned to the caliph. When the Ishmaelite troops were being besieged by the Byzantines, [Tachat] requested a written oath from them so that he could return to his country. He promised to lift the blockade on them and convey them to the country of their residence. When the caliph heard about this, he swiftly acceded to the request, promising [Tachat] whatsoever he wanted. When this had been confirmed in writing, [Tachat] arose and quit the country of the Byzantines with his entire House and extricated the Ishmaelite troops from the siege. Harun, the caliph's son, styled [Tachat] his father and gave him very splendid gifts. And when Tachat came before the caliph, the latter personally thanked him and gave him many valuable items from the royal treasury. He also gave him the dignity of the principate over the country of the Armenians [presiding prince of Armenia] and sent him back to his land with great grandeur. But when Prince Tachat [g159] had returned to the land of the Armenians by order of the caliph and had come to 'Uthman [ibn 'Umara ibn Kuzaim, ostikan 781-785] who was then governor and chief of the country, ['Uthman] did not implement his prince's order. Instead he delayed and sent emissaries to their caliph claiming that it was not the will of the united lords of the Armenians that someone who had rebelled from [Arab] authority and aided the Byzantine emperor should be set up as prince over them, people who had submitted to our rule, for he might be a traitor in our forces.

Now despite the fact that Tachat, on numerous occasions, wanted to inform the caliph about the rupture of his authority, he was unable [to reach him]. This was because ['Uthman's allies] held all the routes leading out [of the country], they seized [Tachat's] emissaries and imprisoned them. Thus his complaints did not reach the ears of [Caliph] Muhammad [al-Mahdi] and his son Harun until the end of that year. Thereafter, when all of [Tachat's] protests finally reached the ears of Caliph Muhammad [al-Mahdi] and his son Harun a great disquiet was visited upon 'Uthman, the governor of our country. Unwillingly, at the caliph's command, he [finally] gave the principate to Tachat.

Then 'Uthman assembled the troops of the lords of Armenia and went to the country of the Aghuanians to the city called Darband by the Caspian Gates, [a city] well fortified with a wall which was built to resist the troops of [g160] the Huns and the Khazars. ['Uthman] also summoned Prince Tachat, as well as the sparapet [commander-in-chief] Bagarat and Nerse'h Kamsarakan and other Armenian lords during the very hot days [of summer] when Hephestus was at its peak, in the most disagreeable sweltering heat. He encamped on the plain called K'eran. They passed the entire summer on that furnace-like rocky plain. Some of the Armenian lords were unable to bear the extremely hot weather and died, [among them] Tachat and the sparapet Bagarat and Nerse'h Kamsarakan and other troops. Caliph Muhammad [al-Mahdi] was enraged when he learned about the lamentable deaths of prince Tachat and the lords with him. He terminated ['Uthman's] rule and sent as a replacement a certain prince named Rauh (R'oh) [ibn Hatim, ostikan 785-786/87] as governor of the land of the Armenians.

Muhammad [al-Mahdi] reigned for 8 years and then died, as Rauh arrived [in Armenia].

[43] After [al-Mahdi], his son Musa (Muse') [al-Hadi, caliph 785-786] ruled for one year. He was a wanton, impudent and possessed person, so manipulated by the demon inside him that when he was disporting himself in accordance with his unworthy behavior, [g161] he designated men as targets instead of objects and shot arrows at them, and killed them. When he was confirmed in his authority [as caliph] he sent a certain Khouzaima (Xazm) [ibn Khazim at-Tamimi, ostikan, 787] to the country of Armenia in place of Rauh. Truly, as befitted his name he was contentious (xazmabar) and fiendish. When he arrived at the city of Dwin, all the Armenian lords came out to meet him, including the Artsrunid princes Hamazasp, Sahak, and Mehruzhan.

Now when that malicious enemy [Khouzaima] saw their magnificent and glorious aspect, and the excellent readiness of their troops, he immediately had them seized, bound, and put in prison for three months--these proto-martyrs and heroes. Then he sent accusations about them to Caliph Musa [al-Hadi] and received back an order to kill them. This wrathful verdict and unjust death sentence was sent to the prison where the venerable martyrs were being held.

As their death sentence was being read out, the captives asked a man named K'ubeida, who was sympathetic to them and a friend, if there was any way to elude the unjust sentence meted out to them. And he told them: "The only way to escape from their clutches and live is to agree to convert to our faith and to [g162] accept the word of our Prophet. That is your only deliverance from the death you have been condemned to." When Meruzhan heard this pronouncement he was terrified about his temporal death and condemned his person to loss in eternal Gehenna. He destroyed the mild yoke of faith in Christ and separated from the flock of the Lord, dressing himself in the clothing of wolves, making himself liable to eternal judgement. But since this was done out of fear of imminent death and not willingly, perhaps Christ will have mercy on his repentant soul.

[44] Then the courageous martyrs donned the armor of faith and put on their heads the fortifying helmets of salvation and replied [to K'ubeida]: "God forbid that we should exchange the truth of God for falsehood, eternal life for daily life, eternal glory for transitory glory, Christ the hope of all, for our insignificant blood." Thus did they vie with each other while in prison, saying: "Oh brothers, we have enjoyed enough this fleeting glory. Hereafter let us not live for greatness, transitory glory, gleaming golden robes, not for love of kinfolk, the tenderness of [our] children, or any of the good things of this world [things which] many have aspired to yet instead inherited hopelessness." Thus did they encourage each other during their grief in prison. In prayer they united with God and anticipated inheriting eternal life. [g163]

Finally the day of decision arrived when the course of their martyrdom would be completed. It was the blessed, glorious day of the Epiphany of Christ, which is celebrated for eight consecutive days by the Christian faithful. [Khouzaima], that instrument of injustice, summoned them before him at a tribunal. Since he was previously cognizant of their firm adherence to the Christian faith and their enthusiasm for it, he did not repeat the same arguments to them. Rather, he had the venerable Sahak brought into the arena first. The instrument of torture which they used was of the latest design: two forked blocks of wood firmly anchored to the ground on the right and left. The martyr was attached [to this device] with his armpits on the forked ends and his hands tightly tied to the wood. Then [Sahak] was beaten on the back with a cudgel so severely that his body separated [into pieces]. Meanwhile the venerable Hamazasp was being held outside, in chains. He prayed to the Lord in his heart without moving his lips or making any audible sound. It was only in his heart that he lamented and sighed and called on the Lord for aid in the tribulation he was about to face.

Having severely tortured [Sahak], they released him from the painful bonds and led the venerable Hamazasp to the same place of torture. In the same fashion they tied him between the two wooden struts and also beat [g164] him with even greater ferocity. [Hamazasp] also courageously withstood the torments. So [Khouzaima] issued the order to kill them with a sword. When the executioners heard the judge's order, they immediately raised their swords and chopped off their heads. Thus did [Sahak and Hamazasp] surrender their souls and depart this life. On the following day [Khouzaima] ordered that their bodies be hanged on wood. And he appointed soldiers to guard [their corpses] so that no Christian would steal and bury the bodies. So full of bitterness was the heart of that unjust judge that even after their deaths [his heart] was not softened. Rather, he had the bodies removed from the wood and the bones of these venerable generals burned to ash in the fire. Even these ashes were not spared for burial but were tossed into the waters of a river. According to the words of the Apostle [Luke] in return for the afflictions they experienced they will be richly rewarded a hundredfold with glory, as the Lord said: "Anyone who has left father, mother, wife, children or fields for my name will receive a hundredfold more in this world and eternal life in the world to come" [compare Luke 18: 29-30].

This [martyrdom] occurred during the reign of [Caliph] Musa [al-Hadi], in the governorship of Khouzaima, on the day of the blessed Epiphany of the Lord, in the year 233 of the Armenian Era [A.D. 784; should be January 6, 786].

Musa held the caliphate for one year and [g165] then died. During his day the prince of the Iberians/Georgians [Stephen III, the Guaramid, 779/780-786] also was cruelly slain, raised up by his hands and feet and cut in two at a tender age. Thus after his death, he was regarded as a sacrificial lamb. After working all this evil, [al-Hadi] perished a year later.

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41.

[45] Subsequently Harun (Aharon) [al-Rashid, 786-809] became caliph. He was the son of Muhammad [al-Mahdi] and the brother of Musa [al-Hadi], and was a greedy, money-loving man. During his reign his own brother 'Ubaidullah (Ovbedla) opposed him. Because of the antagonism between the two, [Harun al-Rashid] divided [the territorial authority], giving to his brother Atrpatakan and Armenia together with Iberia/Georgia and Aghuania. In accordance with his evil nature he designated for governors over our country godless men of unrestrained and avaricious behavior who had never even considered what the fear of God meant. The first of these was a certain Yazid, the son of Mazyad [Yazid ibn Mazyad al-Shaybani, 787-788, 799-801]. After him was Abd al-Kebir (Abdalk'bir)[Abd al-Kebir ibn Abd al-Hamid al-'Adawi, four months], who reigned briefly and did neither good nor bad and so seemed good. Following him was a certain Sulaiman [Sulaiman ibn al-'Amri, 788-790] who was a greedy malefactor and the worst of them all. That same 'Ubaidullah came to the city of Barda'a (Partaw) and confirmed Sulaiman as prince over the land, entrusting to him the Lord's people, who were like sheep surrounded by evil wolves. [g166]

[Sulaiman] so increased the yoke [of taxation] on people that they could not endure it. For even if they gave all that they possessed, it was not enough to save themselves. This same Sulaiman sent to the city of Dwin his son-in-law, a certain Ibn Ducas (Ibndoke'), an impious and malevolent man, son of one of his maid-servants, who was of Greek nationality. He imposed unendurably heavy taxes on the residents of our land. All the lords, common folk, bishops and the kat'oghikos Esayi [Esayi I Eghipatrushets'i, 775-788] came and pleaded with [Ibn Ducas] to reduce the onerous level of taxation, but it was of no avail. For the wrath of the Lord had delivered the Christians into merciless hands. [Ibn Ducas instead] sent tax collectors to the different parts of the land with the order to double the yearly collection and to take it immediately, and they implemented the command. Once this was accomplished, this son of satan devised another wicked scheme. He had lead seals put around the necks of everyone, demanding many zuzas for each [seal]. Thus did this wicked executioner reduce everyone to the worst extremes of bankruptcy through his intolerant measures. [g167]

42.

[46] The year after the arrival of 'Ubaidullah, the same disasters escalated further. For from then on, no one was master of his own belongings. Instead, everything was taken as booty. Many people, unable to bear the severity of the disasters, voluntarily left their flocks and herds and fled, while the enemy captured their livestock and property and took them as spoil.

Thus deprived of their belongings, naked, barefoot, starving, and unable to make a living, [people] fled to Byzantine territory. They say that their number exceeded 12,000 including women and children. Their leaders were Shapuh from the Amatunik' House and his son Hamam and others of the Armenian lords and their cavalry. The impious and brutal enemy pursued them with their troops, catching up in the district of Kogh at the Iberian/Georgian border. In the ensuing battle some [of the Arabs] were put to flight while others were slain. Then [the Armenian] fugitives crossed the Akamsis [Chorokh] River. The sources [of this river] are in the Tayk' area and it flows in a northwesterly direction crossing through Egeria and into the Pontic [Black] Sea. As soon as they had forded the river, they quickly notified [g168] the Byzantine emperor Constantine [VI]. He called them to him and gave honors to the lords and their cavalry. He settled the common folk on good fertile land. As for the half of the people who remained [in Armenia] they endured extreme poverty like slaves, serving as woodcutters or water-carriers like the Gibeonites.

Furthermore [Ibn Ducas] that fiendish, impious man whom 'Ubaidullah had appointed as governor of the city of Dwin, hatched another diabolical scheme. For at that time the venerable kat'oghikos of the Armenians, Esayi, had passed to Christ with blessed and orthodox faith [A. D. 788], and [Ibn Ducas] decided to examine all the Church's property and possessions. So he summoned all the clerics and terrified them with violent threats, saying: "Do not conceal anything from me. Bring it all out into the open. Should anyone hide something that later is discovered, he will pay for it with his life." Horrified by these threats, [the clerics] turned over everything to him. Everything kept hidden in the treasuries they revealed and placed before him without exception: precious gold and silver vessels, some with precious gems, and royal garments for the blessed altar and for conducting the divine service [g169]. As soon as [Ibn Ducas] saw this, he decided to confiscate all of it, but then changed his mind and took [only] whatever appealed to him from the treasuries and splendid vestments and vessels. The rest he gave to the sacrist of the church [to hold] until Step'anos [Step'anos I Dvnets'i, 788-790] acceded to the throne of the patriarchate. [Step'anos] sat on the patriarchal throne only after paying many bribes, selling off all belongings and properties until [the Church's] villages and servants were freed and its debts [were paid].

Colophon

[47] The teaching of Ghewond regarding the chronologies of the House of T'orgom has concluded. [It was written] by order of Lord Shapuh Bagratuni for the glory and praise of the most holy Trinity which is blessed now and forever, amen. Lord Hamazasp from the honorable Mamikonean House desired [a copy of this work] and paid me, the unworthy scribe Sargis, from his legitimate funds to reproduce it. I beseech you to remember [me] to merciful God, to Whom glory forever. Amen.

End

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